

This E-Bulletin focuses on major developments in Pakistan on weekly basis and brings them to the notice of strategic analysts and policy makers in India.

EDITORIAL

Pakistan's political drama continued with Nawaz Sharif's road show which was a show of popularity and strength of the outgoing Prime Minister. However, the difference of opinion between various senior leaders over the Panama care, Nawaz's road show and nomination for the NA 120 seat continues to divide the PML-N, though the division is manageable at the moment. This week also witnessed suicide attack in Quetta in Balochistan that killed 8 soldiers. While the Taliban launched a new magazine to attract female jihadists to its fold; the Jamaat ud Dawa announced a new political party, the Milli Muslim league. This weekly bulletin focuses on the reason behind the formation of Milli Muslim League and its future in the turbulent politics of Pakistan.

COMMENTARY

JuD/LeT Mutating Into 'Milli Muslim League': Mainstreaming or Appeasement?

*Ashok K Behuria**

On August 7, 2017, some of the office bearers of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) called for a Press conference at the Press Club of Islamabad and announced the formation of yet another 'Muslim League' of Pakistan called Milli Muslim League (MML), roughly translated as National Muslim League. It is yet another variation of Jinnah's 'Muslim League', which fought for and secured partition of British India and creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947. There are, at least, a dozen, if not more, factions of Muslim league in Pakistan today.

Pakistan Muslim League led by Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) is the most prominent among them. MML is yet another 'Muslim League' added to the list.

MML's formation was widely reported in the Indian media with a sense of concern about a militant outfit seeking to enter into mainstream politics in Pakistan. In Pakistan, however, it did not receive as much attention. Even the Urdu media chose to ignore it. The English media carried some comments on the mainstreaming of JuD and there were hints that the hidden hands of the establishment might have facilitated its formation.

The Objectives

The leaders of MML informed the media that they had approached the election commission with a flag, and manifesto to be registered as a political party. The party also declared that it had elected its executive body which will be headed by, Saifullah Khalid, a long time JUD office bearer.

The party has already floated its website (<http://millimuslimleague.org/>), facebook page ([facebook/mmlofficial1](https://www.facebook.com/mmlofficial1)) and twitter handle (@mmlofficial1). According to the information provided on its website, apart from Khalid who is its President, other office bearers of the party have been named as well—Fayyaz Ahmad as general secretary, Tabish Qayyum as information secretary (read spokesperson), Muzammil Iqbal Hashimi as vice president, Faisal Nadeem Sheikh as publications secretary, Muhammad Ehsan as finance secretary and Muhammad Harris as joint secretary,

A video (15 minutes 31 seconds) circulated in the website and also in the youtube shows Fayyaz and Khalid announcing the formation of MML and outlining its

ideals. The main aim of MML, it was mentioned, was to “to make Pakistan a truly Islamic Welfare State (*haqiqi maene mein ek Islami aur falahi mulk banaya jaye*), as was envisioned by our forefathers” and make an endeavour to implement Jinnah’s vision in Pakistan.

MML sets itself apart from other groups in the political arena as a party, which will “battle for defence and protection of Pakistan”. It will field “well-qualified and accomplished leadership on the basis of merit not wealth” (*daulat nahin abliyat*) and “unite Muslims once again shunning ethnic and linguistic divisions” and uphold the “ideology of Pakistan” (*nazriya Pakistan*). It keeps its focus on Kashmir and advocates self-determination for Kashmiris as per UN Resolutions and guarantees minorities rights and empowerment of women. Its website says the party “will play a vital role in empowering our women and ensure that they are given due protection and honour”.

Leap into the By-Election

Soon after announcing its political intent, the new party, yet to be registered with the Election commission, came out with its plans in the immediate future. It has decided to support Qari Muhammad Yaqoob Sheikh, an independent candidate, pledged to the ideals of JuD, in the by election to fill up the constituency NA 120 (Lahore III), which had fallen vacant following the top court’s disqualification of Nawaz Sharif, then prime minister, for the National Assembly membership, because he was not *sadiq and ameen*.

Yaqoob Sheikh is pitted against Nawaz Sharif’s wife Begum Kulsoom Nawaz of the PML-N, Dr. Yasmin Rashid of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI), Faisal Mir of Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) and advocate. Zaheer Gujjar of PML-Q, among others, including candidates from Jamat-i-Islami (JI).

MML has launched its election campaign with all earnestness— the emphasis, quite expectedly, is on Islam, and the posters urge voters to vote for the MML-supported candidate because it champions the cause of Islam, and Pakistan has to be based on ‘kalima tayyiba’ of the ‘word of purity’ enjoined by the basic principles of Islam as envisioned by Jinnah and Iqbal.

Analysts say that the constituency has a fairly large number of Kashmir-origin voters who usually vote for

PML-N. But this time JuD may reap a good harvest from this cross section of voters because of its overt sympathy for the Kashmir cause.

However, MML’s ambition extends beyond NA120 and it wants to project itself as the most reliable political alternative to all the existing political parties.

Mainstreaming?

There was a time in the late 1980s, when JuD’s earlier incarnation, Markaz-ul-Dawat-ul-Irshad, had developed differences with its co-ahle-hadis brethren and shunned the company of Jamiat-ul-Ahle Hadis Pakistan over the issue of participation in electoral politics. But in recent years, it has expressed its inclination to join politics.

This is not the first time that JuD has made a break with the past. It had played a leading role in the formation of a coalition of conservative forces towards the end of the year 2011, around the time of the Salala attack by US air force leading to the death of 24 Pakistani soldiers. Maulana Shami ul Haq led the council, but JuD’s Hafiz Saeed stole the limelight on the stage whenever DPC organised any event. DPC is, however, almost defunct by now, even if there were talks of reviving it in recent months.

The formation of MML by JuD thus signals its inclination to take up a more prominent role in politics as an independent group. Since Hafiz Saeed is under house arrest he was not to be seen on the dais. It could also be a ploy to keep him at a distance to begin with, and rope him in later upon his release. The party hopes to bank on its Islamic credentials, its pro-Kashmir agenda and its welfare activities throughout Pakistan, courtesy its offshoot and charity wing, Falah-i-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF).

The foundation (FIF) is running 35 different operations across Pakistan, which includes dispensaries, disaster relief units, ambulance services, regular health camps, food supply, coffin carriers, fire tenders, first aid, water projects, blood banks, vaccination programmes, pathological laboratories, distribution of sacrificial meat, clothes, blankets and beddings, prisoners programme, technical courses and rescue and training workshops. There are 176 dispensaries and 66,890 registered blood donors. It has conducted 3,621 different types of rescue operations.

It has a fleet of 283 ambulances that operate in 242 cities. It has a special focus on Tharparkar district which has a substantial Hindu population. It has so far bored 1,116 wells and installed 517 hand and electronic pumps. It claims to have supplied ration to more than 65,000 families in Tharparkar and distributed 168,451 packets among people containing clothes and beddings.

In a country afflicted with poverty and mal-governance charity outfits like FIF manage to win widespread public sympathy, despite the fact that they have congenial relationship with notorious and tainted militant groups like Jamat-ud-Dawa and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Even FIF has been declared a terrorist group by the US. However, it enjoys popular support and the Pakistani state has chosen to let it function despite American and Indian condemnation of the group and its patrons. The military continues to maintain its deniable linkages with such groups, often termed as assets by the military leadership, unaffected by international censure.

Not long ago the Sunni sectarian outfit, Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), came out with its charity organisation, in addition to the labour union it is running for years. There are many other charity organisations associated with militant groups like Sipah-e-Sahaba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen etc.

Appeasement?

A weak state unable to deliver public goods may ultimately empower such groups in such a manner that they might, through their hold over the people, bring about a change in society radical and violent enough to subvert democracy in Pakistan. The omissions and commissions of the security managers, who still hope to manage the jihadi constituency through their stick-and-carrot policy, may in the long run find itself besieged by monsters they create and hope to keep under control, for use at will.

The move to politically mainstream JuD has received mixed reactions from the strategic analysts from Pakistan. While some would call it a smart policy designed to deradicalize the outfit by subjecting it to the vicissitudes of electoral politics, others would argue that without any explicit commitment from the leadership of such highly ideological groups to shun violence, their participation in electoral politics may, in fact, endanger the process of democracy itself. It is yet

another instance of appeasing the so called “good militants” by the Pakistani. It may also be a clever move by the military to muddy the political waters by inserting such ‘unexpected’ elements into the fray, which might further weaken the hold of civilians over the state apparatus.

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

ECONOMY

JIT spent 97.14% of budget sanctioned for Panama probe

The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) had spent 97.14 percent of the budget provided for the investigations, but legal experts believe that the actual expenses during the course of investigation were much higher than this figure. The JIT had debited a total amount of Rs 19,428,373 from an account dedicated by the federal government to meet its expenses. However, the Supreme Court Registrar and international firms hired by the JIT to assist in its investigation are reluctant to make public the details of the amount received or spent. Avoiding information sharing regarding financial transactions made by the JIT to international firms is creating serious doubts on the transparency of this high-profile team and its findings.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/11-Aug-17/jit-spent-9714-of-budget-sanctioned-for-panama-probe>

Deals inked for export of \$325m worth of goods to China

Pakistan and China on Thursday signed over three-dozen trade pacts for exporting \$325 million worth of goods to Beijing, aimed at addressing private sector’s concerns about adverse implications for their businesses of government-to-government trade deals. State Bank of Pakistan’s (SBP) data shows exports to China dropped 14% in fiscal year 2016-17 and reached \$1.62 billion, despite China being Pakistan’s second-largest export destination. Overall exports of the country have also decreased after the current government came to power

in 2013, there is a cumulative reduction by one-fourth which now stands at \$20.9 billion. The TDAP secretary said the new initiative would promote Pakistani products in Chinese markets through a more focused approach. The \$325 million trade deals with China are equivalent to one-fourth of Pakistan's exports to China in 2016-17.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1478565/deals-inked-export-325m-worth-goods-china/>

Bank of China to open branch in Gwadar soon

The Bank of China, along with other national and international banks, plans to open a branch in Gwadar, said Gwadar Port Authority Chairman Dostain Khan Jamaldini in a meeting with the president of the Summit Bank, Zaheer Esmail. Mr Jamaldini claimed that with the Gwadar Deep Seaport becoming operational, several of the country's commercial banks were interested in opening branches in the port city and the Bank of China would start doing business from Gwadar shortly by setting up a branch in the city.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350894/bank-of-china-to-open-branch-in-gwadar-soon>

China invited to set up mid-country oil refinery

Pakistan has offered China to invest in setting up a mid-country deep-conversion refinery near Lahore and laying a gas pipeline from Karachi to Lahore for the transmission of imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) to consumers in Punjab, an official says. The offer was made during the visit of a Chinese delegation, headed by Nur Bekri, Administrator of National Energy Administration in July this year. During a meeting, the Pakistani side requested China to set up oil and gas subgroup under the Energy Working Group for facilitating production and supply projects.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1477002/china-invited-set-mid-country-oil-refinery/>

POLITICS

PM Abbasi hints at scrapping Article 62(1)(f) with help of political parties

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said that Article 62(1) (f) of the Constitution may be scrapped with the consultation of all parties. Article 62(1)(f), sets the precondition for the head of government to be “*sadiq and ameen*” (truthful and honest), had provided the grounds of the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif, Abbasi's predecessor, from holding public office in the July 28 judgement on the Panama Papers case handed down by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. While talking to *Geo News* on Tuesday, the prime minister hinted that his government would take the initiative of removing Article 62 (1)(f), which has been criticised heavily following the verdict, by contacting all political parties and politicians of all hues.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350368/pm-abbasi-hints-at-scrapping-article-621f-with-help-of-political-parties>

GT Road rally: ‘Only the people should kick out those they vote into power,’ Nawaz says in Jhelum

Ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's procession entered its second day on the streets, with the PML-N leader resuming a long road trip back to his hometown, Lahore, via the Grand Trunk (GT) Road on Thursday after an overnight stay in Rawalpindi. Diverging briefly from his line of thought to talk about his opponents, their attempts to thwart his government, and the circumstance surrounding his ouster, Sharif asked the crowd: “Is there any law to tackle dictators in this country? They [the dictators] break the Constitution and the law and then the judges give them legitimacy. The judges tell them ‘you did well by sending Nawaz Sharif home’,” he alleged.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350757/day-2-of-nawazs-homecoming-rally-journey-to-lahore-resumes-from-rawalpindi>

Reciprocate peace moves, Pakistani foreign minister urges Delhi, Kabul

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, said that Pakistan always wanted to have good relations with its neighbours, especially India and Afghanistan, but both countries were not giving any positive response to Pakistan's initiatives for durable peace in the region. The newly-appointed foreign minister, in his maiden press conference at the PML-N House here, made it clear that Pakistan's desire for peace and good relations with neighbours should not be construed as its weakness. "It's high time for both India and Afghanistan to come forward as good neighbours and give positive response to Pakistan's peace initiatives and end the blame game," he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350058/reciprocate-peace-moves-pakistani-foreign-minister-urges-delhi-kabul>

SECURITY

Jamaatud Dawa enters political arena, launches Milli Muslim League party

Banned outfit Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) has sought to enter the political sphere by launching the Milli Muslim League — a new political party on Monday. Saifullah Khalid, a religious scholar and longtime official of the group, is president of the newly-formed Milli Muslim League party. He told reporters in Islamabad that his party will work to make Pakistan "a real Islamic and welfare state" and that it is ready to cooperate with like-minded parties.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350202>

Pakistani Taliban starts magazine for would-be female jihadists

The Pakistani Taliban has published the first edition of a magazine aimed at convincing women to join them and practice jihad. The inaugural front cover of Sunnat-i-Khaura — which translates as "The Way of Khaura" and refers to a 7th-century female Muslim warrior — shows a woman veiled from head to toe. The 45-page magazine attempts to depict support from a section of society traditionally despised by the militant group. As well as an advice column for would-be female jihadists, the magazine contains an interview with the wife of Fazlullah Khorasani, the head of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). She is not named in the interview, in which she talks about marrying Khorasani at 14.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/08/pakistani-taliban-starts-magazine-for-would-be-female-jihadists>

8 soldiers among 15 martyred in Quetta blast

At least 15 people, among them eight soldiers, were martyred and 40 others wounded when a suicide bomber targeted a military truck near the Pishin bus stop on Saturday night, officials said. Around 25-30 kilograms of explosives were used in the suicide attack. Many vehicles, apart from the army truck, caught fire after the explosion, which was so loud that it was heard all across the city. Windowpanes of nearby buildings were smashed by the impact of the blast. Officials feared the death toll may climb, as eight of the wounded were in critical condition.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351289/8-soldiers-among-15-martyred-in-quetta-blast>

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