

DAWN COLUMN'S

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Perilous misstep

THE federal government on Sunday made good on its threat to dismiss an elected government and impose governor's rule and emergency in KP. The president obliged. The head of state, the only civilian elected twice to that office, has now imposed governor's rule three times: Punjab in 2009, Balochistan in 2013, and now KP — though the ruling PML-N is the main driver behind the latest move. His party, the PPP, has done so six times in the short history of Pakistani democracy, the others being in 1973 (Balochistan), 1975 (the then NWFP), and 1994 (again, KP). There is, therefore, nothing novel about Sunday's move. However, it is a measure that has never achieved what its authors intended, and has more often than not backfired. That, perhaps, is why even those unsympathetic to the PTI government in Peshawar had been warning Islamabad not to take this step. In going ahead with it, the centre assumes responsibility for any blowback.

The imposition of governor's rule in Balochistan in 1973 is instructive. In February of that year, the then prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto dismissed the Balochistan government led by Sardar Attaullah Mengal, and also removed the then governor, Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo. The centre ruled directly through Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and sent in the army, fuelling an already smouldering insurgency. Many elected Baloch leaders turned separatist. The province never really recovered. KP is not Balochistan, and the PTI is no separatist movement. But the parallel of an elected leadership being swept aside on the pretext of security is unmistakable. The experience of the 1973 decision should be seen as a warning that this is how estrangement from the federation begins.

There is no political justification for governor's rule. If the authorities felt terrorism was increasing in some tribal districts and adjoining areas, they could have limited themselves to imposing a targeted emergency under Article 232, as they have already done. To deprive an entire province of its elected government is not only undemocratic; it can also be severely counterproductive, as history shows. The stated reason for Sunday's decision is terrorism. The real target is perceived to be the only provincial government the opposition held, and the agitation it was leading. The PTI government may have faltered on several fronts, but in a democratic society, those failings are supposed to be addressed through the electoral process, not through executive fiat. Under Article 234, the proclamation lapses within two months unless parliament approves it. That is where this ill-considered action should be challenged on principle: lawmakers would do well to scrutinise it, and the courts to test whether the constitutional threshold was actually met. Islamabad must extricate itself from this quagmire before it deepens, and leave KP's governance to those its people have elected to oversee it.

Import fraud

THE under-invoicing of imports from China is not an allegation. It is an open secret in Pakistan's markets — one that has been known for years. The gap between imports recorded from China and what China itself reports exporting is estimated to be in the range of \$3.5-5bn in any single year. The Faisalabad loom owners have described this practice as one of the reasons their business is suffering. Yarn and cloth are the visible case, but the practice runs through the entire import trade from China — from machinery parts and chemicals to electronics, tyres, and household goods. Traders declare a fraction of the true value, pay duty and sales tax on that fraction, and sell at prices no domestic competitor can match. It could not happen at this scale without Customs. Valuation is checked at the port. When the same understatement recurs across the same products, importers, clearing agents, and officers who pass the consignments, year after year, it points past carelessness to facilitation.

The damage is easy to trace. The exchequer loses duty and tax every day. Local manufacturers are forced to compete against goods whose prices have been shaved by a pen stroke. Mills close, looms are sold, workers go home. Then the same industry is told to become competitive and increase exports. It cannot, while its home market is being undercut by tax evasion that the state declines to acknowledge. It also corrupts what the country knows about itself. Imports are undercounted, so the trade deficit and the revenue gap are misstated, and policy is built on wrong numbers. The tools are already in place. Pakistan and China operate an electronic data exchange between their Customs administrations, and Islamabad has asked Beijing for real-time data. Applied to every shipment, not just textiles, comparing the Chinese export declaration with the Pakistani goods declaration would show mismatches in value and quantity at once. Large gaps should mean investigation, penalties, and prosecution. It is an argument for collecting what the law already requires, from everyone, equally. Cheaper power and easier credit mean little to a producer who is underpriced at the border. The government has assured the loom owners that their problems will be resolved. Controlling under-invoicing at the Pakistan-China border should be a good start.

Paralysed prisons

PAKISTAN'S overcrowded jails distort the intention of imprisonment — rehabilitation, education, and occupational development. The *Annual Prisons Data Report 2026*, compiled by the National Commission for Human Rights and Justice Project Pakistan, reveals that attention to lengthy confinement, delays in trials, and difficulties in obtaining bail has been long overdue. It also finds that Pakistan's jails, built for 68,832 people, were operating at over 160pc of their capacity. The prison system currently holds 41,681 more people. As a result, 110,513 are packed in tight, squalid spaces. Three out of every four inmates are caught in legal paralysis and are awaiting trial. Punjab and Sindh have witnessed a substantial rise in inmate numbers, with prisons in KP and Balochistan still operating within capacity.

That the prison system is fractured is no surprise. Dismal sanitation, malnutrition, absent healthcare, and overcrowding define it. Not only are inmates compelled to devise sleeping rosters, they also face mental health hazards. Those with psychosocial debilities face endless jail time and abuse without medical care. Troublingly, the number of women in jail is on the rise. Since 2024, their numbers have gone up by 46pc; a number of children, too, await trial. These conditions illustrate how easily citizens are deprived of civil freedoms. For decades, there has been little meaningful change. The crisis is worsened by overreliance on custodial measures. While the various initiatives to improve the jail infrastructure must be appreciated, an overhaul in the bail and surety processes, along with speedy trials, can actually reduce the under-trial population. Meanwhile, serious health concerns are widespread, with reports of cases of hepatitis, HIV, and diabetes. Insight into how individual conditions — such as mental health issues and drug addiction — worsen without treatment is the hallmark of a system that cares for its people, prisoners included.



BY MALEEHA LODHI

Why stability is elusive

Using coercive measures and undermining institutions do not produce stability.

RECENT events are another reminder of how elusive political stability remains in the country. The confrontation between PTI and the government escalated after an effort at dialogue between them ended in mutual recriminations. PTI pressed ahead with its protest march that the federal government tried to stop by threatening to oust the KP government through imposition of governor's rule. The usual wave of arrests of party activists preceded the opposition's march. The Shehbaz Sharif government is now set on imposing an emergency and governor's rule in KP in a move that is likely to inflame sentiment in the province and exacerbate the situation.

This is a rerun of a familiar script, except it is set against a backdrop of deepening authoritarianism. It also marks a dangerous phase in confrontational politics with the federal authorities and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government at loggerheads. Inflammatory rhetoric by federal ministers was matched by fiery speeches from KP's Chief Minister Sohail Afridi.

Other than the brief interlude of dialogue, the government responded to the opposition protest by its usual mix of coercion, threats, and incendiary statements. It took the consequential decision to impose an emergency in KP and bring the province under federal control. The cabinet has approved this while parliament has been convened to sanction the move. The most egregious use of coercion was the reported abductions and incommunicado detention of over eight PTIMPs, including three members of the National Assembly. Using coercive means to manage the opposition has only reinforced the government's slide into authoritarianism, which has resulted in the country's democratic decline. This has been evidenced in the past couple of years in actions taken against the opposition and other critics: banning public gatherings, breaking up protest demonstrations, arresting opposition supporters, raiding homes of political leaders, filing cases against them, policing the media, imposing internet restrictions and criminalising free speech. Another telling indicator of democratic regression is the undermining of judicial independence by controversial amendments and defiance of court orders. The erosion of institutions meant to check executive power has contributed to growing autocratisation. The shell of democracy remains, but it is increasingly hollowed out.

The aim of these actions is to tighten the government's grip on the political system and the country. But it does not make the government strong. It signals weakness, not confidence. Some argue there is nothing new in this phase of repression, that it continues a familiar tradition and borrows from a well-worn playbook. Previous civilian governments, too, were guilty of undemocratic conduct, intolerance of opposition, jailing rivals on trumped-up charges, marginalising parliament, curbing press freedom, and undermining judicial independence. All of this is true. But the scale and scope of the repressive measures today go beyond anything seen under a civilian government before.

Public space is being encroached upon in an unprecedented manner. Because there is more to control in the digital era, especially social media, the present government has gone much further than its civilian predecessors in imposing digital space curbs and censorship and micromanaging the electronic media.

The rationale offered by spokesmen of the hybrid government, when pressed to justify such measures, is that they are necessary for political stability. But does the veneer of calm imposed by force bring stability? On the contrary, it is a recipe for instability. Coercion does not produce stability. It deepens polarisation, erodes the social contract, divides the country further, and fuels uncertainty. The opposition represents a large section of society, has a significant parliamentary presence, and runs the government in KP. To suppress and demonise it does not promote stability. It guarantees the continuation of political confrontation.

The economic cost of relentless political tensions and government-opposition conflict is plain to see. Frequent shutdowns and blockade of cities hit businesses hard. It vitiates the business climate. This at a time when recovery has yet to take hold, economic growth remains anaemic and stabilisation is still fragile. Jittery investors hold back, deterred by the spectre of turmoil and unrest. Celebrating every tranche received from the IMF doesn't obscure the reality that the economy is yet to embark on the path to sustainable growth. Meanwhile, all recent surveys — Gallup, Ipsos — show declining public confidence in economic conditions and pessimism about the country's economic future. Clearly, the country's economic problems cannot be tackled in a politically volatile environment.

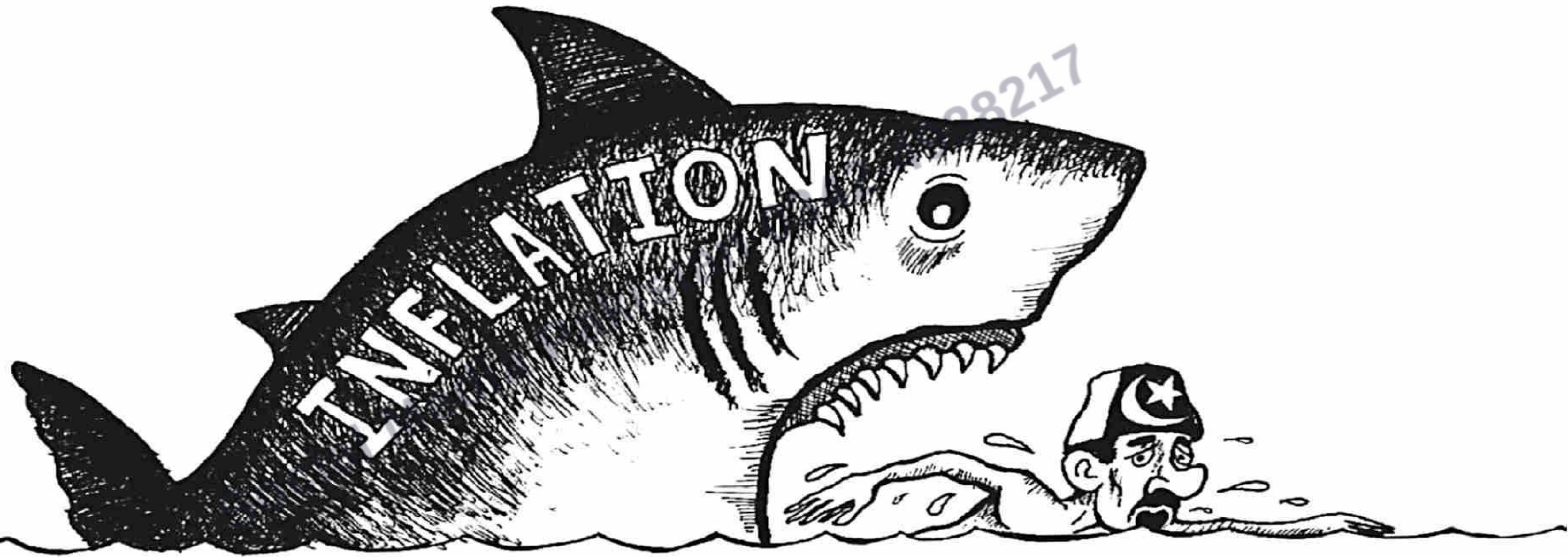
Political stability requires a reset on several fronts. It needs the creation of a peaceful and predictable political environment resting on a truce and mutual accommodation between the government and opposition. A divided and polarised country cannot be stable. Genuine dialogue is needed that is aimed at a lasting *modus vivendi*, not driven by short-term expediency to stop the next protest march. It also means the government relenting in its inhumane treatment of PTI leader Imran Khan in defiance of court orders. The recent talks were doomed when the government wasn't even willing to allow opposition leaders to meet Khan for consultations on the negotiations. It also remains unwilling to grant him his entitlement under the law. Such an attitude cannot form the basis for serious negotiations, let alone a political settlement.

Political stability is also achieved by governing the country inclusively by consensus and not by excluding other political actors who command substantial electoral and public support. A 'winner-takes-all' approach has long characterised Pakistan's politics. This has rested on the mistaken assumption that the party that wins an election (almost always on a minority vote and, in the case of the present government, in a disputed poll) is the 'sole representative' of the people. This stance leads to inherently unstable and exclusionary governance. Unilateral rule not only erodes democracy; it also undermines effective governance. The country's federal nature makes inclusive governance essential. The centre must work with and not against opposition-run provinces.

Political stability is also built by ensuring an environment where the rule of law prevails. It involves strengthening institutions and not weakening them in pursuit of ephemeral 'control'. Strong institutions ensure predictability — the bedrock of stability. They provide the checks and balances that are essential to prevent the abuse of power and protect fundamental rights and civil liberties.

To those who believe stability can be achieved by ousting an elected provincial government, concentrating power and discarding democratic freedoms, Pakistan's history stands testimony to how disastrous that path has been for the country and its people. ■

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.



Rohail Bhagwan 2026

A theorist of crisis



BORN in Karachi in 1945, Anwar Shaikh, a giant of Marxian economics and professor at The New School in New York, passed away last week. His father served in the Foreign Service as a result of which his family moved around frequently, through Malaysia, Canada, Kuwait, and finally the US. It was in Kuwait, he would later say in a biographical note from 2016, that economics first claimed him: standing amid the gleaming infrastructure of an oil economy, he could not reconcile the scale of wealth with the poverty of those who produced it. The obvious question was why. He spent the next half-century building an answer to this and its related questions.

I came to Shaikh's work first through an undergraduate class: Aasim Sajjad Akhtar's Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment course, which featured Shaikh's short four-page elaboration of Marx's theory of exploitation published in a 1990 reader on Marxian economics compiled by Eatwell, Milgate, and Newman. It was only later on, after having joined academia myself, that I picked up a more sustained interest in his political economy contributions. Many of these were based on the workings of the advanced capitalist world, but to me it felt possible — via a universalist understanding of the capital-labour relation that characterises our shared modernity — that one could recover a broader insight and logic extendable to other contexts as well.

His magnum opus, *Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crises*, published by Oxford in 2016 after nearly 20 years of writing, is not an easy book. It runs into nearly 1,000 pages and I have only been able to digest parts of it, a process aided greatly (and almost singularly) by his video lectures on YouTube. However, its central propositions are clear enough to state plainly — capitalism is driven by the pursuit of profit as a structural consideration. Firms invest, hire, fire, pollute, underpay, and cut corners not out of some moral imperative or ethical inadequacies, but because competition demands it.

Competition, Shaikh insisted, is quite unlike the “decorous ballet” of textbook economics. It is a war, fought with prices, wages, lobbying, disinformation, and whatever else gives one firm an

edge over another. In this universe, marked as it is by war, it's a bit difficult to model markets as tending towards equilibrium (as orthodoxy usually claims). Shaikh, instead, argued that rather than any form of stasis, capitalism fluctuates, overshoots, crashes, recovers, and overshoots again.

Mainstream accounts tend to view these as ‘failures’ (of regulation or rationality). Someone like Shaikh, on the other hand, would see these as systemic features of a mode of production built on separating the producers of value from the means of production.

What is worth celebrating in Anwar Shaikh's work is his insistence that economics is never neutral.

His writings on so-called externalities generated by this systemic feature of competition are worth dwelling on, given the cost-of-living and ecological crises plaguing the planet. Orthodox economics treats pollution, low wages, and dangerous working conditions as costs that firms impose on society from outside the market, ie, as unfortunate side effects, correctable with the right regulations.

Shaikh went as far as calling this view of externality a conceptual fraud. Rather than by accident, a firm pollutes because the alternative — investing in cleaner production — costs money that would otherwise be profit. The extraction and pollution are thus internal to how profit works. The same point has also been made at a more philosophical level by theorist Alysa Battistoni, who argues how nature is classified as a “free gift” under capitalism, ie, as something that does not carry with it the moral force of reciprocity or care (unlike a real gift).

Beyond the intricate debates with the mainstream, what is worth celebrating in Shaikh's

work is his insistence that economics is never neutral. In his own words, he asserted that “there is no such thing as a value-free or socially neutral economics”. Every model encodes assumptions about how society works and who it works for. The amnesty schemes, the short-lived consumption-led booms, the stabilisation programmes that periodically arrive with the IMF, the growth targets announced at press conferences, the optimistic narratives about investor confidence and trickle-down are all consequences of choices made in a particular direction and for particular interests.

Shaikh spent his career mapping those choices with a view to uncovering their systemic root in the unceasing motivation for profit. By implication, he ends up showing how reformist ‘tinkering’ that seeks to curtail externalities and fall-outs is ultimately futile, and how a far more fundamental overhaul is required.

Shaikh was educated partly at St Patrick's in Karachi, before finishing his schooling in New York, his undergraduate at Princeton, his doctoral studies at Columbia, and a long career of teaching and research at the New School for Social Research in New York. During that time, he was always on the heterodox edge of the discipline, and concerned with abstract theory, which explains why his work never found the same recognition in a society that otherwise rushes to embrace high-achievers with even the most ephemeral of connections to Pakistan.

However, that biography — from Karachi to a position of heterodox criticality in American academic life — carries a relevant resonance right now. In the face of geopolitical and economic reordering, the questions of whose economics we use, the viability of its long-held orthodoxies, and what they are actually deployed for, matter more urgently in Pakistan and the world at large than at any point in the recent past. It is then truly unfortunate that we have lost one of the clearest thinkers available on such questions. ■

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سوشل میڈیا پاکستان

گروپ کے قوانین

- ۱۔ گروپ میں نمبر تبدیل کی اجازت نہیں ہے۔ جو بھی نمبر تبدیل کریگا اسی وقت ریموو کر دیا جائے گا۔
- ۲۔ نمبر تبدیلی کی وجہ سے **ویموو میمبر** کو دوبارہ ایڈ ہونے کیلئے دوبارہ فیس دینا ہوگی۔
- ۳۔ غلطی سے لیفٹ کرنے والا **میمبر** کو بھی دوبارہ ایڈ ہونے کیلئے دوبارہ فیس دینا ہوگی۔
- ۴۔ کوئی ایڈشل ڈیمانڈ پوری نہیں کی جائے گی۔ ایڈمن پینل جو مواد بتا چکا ہے، وہی مواد گروپ میں ملے گا
- ۵۔ جن ممبران کو **وائس فانی** یا **موبائل ڈیٹا** آف رکھنے پر گروپ کی پوسٹنگ نہیں ملتی۔ ایسے ممبران اپنا **وائس فانی** یا **موبائل ڈیٹا** آن رکھیں تاکہ آپکی پوسٹ مس نہ ہو۔ کیونکہ ایڈمن پینل بتایا گیا تمام مواد روزانہ کی بنیاد پر بھیجتا ہے۔
- ۶۔ **ایڈمنز** کے وائس ایپ نمبر پر رابطہ کرنے والا بندہ ہی گروپ میں فیس ادا کرنے کے بعد ایڈ ہو سکتا ہے
- ۷۔ فیس ادائیگی کے بعد **24** گھنٹے کے اندر آپکو ایڈ کر دیا جائے گا، لہذا ایڈمن کو زیادہ تنگ نہ کریں۔
- ۸۔ جس تاریخ کو آپ فیس ادا کریں گے۔ اگلے ماہ کی فیس بھی اسی تاریخ کو جمع کروانا ہوگی۔
- ۹۔ گروپ میں ایڈ ہونے سے پہلے گروپ کے قوانین اور گروپ کے بھیجے جانے والے مواد کی تفصیل لازمی پڑھیں
- ۱۰۔ گروپس میں بھیجا گیا مواد مختلف انٹرنیٹ ویب سائٹس سے لیا جاتا ہے، اسکے سہمی یا غلط ہونے پر وائس ایپ گروپ سوشل میڈیا پاکستان کوئی ذمہ داری قبول نہیں کریگا۔

نوٹ

- ۱۔ ایزی لوڈ، موبائل لوڈ بھیجنے والا بندہ گروپ میں ایڈ نہیں کیا جائے گا اور نہ اسکا بھیجا ایزی لوڈ، موبائل لوڈ واپس کیا جائے گا
- ۲۔ لہذا دھیان سے جب بھی بھیجیں، جازکیش یا ایزی پیسہ مینٹ بھیجیں۔ بعد میں اعتراض قبول نہیں کیا جائے گا
- ۳۔ جس ایڈمن کو فیس ادا کریں، اسی ایڈمن کو وائس ایپ پر میسج کریں۔ تاکہ وہ آپکی ٹرانزیکشن دیکھ کر آپکو جلدی ایڈ کر سکے۔
- ۴۔ ایزی پیسہ بھیجنے والے ممبران دکاندار سے **TRX ID** نمبر لازمی لیں، **TRX ID** نمبر نہ بتانے کی صورت میں آپکو ایڈ نہیں کیا جائے گا
- ۵۔ جازکیش بھیجنے والے ممبران دکاندار سے **TID** نمبر لازمی لیں، **TID** نمبر نہ بتانے کی صورت میں آپکو ایڈ نہیں کیا جائے گا
- ۶۔ **TRX ID** یا **TID** کو ٹرانزیکشن نمبر کہا جاتا ہے، جس کا آپ کے پاس ہونا لازم ہے۔
- ۷۔ آپ ایک سے زیادہ ماہ کی فیس اک ساتھ جمع بھی کر دے سکتے ہیں، کیونکہ دکاندار **100** روپے سے کم مینٹ نہیں سینڈ کرتے
- ۸۔ سوشل میڈیا پاکستان نام سے گروپ بنانے والا، سوشل میڈیا پاکستان گروپ کی پوسٹنگ سے اپنا گروپ پیسے لے کر چلانے والا، گروپ کی پوسٹ کا پی کر کے ایڈ یٹنگ کر کے اپنے نام سے بھیجنے والا میمبر، کسی پیڈ گروپ کا ایڈمن یا گروپ روٹر پر عمل نہ کرنے والا میمبر بھی بغیر کسی وارننگ کے ریموو کیا جائے گا ایڈ اسکی آئی ہوئی فیس بھی واپس نہیں کی جائے گی۔

سوشل میڈیا پاکستان

اگر آپ سوشل میڈیا پاکستان میں ایڈ ہونا اور مندرجہ ذیل مواد حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں

- ۱۔ تمام پاکستانی اخبارات
 - ۲۔ انٹرنیشنل اخبارات
 - ۳۔ انٹرنیشنل میگزین اور سنڈے میگزین
 - ۴۔ نوکریوں کے اشتہارات
 - ۵۔ اخباراتی کالمز اینڈ ٹینڈرز
 - ۶۔ سکول، کالج اینڈ یونیورسٹیز ایڈمیشن انفارمیشن
 - ۷۔ ویب سیریز فلمیں، ڈرامے
 - ۸۔ انکس فلمیں
 - ۹۔ انڈین ڈرامے، شووز اینڈ فلمیں
 - ۱۰۔ ڈبلیو ڈبلیو ای ریسلنگ
 - ۱۱۔ حقیقت ٹی وی ویڈیوز
 - ۱۲۔ پاکستانی ڈرامے، ٹاک اینڈ گیم شووز
 - ۱۳۔ PDF کتابیں اور ٹاؤلز
 - ۱۴۔ مہندی، ہیر اینڈ حجاب اشاکل
 - ۱۵۔ سلائی، کوکنگ، ہیلتھ اینڈ بیوٹی ٹپس
 - ۱۶۔ کارٹونز اینڈ کارٹونز کہانیاں
 - ۱۷۔ اسپورٹس ویڈیوز
 - ۱۸۔ سبق آموز، معلوماتی اور دلچسپ ویڈیوز
 - ۱۹۔ نیوز ہیڈ لائنز : صبح 6، صبح 8، صبح 10، دوپہر 12، سہ پہر 3، شام 6، رات 9، اور رات 12 بجے کی ملیں گی۔
 - ۲۰۔ صرف نیوز پیپر حاصل کرنے والے افراد اسٹیل فیس ادا کر کے نیوز پیپر گروپ جوائن کر سکتے ہیں۔
- ابھی گروپ کی فیس 100 روپے ماہانہ ادا کریں اور سوشل میڈیا پاکستان کا حصہ بنیں۔**

فیس جمع کروانے کا طریقہ

جاز ای ٹرانزیکشن کرنے کیلئے سب سے پہلے اپنے جاز کیش اکاؤنٹ سے #10*786 ڈائل کریں

اور اسکے بعد جب آپ سے TILL ID پوچھا جائے تو یہ TILL آئی ڈی 00197661

لکھ کر OK کریں۔ اور پھر گروپ کی فیس لکھ کر OK کریں اور پھر اپنا پن کوڈ لکھ کر OK کریں

اور 8558 سے آنے والا پیغام ایڈمن ظہور احمد کو نیچے دیئے گئے اسکے نمبر پر وائس ایپ کریں

تاکہ وہ آپکو وائس ایپ گروپ سوشل میڈیا پاکستان میں ایڈ کر سکے۔

مزید معلومات کیلئے رابطہ نمبرز

محمد ظہور احمد محمد خالق حسن محمد شریف خان

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