

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

The release of provincial census data showed that Pakistan population has increased to 207.8 million. The increase of population would have several implications for Pakistan's politics and economy. However, the picture will be clearer once the data is made public early next year. Debate on Trump's new Afghan strategy continue to dominate the political space as the Chinese Special Envoy on Afghan Affairs, Ambassador Deng Xijun, arrived in Islamabad to discuss the Afghan strategy. Tightening the pressure on Pakistan further, the Trump administration has decided to put \$255m into escrow account that Pakistan can access only if it 'does more'.

COMMENTARY

The Census Day May Open a Pandora Box in Pakistan?

*Yaqoob ul Hassan and Mohammad Esa**

Finally after a gap of 19 years, Pakistan held a nationwide census in March 2017. It was made possible only after the Supreme Court intervened and put pressure on the federal government setting March deadline to start the process. The main reason of not holding census decennially was because over the years it had become politically contentious issue, causing repeated postponement. Last census was held in 1998. The army provided 200,000 personnel for security for the 70-day census campaign. As the Chief Commissioner of census explained, "with every civil enumerator will be a military officer to ensure that the enumerator can enter the

correct data without being intimidated by local political figures."

Provisional Data and Reactions of Political Parties

Some significant takeaway's from the census data are that Pakistan's population stands at 207.8 million with estimated growth rate of 2 percent; male population have outnumbered the female and there is a growing urbanisation as urban population has increased significantly. The results which were presented to the Council of Common Interest (CCI) last month shows that 30.5 million people reside in KP, 47.9 million in Sindh, 12.3 million in Baluchistan, 110 million in Punjab and 2 million in Islamabad. According to the data, 52 percent residents in Sindh are living in urban areas which surpassed the urban population in Lahore that stood at 36.4 percent. However, the overall population of Sindh and Punjab have reduced if one compares with the previous 2011 Housing census estimation. Interestingly, Baluchistan has experienced fastest average annual growth rate of 3.37 percent which could be due to migration from other provinces to take advantage of the opportunity that Chinese funded Gwadar port offered and. The Baluchistan High Court in March had directed not to include Afghan refugees while collecting census data in Baluchistan.

After the provisional results were declared, all the political parties except for the PML-N expressed their reservations on the preliminary results. PPP and MQM-P even threatened to stage protests against what they described as rigged data. PTI, JI and ANP also raised serious objections to the census data. Shibli Faraz, a PTI Senator said the census had been conducted in a

shabby and non-transparent manner. Qaumi Watan Party (QWT) chief and member of the National Assembly Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao rejected the census result. According to Sherpao population of the FATA stood at 10 million but the census data showed it to be 50,000. In short, the leaders of all the ethnic groups claimed that their numbers in the census have deliberately been reduced. However, the Chief Census Commissioner Asif Bajwa has turned down these objections raised by various political parties and claimed that the verification of each and every individual has been ensured.

When the enumeration started, all three provinces, except for Baluchistan, constituted special contact committees to ensure accuracy of data. Objections that the political parties raised has much to do the larger issue of provincial share in finances and delimitation of constituencies on the basis of population which may affect the share of seats each province has in the National Assembly. Province's share in the National Finance Commission (NFC) is awarded according to the population; larger the population, greater is the resource share in the NFC Award.

The Inter-ethnic rivalry in Sindh and Baluchistan:

Only detailed census would tell us about the ethnic and linguistic composition of the population which is expected to be declared next year. The final report would be submitted in April 2018, just couple of months prior to the next general elections. That means there would be no further delimitation or redrawing of the electoral constituencies before the 2018 elections since it will require the National Assembly to pass legislation creating new constituencies based on population. The census which clearly reflected population implosion would impact the whole of Pakistan. Two provinces Sindh and Baluchistan would be affected more than the other two provinces. The provincial government of the Sindh has to cope with the pressure of growing urbanisation with the already fixed financial share that it gets under NFC award. In case of Baluchistan, an increasing population will change the demography and political balance between Pashtuns and Baloch in the provincial assembly and add to the further alienation of Balochs.

As stated above, the overall population growth in Sindh remained stagnant despite massive influx of internal migrants from other provinces in the long inter-censal

period of 19 years. There is an apprehension among the Sindhi politicians that with presumably fudged numbers, Pakistani rulers have ensured that there would be no increase in the share of seat for Sindh in the National Assembly. The political fortunes of PPP and MQM which have their bases in Sindh will get affected with this census data. That is why both MQM and PPP had filed petition in the court to halt the census before the enumeration began in March this year. The urbanisation will help MQM- if all its factions get united under one banner- to garner the support of its urban based Mohajir vote bank. For PTI to make inroads into Karachi and other new urban areas will depend on whether the MQM's can manage reunification of all its faction. Similarly the share of urban and rural Sindh in the job quota system may contribute to conflict between the Sindhis and Mohajirs, The Mohajirs may demand reduction of the rural quota as the urban population has increased massively.

In Baluchistan, ethnic Baloch political leaders were not in favour of holding census. All the nationalist parties in Baluchistan opposed the enumeration due to the presence of huge Afghan refugees' population. Baloch nationalists often allege that many Afghan refugees have got fake Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) and would get enumerated as residents of this province. In 2015 alone more than 88,000 fake CNICs were blocked in Pashtun dominated areas of Baluchistan. Even in the Baloch dominated areas-Noushki, Chaghi, Bolan and Sibi- have seen the huge influx of Afghan refugees since the US led war in Afghanistan. Although, Pakistan has repatriated many Afghan refugees after the terrorist attack on the Army Public School, Peshawar, but most of the deportees were from Lahore and Islamabad and not from Baluchistan where more than 4 million Afghan refugees are residing. Therefore the central committee of BNP (M) issued a statement saying that holding census in such circumstances "tantamount to turning the Baloch population into minority in their own homeland".

Apart from Afghan refugees, the internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from tribal areas have further complicated the problem in Baluchistan. The Pashtun leaders have welcomed the census data for Baluchistan. Apprehensions of the Baloch nationalists that the Baloch population may turn into a minority appeared to have some substance. According to the 1998 census results, the Baloch accounted for almost 65 per cent of

the population, while Pashtuns accounted for 29 per cent. Since then much water has flown under the bridge. Many Baloch population have also migrated to Sindh. The house listing census conducted in 2011 showed a sharp increase in the Pashtun population in Baluchistan, and that created a stir. The other political problem for Baloch politicians apart from demographic change of the province would be the redrawing of constituencies, share of seats in provincial assembly with the possibility if increased share for the Pashtuns and allocation of funds that is purely based on population figure.

Therefore, this census will only contribute to the existing divisions between the Pashtun and the Baloch populations. The apprehensions of Baloch nationalists if not addressed will further exacerbate the precarious security situation in Baluchistan. That would definitely undermine Pakistan's dream of seeing a successful implementation of the CPEC. The other challenge for the Pakistani leadership would be to meet the challenges of the uncontrolled population. Recent records of terrorist related incidents showed that most of the incidents are happening in the urban areas.

Conclusion

Huge youth bulge and lack of employment opportunities will make it tough to control extremism in Pakistan. Additionally, the census data may exacerbate inter provincial conflict over resources and share of seats in the National assembly. Within the province it would contribute to inter-ethnic rivalry and the demand for better political representation. It is likely to open a Pandora box of conflicts in Pakistan.

* Dr Yaqoob ul Hasan and Dr Mohammad Esa are Members of Pakistan Project and Researchers at IDSA

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

ECONOMY

\$400m project faces two-year delay as dispute, complexities take over

In its recent review of Pakistan's portfolio, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has declared half of the total

projects worth \$3.4 billion either problematic or put on a 'watch list' due to implementation delays. The smart meters project is not among these problematic schemes. The ADB had approved the loan in November 2015 and, according to the recent review of the ADB-funded portfolio, there was no physical and financial progress in the project as of June 2017, said the sources. The entire amount of \$400 million remained undisbursed and not even a single contract was awarded till June 2017, they added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1493518/400m-project-faces-two-year-delay-dispute-complexities-take/>

Malaysia's Axiata to buy Pakistan telecom towers for \$940 million

Malaysian telecommunications group Axiata Group Bhd (AXIA.KL) has announced that it will buy communications towers in Pakistan for \$940 million in partnership with local conglomerate Dawood Hercules Corp Ltd (DAWH.KA). Axiata said its telecommunications infrastructure services unit, edotco Group Sdn Bhd, and Dawood Hercules will buy 13,000 towers from Pakistan Mobile Communications Ltd (PAKI.KA) using \$600 million raised via debt and the remainder via equity.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1494850/malaysias-axiata-buy-pakistan-telecom-towers-940-million/>

POLITICS

Trump's Afghan Policy poised to fail: PM Abbasi

Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi says US President Donald Trump's strategy for America's longest-running war in Afghanistan is poised to fail like the plans of his predecessors, reported Radio Pakistan. In an interview with New York Bloomberg News agency, the prime minister stressed the need for a political settlement in Afghanistan. He said that from day one we have been saying very clearly that the military strategy in Afghanistan has not worked and it will not work. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said we do not intend to allow anybody to fight Afghanistan's battle on Pakistan's soil and Islamabad doesn't harbour terrorists.

Pakistan is willing to work with all countries, including India for peace in the region.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/28-Aug-2017/trump-s-afghan-policy-poised-to-fail-pm-abbasi>

After putting off US envoy, Pakistan hosts top Chinese official

In a significant development, Pakistan and China joined hands in opposing the new US strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia, as the two countries contrary to Trump administration's reliance on military options called for a political solution to the long-running conflict. The development came on a day when Acting US Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan Alice Wells was supposed to be in the town. Her visit was postponed earlier at Islamabad's request. Instead, Chinese Special Envoy on Afghan Affairs Ambassador Deng Xijun arrived in the capital for crucial discussions with Pakistani authorities on the implications of Trump's Afghan strategy. Ambassador Xijun held talks with Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua and discussed regional and international efforts for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office. He also underlined the need for a politically-negotiated settlement through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, according to the Foreign Office.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1493592/putting-off-us-envoy-pakistan-hosts-top-chinese-official/>

Pakistan's population has ballooned to 207.8m, provisional census results show

Pakistan's population has surged to 207.77 million, having experienced a 57 per cent increase since the last census in 1998, provisional census data presented to the Council of Common Interest (CCI) shows. *It reveals acceleration in the population growth rate of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), even as growth in Punjab and Sindh has slowed compared to previous results.* Pakistan houses 106.45m males, 101.31m females and 10,418 transgender, the provisional data reveals. An increase in the urban-rural ratio has been observed in all administrative units except Islamabad, which nonetheless remains the second most urbanized unit of the country. Over 52pc of Sindh's residents live in

urban areas, which have surpassed the capital territory as the most urbanized territory of Pakistan. Close to 36.4pc of Pakistanis live in urban areas, the provisional results reveal. Balochistan, the least urbanized of Pakistan's provinces, has experienced the fastest average annual growth rate since 1998 of 3.37pc. Punjab's average annual growth rate remained the slowest at 2.13pc, slightly below the national average of 2.4pc. The provisional results exclude data from Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, which is likely to be included in the final report

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1353867/pakistans-population-has-ballooned-to-2078m-provisional-census-results-show>

Sindh govt rejects census results

Sindh government has rejected the results of the census held earlier in 2017 by alleging it to be part of a conspiracy by the federal government against Sindh. Sindh provincial minister Nisar Ahmed Khuhro alleged that the federal government is conspiring against Sindh and the census results are a part of it. He further alleged that by showing less population of the province in 2017 census, the federal government intends to reduce the number of seats Sindh has in the national assembly. "This move is aimed at reducing Sindh's share in the National Finance Commission as well as in the national and provincial assembly seats and the job quota in federal government services," Khuhro said.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/features/28-Aug-17/sindh-govt-rejects-census-results>

SECURITY

'TTP men' acquitted, two cops convicted in Benazir case

An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Rawalpindi announced the verdict in the Benazir Bhutto murder case on Thursday, acquitting five Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) suspects and announcing 17-year imprisonment for two police officials. An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Rawalpindi convicted additional inspector general Saud Aziz and senior superintendent of police (SSP) Khurram Shehzad, and fined them Rs1 million each. But five suspects allegedly linked with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were acquitted for lack

of evidence. ATC Judge Asghar Ali Khan announced the judgement during in-camera proceedings at Adiala jail, declaring former president retired Gen Pervez Musharraf a proclaimed offender in the case and ordering the attachment of his movable and immovable properties.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1355330>

US attaches new conditions to pledged military aid

The Trump administration puts \$255m into escrow account that Pakistan can access only if it 'does more'.

In its notification to the US Congress said it was putting the entire amount into an escrow account that Pakistan could access only if it did more to eradicate alleged terrorist safe havens in the tribal areas and stopped cross-border attacks in Afghanistan. Although figures released to the US media estimate the volume of annual US assistance to Pakistan at \$1.1bn, hundreds of millions of dollars are withheld every year under different restrictions imposed since 2011, when relations between the two countries began to deteriorate after Osama bin Laden's discovery in Abbottabad.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1355318/us-attaches-new-conditions-to-pledged-military-aid>

Editor: Dr Smruti S Pattanaik, Research Fellow & Coordinator, Pakistan Project
News compiled by: Dr Zainab Akhter, Researcher & Member, Pakistan Project