

+ THE WOMEN ISSUE PORTRAITS OF POWER

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# IRAN AFTER THE IMAM

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TRUMP AS WAR PRESIDENT

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## OPEN MAIL

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LETTER OF THE WEEK

The career of former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan illustrates how personal myth and national politics can intersect uneasily ('Pakistan's Prisoner', by MJ Akbar, March 9, 2026). Educated at Oxford and celebrated for leading Pakistan to cricket World Cup glory, Khan cultivated an image of rectitude that set him apart from a transactional elite. His refusal to mimic drawing-room cynicism won him admirers, yet it sharpened opposition in a system where power is diffused across parties, courts and the military establishment. Philanthropy through the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital reinforced his claim to moral purpose, but governance demands negotiation as much as sincerity. Pakistan's politics rarely accommodates solitary crusades and its army never tolerates those who oppose it. This resulted in Khan's conviction for state gift fraud, which in itself indicates his enemies couldn't find more substantial charges against him. His journey proves that conviction and charisma can mobilise crowds, though sustaining authority requires institutional alignment, pragmatism, patience and an ability to convert symbolism into durable administrative consensus.

K Chidanand Kumar



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**REFORMS NEEDED**

The portrait of Imran Khan in this article is absorbing but there is a larger and more important issue that must be raised ('Pakistan's Prisoner,' by MJ Akbar, March 9, 2026). Pakistan's recurring crisis is less about one man and more about a system where the army holds the real levers of power. Civilian leaders, however gifted and capable, remain hostage to this arrangement, and are punished if they stand up to the military. This is a continuous vicious cycle, and Imran Khan is only the latest example of it. The solution lies not in finding the right messiah but in building durable institutions — an independent judiciary, a free press, and genuine civilian oversight of the military. Pakistan's dependence on the International Monetary Fund and political instability are symptoms of the same structural malaise. Regional stability, including India's own

security interests, would benefit from a genuinely democratic Pakistan. That should matter to observers beyond its borders.

A Mylssami

**BATTING FOR IMRAN**

Imran Khan is currently unjustly imprisoned ('Pakistan's Prisoner,' by MJ Akbar, March 9, 2026). Khan is not only a well-meaning and popular politician who did his best, but he was also a decorated cricketer who won the World Cup for Pakistan in 1992. His time on the field commands such respect that a large part of the international cricketing community has come together on his behalf. Fourteen former cricketers from five countries, including Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev from India, and Australian Greg Chappell have made a joint plea to the Pakistani government to treat Khan fairly in jail. Now, all Pakistani cricketers

should come together with the people of Pakistan and put pressure on the government to release him.

CK Subramaniam

**THE AI FUTURE**

The question is not whether India can lead the AI revolution but whether business leaders and the government are able to transform India's AI ambitions and demographic dividend into economic strength ('Modi Aims High,' March 2, 2026). More than 50 per cent of the workforce with access to AI use it daily. As India's young workforce is adaptable and learns fast, there is an immense opportunity waiting to be unlocked. While the majority of organisations realise that most jobs will be automated in the near future, they have not redesigned their roles around AI capabilities. This must be rectified.

Bal Govind