

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

Once again the fall out of Supreme Court verdict that dismissed Nawaz Sharif before he could complete his term hogged the headlines in Pakistan. In fact Sharif's dismissal overshadowed the news of Lahore blast where 21 people were killed. As accountability is becoming increasingly vogue politically in Pakistan the controversial Sindh Accountability Act 2017 was passed with a majority vote.

## COMMENTARY

### From Rad-ul Fasad to Rad-ul Sharif: Military does it again

*Yaqoob ul Hassan\**

Nawaz Sharif's ouster by the five member bench of Pakistan Supreme Court that was hearing the Panama case has dashed the hope of Sharif completing his third term in the office – twice he has been removed before he could complete his full term. This decision has polarised public opinion in Pakistan. Mostly the opposition and particularly the supporters of the PTI are overjoyed by this decision. The numerous sittings could not dislodge Sharif and the Panama paper finally pinned the Sharifs and ousted him from power. The opposition believe that Nawaz Sharif's disqualification proved the rule of law triumphed. And they also see this as the first step in ensuring accountability and rule of law which are essential part of democratic norm which makes elected leaders accountable to the electors. But the critics describe Sharif's removal as judicial coup that has the blessings of the establishment. Ironically

Nawaz's disqualification is not based on the report submitted by the Joint investigation Team (JIT) which has asked for further investigation into Sharif family's financial trail. Rather, Pakistan's Supreme Court found Sharif guilty under Article 62 and 63 and disqualified him from holding the office for not being "honest". These articles were introduced during former military ruler General Zia ul Haq's regime which requires a member parliament to be Ameen (honest) and Sadiq (morally upright). It is likely that this verdict may help PML-N in the next election which would project Sharif as a political martyr who has fallen victim to a conspiracy.

### Reasons Why Nawaz Sharif was ousted

Nawaz Sharif's disqualification is not something that happened overnight. Attempt to remove Sharif was brewing for some time. It actually started when Sharif began his third stint as the Prime Minister of Pakistan. One would have expected that Nawaz might have acquired political acumen and learnt how to deal with powerful military establishment during his days in exile. After election, a triumphant Nawaz thought differently. He annoyed the establishment by filing a treason case against the former military ruler Pervez Musharraf who had removed him in a coup in 1999, showed his keenness to improve relations with India and Afghanistan, and publicly supported Hamid Mir who accused ISI of trying to eliminate him by visiting him in the hospital and also not towing the military's line in the Dawn leak case. Military used its protégé, Imran Khan to orchestrate a protest against him in Islamabad with the objective of cornering Sharif to tow the military line of thinking in many of the issues that Sharif had differed. Sharif also compromised and allowed Musharraf to travel abroad ostensibly to meet his ailing mother and tried to take

less confrontational path and tried to tow the Army line by allowing military operation in the tribal area after Peshawar school tragedy and also raised the Kashmir issue in the UN and declared Burhan Wani as a martyr to win back establishment's trust. However, Panama leak emerged as a major instrument in the hand of the Army and a judiciary willing to do its bait. Interestingly, the media wing of the armed forces, ISPR, issued a statement saying that Army is keenly watching the Panama case proceedings.

Historically in Pakistan Judiciary has sanctified military rules and justified removal of the civilian governments under 'doctrine of necessity'. Therefore, verdict of the judiciary does not come as a surprise. The other fact is that two of six members of JIT which produced the evidence spread over 256 pages were from the ISI and the Military Intelligence. Some homework was already done even before the formation of JIT. Otherwise it would not have been possible to amass that much of evidence within 60 days only, that too related to offshore companies and properties outside Pakistan.

Although army wasn't happy with Nawaz Sharif's daughter Mariam Nawaz being allowed to sit in every important meetings between the army and the civilians, it considers Mariam as the sole culprit for the dawn leaks scandal. She was almost a de-facto spokesperson of the government and used social media effectively to counter the opposition. Moreover, the PML-N was all set to [perform well in the next election.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nominated Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as the prime minister and he was elected by the parliament with 221 votes. Earlier it was believed that he would be an interim prime minister for 45 days and then replaced by Shahbaz Sharif who would be contesting in the seat vacated by Nawaz Sharif. But now it is reported in the media that Abbasi will remain prime ministership till the next general elections in early 2018. This is because PML-N does not want to lose Punjab which is a strong bastion of the Sharif's and a determining factor in the next election. Shahbaz Sharif who is the Chief Minister of Punjab have hold the party in a good stead in the home bastion. There are other reports that the Sharif family could not reach a consensus on who will succeed him in Punjab.

Abbasi is known for his old military links. Like Sharif, he is known as a Zia's boy. With his elevation as a prime

minister one could see a less confrontational approach towards army. His main focus would be 2018 elections. For that he has to deliver what PMLN promised during last election campaign. Their main focus would be on delivering electricity and complete electricity projects to resolve a crippling energy crisis before the next elections. He would prefer cordial relations with army and is likely to tow the Army line in foreign policy. Army may also use this time to go against the sectarian elements in Punjab where they were denied free hand by Sharif family.

### **Conclusion:**

The Pakistan army has ruled the country most of its time and therefore establishing civilian supremacy over the military would remain a distant dream. Given the fact that military is powerful and can intimidate various institutions to tow its line democracy will remain fragile. Moreover, the political parties' eager to assume power is likely to remain a hand maiden of the military. With the judiciary willing to oblige the powerful establishment, it is likely Zia era provisions in the constitution would become handy. At the end of it, it is advantage Army where it remains the real ruler without the responsibility of governance.

- \* Yaqoob ul Hassan is a Researcher at IDSA and a member of Pakistan Project.

## **THE WEEK AT A GLANCE**

### **ECONOMY**

#### **With govt fixated on Panamagate, state business suffers**

The ongoing political turmoil has virtually halted the 'business of the state' on key foreign policy and national security issues, according to officials and observers. At a time when all attention is focused on the apex court and whether it will disqualify Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for 'concealing his assets', Pakistan has to take crucial foreign policy decisions in the wake of the tough stance the Donald Trump administration is considering against Islamabad in its policy review for South Asia. Indications are that Pakistan may have to deal with increased pressure from the United States to do more against groups such as Afghan Taliban and Haqqani

Network. Washington has already withheld \$50 million military reimbursements after the US defence secretary refused to certify that Pakistan was taking enough measures against militant groups, including Haqqani Network, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1464937/govt-fixated-panamagate-state-business-suffers/>

### **Sindh government passes controversial bill amid protest**

Amid strong protests by the opposition parties, the provincial assembly passed on Wednesday the controversial Sindh Accountability Act 2017 with a majority vote. The joint opposition parties in the assembly protested and said they would challenge it in the court as no provincial assembly can pass a law after repealing the federal law. The Sindh Accountability Act 2017 will apply to all officeholders who are performing their functions in connection with affairs of the government funds in Sindh and include the transaction and utilisation of government money. Under the new law, Sindh Accountability Agency (SAA) will be set-up, which will be headed by a chairperson.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1467248/sindh-govt-passes-controversial-bill-amid-protest/>

### **Govt to provide guarantees for LNG pipeline financing**

As the country's gas reserves deplete, the federal government has agreed to provide guarantees for raising Rs175 billion for building a third liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline for the supply of imported gas to Punjab, which has been most affected by the declining reserves. "Guarantees will be provided on the basis of strength of the gas infrastructure development cess (GIDC) funds," said Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources. Abbasi revealed that so far Rs258.8 billion had been collected in GIDC from various stakeholders including the receipt of Rs122 billion after the passage of GIDC Act in parliament in 2014.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1468248/govt-provide-guarantees-lng-pipeline-financing/>

## **POLITICS**

### **Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Is Topped by Corruption Case**

Nawaz Sharif, the tycoon and party leader who helped define a turbulent era of Pakistani politics, stepped down as prime minister after the Supreme Court ruled that corruption allegations had disqualified him. Coming with less than a year to go in his term, his ouster adds to a grim and long list of civilian governments cut short in Pakistan including two of his own previous terms as prime minister. And it will further roil the country's tumultuous political balance, as his rivals vie to exploit his fall. Announced by the five-member Supreme Court, the verdict on Friday caps more than a year of high political drama, breathless court proceedings and a piercing investigation into the finances of the family. The fragile democratic system in this nuclear-armed nation of almost 200 million people again appears to be on shaky ground. And Mr. Sharif's own political legacy stands further tarnished.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/28/world/asia/pakistan-prime-minister-nawaz-sharif-removed.html>

### **Shahbaz to succeed Nawaz as PM, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to take over in the interim**

PML-N leaders, in a parliamentary committee meeting headed by ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday, decided that Nawaz's younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, should take over as the party's leader in parliament. Additionally, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who was the petroleum minister, will take over as interim prime minister till the time Shahbaz is elected to parliament, and then to the prime minister's office. Shahbaz's ascension to the prime minister's office is considered to be a foregone conclusion, as the PML-N continues to hold a hefty majority in parliament and can independently vote him into office. He will also likely seek election to the National Assembly from Nawaz Sharif's constituency, which is a PML-N stronghold.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348391>

### **Interior Ministry puts Sharifs on Exit Control List**

Sources in the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)

confided in *Pakistan Today* that FIA's immigration head Wajid Zia (JIT's head), with the approval of Interior Ministry, has enlisted the name of Sharif family members on Exit Control List (ECL) on Friday. Following the Panama Leaks case verdict of Supreme Court of Pakistan, names of ex PM Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Hussain Nawaz, Hassan Nawaz, and Captain (ret'd) Muhammad Safdar were put on ECL. Until the accountability court decides their fate within the given six months, no one can leave the country. The source also said that, in all the high profile cases, NAB puts accused people in ECL regularly, adding it is a matter of routine.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/07/28/interior-ministry-put-sharifs-on-exit-control-list/>

## SECURITY

### 26 killed in blast near Lahore's Ferozepur Road

At least 26 people, including nine policemen, were killed while 58 others were injured in a bombing attack near the Arfa Karim IT Tower on Lahore's Ferozepur Road on Monday afternoon. Lahore's DIG Operations Dr Haider Ashraf said that the blast, which occurred at around 3:55pm, was a "suicide attack" and that "police were the target". *The Tebreek-i-Taliban Pakistan* (TTP) claimed responsibility, stating that a "suicide attacker" had used a motorcycle bomb to target police officials. Lahore has been targeted by terrorists in recent months.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347364/26-killed-in-blast-near-lahores-ferozepur-road>

### UN body asks Pakistan to criminalise enforced disappearances

The United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) has recommended Pakistani government to criminalise enforced disappearances in its concluding remarks on Pakistan's first ever review following the country's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The commission has asked the government to investigate all known cases of disappearances and extra judicial killings and penalise those responsible for these acts. It has held that the government should ensure that penalties are 'commensurate with the gravity of crimes'.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/28-Jul-17/un-body-asks-pakistan-to-criminalise-enforced-disappearances>

### National Action Plan must be implemented: PUC

To eliminate the menace of extremism and terrorism, the government has to ensure the implementation of the National Action Plan, said participants of a religious seminar. The '*Tabafuz Harman Al Sharifain Al-Aqsa Conference*' had been organised in Faisalabad by the Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Jamiat Ulema Ahl Hadis. The conference was attended by representatives of various religious and political organizations and ulema. The speakers emphasised the need to carry out a joint struggle against elements responsible for disrupting peace of Islamic countries. The speakers also urged the political leadership of the country to counter the allegations of US and Afghan leadership.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/28-Jul-17/national-action-plan-must-be-implemented-puc>

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