

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

EDITOR'S NOTE

Nawaz Sharif's return to Pakistan from London and his decision to appear before the Commission investigating into the alleged corruption mostly hogged the media limelight. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which is investigating into the Sharif family's assets, sought further clarification from the Lahore Development Authority in the matter concerning the assets belonging to his sons- Hasan and Hussain.

The profit made by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) amounted to Rs. 238 billion in the last fiscal year against Rs.229 billion in 2015-16. Its income on foreign currency assets registered an increase of almost 50 per cent.

Pakistan also confirmed the death of two Chinese nationals who were abducted by IS terrorists. Interestingly, the Army was concerned about the fact that the civilian government was not transferring terrorism cases to the military courts - whose establishment at one point was a major bone of contention between the government and the military.

COMMENTARY

Delimitation of Electoral Constituency in Pakistan

*Smruti S Pattanaik**

Pakistan government passed an amendment to the Delimitation of Constituencies Act, 1974 on November 16th after it was approved by the Cabinet on the 26th of October. The delimitation of constituencies for local bodies' election were earlier entrusted with the provincial

governments who could draw the administrative boundaries and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would then determine the electoral boundaries. However, the Supreme Court of Pakistan directed the government in April 2014 to devolve the power of delimitation to the Election Commission of Pakistan saying that delimitation is part of the electoral process and therefore, it has to be entrusted to the ECP. In the 18th Amendment, the ECP is authorized to conduct local bodies' election under article 140 of the Constitution. With the objective of the introducing this law, the government clearly mentions that it is to implement the 20th March 2014 direction of the Supreme Court to empower the ECP to carry out delimitation of constituencies of local government. The ECP website reads, "According to the Delimitation of Constituencies Act, 1974, the constituencies for elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies are to be delimited after every census. Therefore, delimitation has become a politically relevant issue keeping the recently published census and the upcoming 2018 elections in mind. Interestingly, some of the political parties, Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and the Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP) have rejected the census data saying that the population figure does not reflect the actual figure in rural Sindh and Karachi.

Delimitation of electoral constituencies, therefore, has become part of the ethnic politics and political contestation for power in Pakistan. There are many constituencies, which are asymmetrical in size as population figure varies from constituency to constituency. According to the ECP: "All constituencies are required to be delimited having regard to the distribution of population in geographically compact

areas, existing boundaries of administrative units, facilities of communication, public convenience and other cognate factors to ensure homogeneity in the creation of constituencies.” But since the last census was held in 1998, Pakistan population has grown to 207.8 million from 130 million in 1998. This demands a fresh delimitation.

In any democracy, delimitation of constituencies is a necessity especially in countries where the annual growth of population is more than 2 per cent and there is a tendency among the people to migrate to the urban areas to enjoy better access to various facilities. Therefore, delimitation is carried out at regular intervals to make the constituencies adequately representative. However, the recent census, which took place after the intervention of the Supreme Court, has released so far only provisional data. The socio-economic data are yet to be released; the provisional census data shows that the population of Punjab has reduced and it is likely to lose a few seats in the National Assembly.

Government plan to introduce the delimitation bill based on the sixth population census initially received a setback as the PPP was not willing to support the government in the Senate where PML-N lacks majority. The PPP demanded that prior to the introduction of the bill in the parliament, the government should seek the approval of Council of Common Interests (CCI), which the government initially rejected. However, it later convened the meeting of CCI to get the census approved giving official sanction to the census results. The political parties have now reached a consensus that there will be no increase in the overall strength of the National Assembly, and the seats will be redistributed among the provinces as per the census results. As per media reports, Punjab is likely to lose about nine electoral constituencies while Sindh may not gain any more seats. The net gainer would be Balochistan, which may get about three additional seats. Khyber Pakhtunkwa may get five more seats while Islamabad one more. The PPP-led government of Sindh as well as the MQM look at the census as a conspiracy to deny Sindh its legitimate share of electoral seats by deliberately underplaying the population of Sindh.

It appears that delimitation of constituencies may not be done in a hurry given the fact that the election is months away, while the exercise may take significantly

longer time (about five months) than what is required for the ECP to conduct the next elections. Some commentators in Pakistan see this as a delaying tactic of the government, which is not keen to hold the election so soon, fearing it may be defeated in the polls if it is held in time. However, according to the Election Act, fresh delimitation of constituencies is a constitutional responsibility following the population census and it has to be carried out to ensure better representation and fairer elections.

Be that as it may, the delimitation of constituency would remain an important task for the government as it needs to rationalize process of electoral representation. The last delimitation had happened in 2013 for the local bodies’ election. The 24th Amendment bill that deals with delimitation was passed by the lower house, the National Assembly, on the 16th of November and the upper house dominated by the PPP, has issues with the census results and the Bill may not have an easy run there.

The Bill authorises fresh delimitation of constituencies on the basis of officially published 6th Population and Housing Census 2017 results for the General Election 2018. One has to watch out how the ethnic politics would shape up once the detailed census is made public and how it will affect the delimitation-politics in Pakistan.

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

POLITICS

PML N rejects minus-Nawaz formula

The top PML-N leadership yesterday rejected ‘minus-Nawaz’ formula for the ruling party and warned they would not accept any unconstitutional step in the country. Speaking after a key meeting in London, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and incumbent Premier Shahid Khaqan Abbasi both rubbished rumours of any rift within the party. Nawaz Sharif said he would return to Pakistan this week to appear before an accountability court hearing three National Accountability Bureau (NAB) references against him and his children. Besides Nawaz, his sons Hassan Nawaz and

Hussain Nawaz, PM Abbasi, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar attended the meeting at Hasan's residence.

<http://nation.com.pk/31-Oct-2017/pml-n-rejects-minus-nawaz-formula>

Draft for delimitation of constituencies finalized by house leadership

The National Assembly's (NA) Speaker, Ayaz Sadiq, has announced that the draft of a constitutional amendment bill for the delimitation of constituencies has been agreed upon by parliamentary leaders in a meeting on Wednesday. In comments reported by *Radio Pakistan*, the Speaker stated that the number of seats in the NA will remain constant at 272. There would, however, be a change in light of the new population census report. "All agree that the seats should not be increased," the speaker said. "The number of seats for Punjab will decrease, K-P and Balochistan will see an increase, and an additional seat would be allocated to Islamabad," he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1546956/9-draft-delimitation-constituencies-finalised-house-leadership/>

NAB seeks Hassan, Hussain's assets details from LDA

National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Thursday asked Lahore Development Authority (LDA) to submit assets of Nawaz Sharif's sons Hassan Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz. NAB sought details of Hussain Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz's commercial and residential assets as well as identity card numbers of Nawaz Sharif's sons. NAB will also write a letter to other concerned departments if needed. The Bureau has already frozen the assets owned by Hassan and Hussain. An accountability court has already declared Hassan and Hussain as proclaimed offenders last month for not appearing before the accountability court over the corruption references filed against them.

<http://nation.com.pk/03-Nov-2017/nab-seeks-hassan-hussain-s-assets-details-from-lda>

Ousted PM gets VIP protocol on arrival in Islamabad

A day before his appearance in an accountability court, ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif arrived here on Thursday and got a much-needed 'relief' when the Islamabad High Court accepted his plea for clubbing together three corruption references filed against him by the National Accountability Bureau in connection with the Panama Papers case verdict. The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president was given VIP protocol on his arrival after almost a month-long stay in London. NAB could not serve on Mr Sharif at the airport the summons of his bailable arrest warrants issued by the accountability court for not appearing before it at a previous hearing.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1368093>

ECONOMY

Russia wants to lay gas pipeline from Iran to India, but via Gwadar

Russia, which controls and manages huge gas reserves in energy-rich Iran, plans to export gas to Pakistan and India by laying an offshore pipeline, ignoring pressure from the United States that has fiercely opposed the building of Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline for years. Moscow is looking to meet growing gas needs of Pakistan and India as an alternative because it fears it may lose energy markets in Europe following a long tussle with the United States and the European Union over the annexation of Ukrainian region of Crimea."Russia holds huge gas deposits in Iran and has offered Pakistan and India gas exports by laying an offshore pipeline that will pass through Gwadar Port," a senior government official said while talking to The Express Tribune.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1544763/2-russia-wants-lay-gas-pipeline-iran-india-via-gwadar/>

SBP profits rises to RS238bn

The profit of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) registered a modest year-on-year growth of four per cent in 2016-

17, according to the annual performance review issued on Tuesday. It amounted to Rs238 billion in the last fiscal year against Rs229bn in 2015-16. Its income on foreign currency assets registered an increase of almost 50pc. The central bank paid Rs227bn profit to the federal government. The SBP said the banking sector constitutes around 74pc of the country's financial sector with an asset base equivalent to almost 55pc of the country's GDP. It said lending to the federal government and commercial banks remained major sources of its profit followed by earnings on foreign exchange reserves.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1367540>

PAC grills energy officials about inefficiencies

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) warned the government to improve dilapidated electricity supply systems and governance structure of distribution companies that caused over Rs215-billion losses in just the last one year. In case the government is unable to improve the electricity transmission and distribution systems, the PAC may stop recovery of losses from consumers and make the amount part of the circular debt, warned PAC Chairman Syed Khurshid Shah.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1547427/2-pac-grills-energy-officials-inefficiencies/>

PC board decides to re-start PIA privatisation process

In a major policy shift, the Privatisation Commission (PC) board on Thursday decided to reinitiate the process of privatising Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and all power generation and distribution companies. The PC board also approved a Rs141.4-billion liabilities settlement plan of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) employees, National Bank of Pakistan and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) by giving away PSM land. It decided to invite fresh bids for hiring financial advisers to sell government shares in Mari Petroleum Limited.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1548344/2-pc-board-decides-re-start-pia-privatisation-process/>

SECURITY

Expectations should be logical, Pakistan tells US

Pakistan has told the United States that it was willing to work with them but the "expectations should be logical", The Nation has learnt. Senior officials at the foreign ministry who remain in contact with Washington said Islamabad wanted to work as an ally not as an "inferior partner". "We are trying to convince them that their expectations should not be influenced by India. Our [Pak-US] bilateral ties should not be dictated by India," one of the officials told The Nation. He added: "Of course the partners do have expectations from one another but the expectations should be logical . "This week, US Acting Secretary of State for South Asia and Central Asian Affairs Alice Wells said her country had specific expectations from Pakistan to "help create conditions" that will help "bring Taliban to the negotiating table."

<http://nation.com.pk/30-Oct-2017/expectations-should-be-logical-pakistan-tells-us>

Pakistan confirms death of two Chinese nationals, vows to nab perpetrators

The government has confirmed the death of two Chinese nationals who were abducted from Balochistan earlier this year. "The DNA reports have confirmed that the two persons killed in Balochistan in June 2017 were the same two Chinese nationals, who were kidnapped from Quetta in May 2017," the Foreign Office said in a statement on Monday. Lee Zing Yang, 24, and Meng Li Si, 26, were abducted from Jinnah Town of the city on May 24. The Islamic State terrorist group had claimed that it had killed the abductees.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1545249/1-pakistan-confirms-death-two-chinese-nationals-vows-nab-perpetrators/>

Pakistan's fight against terrorism has dismantled many terror groups: Maleeha Lodhi

Brushing aside misperceptions about Pakistan not doing enough to combat terrorism, Ambassador Maleeha

Lodhi has said Islamabad's firm commitment to wipe out the scourge has brought about the destruction of many terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda. "The decimation, for example, of al-Qaeda in our region is entirely due to Pakistan's efforts, of course in cooperation with other countries, but fundamentally, it has been Pakistan's effort," Lodhi, permanent representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, said in an exclusive interview with *Impactmania*, an online American magazine, which features people who make a cultural, social and economic impact. Responding to a question, she said Pakistan has lost tens of thousands of lives, of military and law-enforcement personnel and of civilians in the fight against terrorism. "This is such a hot-button issue and rightly so," the Pakistani envoy noted.

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/165496-pakistans-fight-against-terrorism-has-dismantled-many-terror-groups-maleeha-lodhi>

COAS concerned as cases dry up at military courts

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa has drawn the attention of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to the lack of terrorism-related cases being transferred to military courts. He has informed the PM that the government has not forwarded any cases to military courts since January this year. A source privy to the development told *Express News* that Gen Qamar has written a demi-official (DO) letter to explain the issue prior to it being referred officially.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1548394/1-coas-concerned-cases-dry-military-courts/>

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