

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

Pakistan is witnessing upheaval on several fronts. While the conflict between the judiciary and government continues, with several cases pending against the Sharif family, the civil-military relations are not at their best. To add to the crisis, the Pashtun movement for justice against the targeted killings, missing persons and terror profiling of the community, has pitted the group against the Army. Though dialogue between the agitating Pashtuns and the army is yet to materialize, in several areas, the army has handed over the administration to the civilian government after clearing the area of terrorists. Nawaz Sharif has been disqualified and Shahbaz Sharif is projected as the next Prime Ministerial candidate from the party. After the controversial Senate elections, all the political parties are gearing towards the next general election. In the meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif's interview to Dawn indicating the Pakistani establishment's hand in the Mumbai carnage put the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in a difficult position. The party finally rejected Sharif's charges as the army pressed for a meeting of the National Security Council.

This issue of the bulletin combines news items of the past four months, from January to April 2018. There are three interesting commentaries on important issues confronting Pakistan, especially the domestic political dynamics that are captured well in these articles focusing on the Senate elections, the politics within the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) and the crisis within the PML-N.

COMMENTARY

Balochistan and the Senate Elections in Pakistan: A Prelude to the Upcoming Elections

*Yaqoob ul Hassan**

All the major political parties of Pakistan are gearing up for the upcoming general elections. Alliances are made either to thwart any particular party's electoral prospect or to make inroads to a constituency where they lack popular support. A few political developments that took place over the last couple of months that has set the precedence for the next general elections. These developments are the change of government in Baluchistan and the Senate elections where allegations were made regarding switching of loyalties .

Baluchistan saw a strange bit of political theatre where election engineering and echoes of political interference were heard in the power corridors of Islamabad. The government of chief minister Nawwab Sanaullah Zehri was toppled by his own party members. According to media reports, Pakistan's Prime Minister Khakan Abbasi was told by his civilian agency in advance that 'people' are out to remove Zehri from the position. Zehri tried to sort out the deal but was told 'resign gracefully or fight it out and go disgracefully, take your pick'¹. Disheartened, Zehri reached out to Nawaz Sharif and PM Abbasi for help. According to Murtaza Solangi, a prominent journalist, a federal minister from Baluchistan was sent to GHQ to do some fire-fighting. He was told that they have nothing to do with it. But next day, Zehri's close confidantes were picked up and corruption charges against him made rounds on TV channels. A motion of

no-confidence against Zehri was filed by the 14 members among them were members from Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q), National Party (NP) (interesting to note here that NP's president, Mir Hasil Bizenjo, although lent Zehri a helping hand and assured him his party's support but one of his own party's MPA' Khalid Langove, was one of the 14 signatories on the motion against Zehri) The other dissidents were from Baluchistan National Party Chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Awami National Party (ANP) leader, Zamarak Achakzai AND Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen legislator Aga Raza.

Notwithstanding, apart from seeing very ineffective and powerless chief minister, Zehri's major mistake was standing by and supporting Nawaz Sharif in an on-going confrontation with the judiciary and the military. A no-confidence motion against Zehri was a well-thought out plan of power manoeuvring and the timing was very important. It also has far-reaching impact on the national level politics. The target was not Zehri himself, rather it was Nawaz Sharif. It was deliberately done to reduce the party's strength in the forthcoming Senate election that was due. The military establishment did not want to see Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) getting a majority in Senate. If it does, Nawaz may find it easy to change the legislation that would make his return to power easy. The 11 Senators from Baluchistan were supposed to retire in March and there was an opportunity for the ruling party PMLN to increase its Senate membership. Although, it had only 21 legislators out of the total 65 members, in the legislative assembly, therefore, retaining the power was imperative to elect its Senators. Zehri's was replaced by Abdul Quddus Bizenjo of the PML-Q who was elected as a member of the provincial assembly from Awaran District by 500 votes in the wake of a boycott of elections by Baloch nationalist insurgents. By toppling Zehri's led PMLN government, the PMLN was deprived of six Senators from Baluchistan by breaking up the coalition.

While the tone was set for the Senate elections, but no one had expected that both Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaf (PTI) will come together to defeat PMLN, despite the two parties being at loggerheads. The new Chief Minister of Baluchistan, Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, was assigned the job to bring PPP and PTI together, whose leaders were reluctant to come out in open supporting each other in Senate elections as no one wanted to damage the prospects of

2018 election by publicly being seen together. According to media reports, someone from power corridors in Islamabad floated the idea of using Bizenjo as a mediator between Imran Khan and Asif Zardari².

Senate elections 2018 will be remembered for rampant horse-trading in all four provincial assemblies. PPP got its senators elected from KP and Sindh by relying on support from members who do not belong to the party, whereas PTI got surprisingly one senator from Punjab Assembly which was above its due share in that assembly. The PTI's total strength in Punjab Assembly is 33 members whereas PMLN- has 310. The PMLN had 33 seats while as PPP and PTI managed to get 21 and 12 seats respectively from Sindh, KP and Punjab. With six senators from Baluchistan, eight independent Senators from FATA, the PTI and PPP together succeeded electing their own chairman and deputy chairman. Most of the MPA's in four assemblies voted outside the party in large numbers. Vicious electioneering took place, according to media, money and other benefits, perks privileges played a significant role in Senate elections.

Generally, it has been seen in Pakistan that the smaller parties and independent candidates particularly from the FATA region incline towards the military establishment. The other reason why PMLN failed in putting together a viable coalition of smaller parties and independents, primarily because of anti-establishment narrative adopted by Nawaz Sharif that put them in a tough position.

Learning from the Baluchistan, that military is all out to defeat the PMLN, Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam- Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F) came up with the proposal that both PPP and PMLN should form an alliance and elect Raza Rabbani as chairman. According to media sources, Nawaz agreed on Rabbani's candidature and even other parties such as National Party (NP), Pukhtunkhawa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) and JUI-F also supported the idea. It is also believed that PPP chairman, Bilawal Bhutto also tried hard to persuade Zardari to change his mind and accept Raza Rabbani for the top slot. "Zardari knew better to stick to the Milabishment (military establishment) that has been speaking against the 18th Amendment and its architect Rabbani. Zardari not only stuck to his guns but forced Bilawal to make the unpopular announcement of bowing before the Askari group (Askari means

military. The term is sarcastically used against Baluchistan Chief Minister and his senators who toppled Zehri's government ostensibly under the guidance of army) and demoting Saleem Mandviwalla as the deputy chairman"³. Both PPP and PTI agreed on the candidature of Sadiq Sanjrani as the chairman of the Senate. Although it is unlikely that both PPP and PTI will come together for any seat adjustment or alliance in the forthcoming general elections, nevertheless, "The die was cast. The umpire had ensured that the victory of the coalition and the Noon saw (referred here PML-N party its worst afternoon. The rest, as they say, is history" said Solongi. By succeeding to replace the Chief Minister in Baluchistan assembly and Senate elections, the military has made it again clear that the institutional hegemony on political realm remains with them. They would be happy to see a weak government coming in the power in next elections which will help them to continue with their overarching influence in politics.

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¹ Murtaza Solongi, After Noon, *The Friday Times*, March 16, 2018, at <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/afternoon/>

² Umer Farooq, Rearranging the Upper House, *The Sunday News*, March 11, 2018, at <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/rearranging-upper-house/#.WvvQVtR97Gh>

³ Murtaza Solongi, After Noon, *The Friday Times*, March 16, 2018, at <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/afternoon/>

MQM in Crisis: The Splits and its Implications for Mohajir Politics in the Election

*Dr Nazir Ahmad Mir**

At a time when generally political parties are exhibiting a united approach and are pull their strings to write election victories in the forthcoming election, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) is experiencing its worst time since its creation in 1986. There is no apparent common-ground between the fighting factions on which they would come together and retain their loyal vote-bank. Each faction within the MQM (P) and also the Pak Sarzameen Pakistan (PSP) that was earlier part of MQM are painstakingly trying to retain their independent political identity and promote their distinct

position and agenda, which is further confusing their respective vote banks.

No compromise seems to be emerging between the factions at the moment. Earlier efforts at reunification turned out to be futile efforts. The main faction, MQM (P) headed by Farooq Sattar has not been able to overcome the crisis that began at the time of issuing tickets for the Senate elections in February 2018 which had severe electoral ramifications. For example, the party could get just one Senate member elected while it was expecting to elect four. This has made reconciliation between the Pir Ilahi Buksh colony (PIB), the head-quarter of Farooq Sattar's faction and Bahadurabad, the head-quarter of Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui's faction, a herculean task. Earlier in November 2017, the decision of the MQM (P) and PSP to come together ended as fast as it had made news. Both the parties have since been blaming each other for taking away members of each other's party.

MQM has been going through splits since its origin: In 1991 first split happened when MQM Haqiqi (MQM [H]) led by Afaq Ahmad and Amir Khan broke off due to their differences with party leader Altaf Hussain's ways of handling party affairs and the iron-fist hold he had on the party. Though MQM (H) could not make much gains, it remained distant from the MQM-Altaf. Second split came when senior leader and former mayor of Karachi, Mustafa Kamal parted his way from the MQM in 2016 on differences with the party leadership and its functioning especially after the killing of Imran Farooq in London. Mustafa formed Pak Sarzameen Pakistan (PSP) party in opposition to the MQM. He has been critical of Altaf Hussain and even went to blame him for political violence in Karachi.

Most deleterious moment for the MQM was the Altaf Hussain's speech in August 2016 from London, calling Pakistan as the 'cancer for the entire world'. Left with no option, the MQM in Pakistan had to, by wish or by compulsion, distanced itself from Altaf's statement. Leader of the MQM in Pakistan, who was considered close to Altaf and was heading the powerful body of the party, the Rabita Committee, Dr. Farooq Sattar decided that MQM in Pakistan would operate independently of what he now called MQM-London. It was, however, difficult, for him to provide the charismatic personality that Altaf enjoyed among the Mohajirs in Karachi and other parts of Sindh. Therefore

differences were bound to crop up whenever any important decision has to be taken.

This happened at the time of Senate elections. With increasing lobbying and factionalism in the party and among its supporters, Sattar found it difficult to influence opinions of the members and take decision. He wanted to control the party but he lacked legitimacy and authority to influence everyone. In order to strengthen his hold on the party, he decided to issue the Senate tickets without consulting the members of Rabita Committee. Many within the party perceived his unilateral decision as reflection of his authoritarian mentality. They started to raise their voices and challenged Sattar's ways of dealing with the party affairs.

The crisis deteriorated further when Farooq Sattar wanted and issued Senate ticket to his friend Kamran Tessori, which was strongly opposed by the members of Rabita Committee. Tessori wanted to join the party in 2013 as well which was not allowed. The opposition to Tessori's joining the party was on the ground that he is a businessman while the MQM is generally seen as party of workers and lower class people. However, Sattar did not take his decision back and tried different tactic like threatening to resign from the party and claiming that he has the final say as the chairman of the Rabita Committee. Factionalism within the party was inevitable.

The politics and nature of the MQM is different from other political parties. It is a party comprising of people who think they are marginalized but have to fight within the existing structure because they do not have a geographical base as what is considered as 'sons of the soil', like People's Party of Pakistan (PPP) in Sindh, Pakistan Muslim League N (PML N) in Punjab or Awami National Party (ANP) and Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Unlike other ethnic group, MQM emerged against the perceived injustice it faced by the other groups in Karachi: The incident that incited the feeling of what they called 'fifth nationality' in Pakistan among the Muhajirs, was the killing of a college student hit by a bus owned by a Pathan. Since its formation, despite many ups and downs, MQM has played important role in national politics and in Sindh in particular. It is still fourth largest party in the country with 18 seats in the 2013 elections, second in Sindh and largest in Karachi.

However, after the latest splits and disarray in party's thinking, these happenings may take heavy toll on the party's prospects in the forthcoming general elections. Without putting a united fight, the confusion within the party's base will continue and there will be fragmentation in the voting pattern. Some voters may switch over to other parties who are trying hard to encroach on MQM's vote base. This encroachment on MQM's vote bank is led by PPP, ANP, PTI and PML N who are struggling their presence to be felt in urban Sindh. In a recent rally, held by PPP in Liaquatabad on 29 April, generally considered strong bastion of MQM, Bilawal Bhutto said that the support for PPP was stopped by force. He vowed to liberate the Karachi from the clutches of MQM and blamed the MQM for lack of water, electricity crises and uncleanness of the city. Other parties are following the suit. This may push the warring-factions within the MQM to come together, as Sattar and Siddiqui held a single rally on May 5, rather than going separate way which they had announced earlier. But coming to a common ground on various issues that is affecting the Mohajir community will require painstaking efforts and some compromises from the leaders. That does not seem to be happening as of now. Farooq Sattar seems to have sensed declining prospects of the party in the next elections. He said recently that he does not want to contest elections and nor wants to hold a position in party which 'does not have any power'. Sattar then warned that 'But if anything occurs in the general elections all criticism would be against the convener.' This statement was made during his address to the party workers in Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) ground on May 13.

In order to make a strong come back in the face of current crisis, MQM leadership needs to take some tough decisions. How keen it is to do so, is not clear as of now. This has allowed the other parties to woo the leaders of MQM to join them and also woo the party's electoral constituency. Also interesting will be the role of the army: How it wants to the MQM go from now onwards? Will it let it go or it will make some efforts to pressurize the warring factions to come to some consensus if it wants to undermine the PPP's electoral prospect? It was believed that the decision to merge PSP and MQM (P) in August last year was made possible by the army's intervention. It is general perception that MQM has helped the army to keep PPP in check in

Sindh. Therefore, MQM's fall will have severe political implications in Karachi, rural Sindh and in the whole country.

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Crisis within PML-N: The fall of Nawaz Sharif

*Zainab Akhtar**

Post-Panama verdict, the problems for the PML-N and Nawaz Sharif has increased manifolds. The first blow that the party received was the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif as the Prime Minister of the country, second, his removal from the post of party president and the final nail in the coffin was a judgement by the Supreme Court of Pakistan that announced life time ban for Sharif's participation in politics under article 62 (1) (f). According to the new ruling, Article 62(1) (f) sets the precondition for a Member of Parliament to be honest and righteous. In other words, a person shall not be qualified to be elected or chosen as a member of Majlis-e-Shoora if he is not "honest and trustworthy". Even though the period of disqualification is not stated in the article, the Supreme Court has interpreted it as life time ban or "permanent". The ruling boldly underlined, "Such a person cannot contest elections or become a Member of Parliament," for life thus pushing PML-N into an unprecedented situation ending any chance or hope for Nawaz Sharif to return into active politics. Adding to the woes of the party are the continuous defection of the PML-N loyalists and increasing number of judicial inquiry into the activities of individual members.

With such enormous pressure from within as well as from outside the party, this article attempts to understand the party's strategy to swim through the general elections and analyze whether Nawaz Sharif is able to ensure success for PML-N in the upcoming general elections irrespective of the disqualification and cases against him.

The fall of Nawaz

Nawaz Sharif was ousted from politics under the pretext that he was not Sadiq (honest) and Ameen (trustworthy) and thus not fit for his post and politics. But if we dig a bit deeper the underlying fact is that the ouster of Nawaz

Sharif was well planned and timed, before the general elections and hence was politically motivated. The ouster was smartly routed through the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) which first put Nawaz on trial on the Panama case, then came the conviction and finally using the same web of convictions to trap and, ouster him from politics for a lifetime. A joint investigation team (JIT) was set up on the directions of the Supreme Court to Probe the Panama case against Sharif, but inclusion of two intelligence officers in the JIT not only indicated the courts' poor opinion of other institutions, but also that, at the very least, the investigation was unlikely to dissolve into nothingness.¹ The JIT immediately suggested that the National Accountability Bureau should register a case against the Sharif's and prepare a corruption reference. The most noteworthy aspect of all these processes was the keenness of the judiciary to pursue the case and get him convicted. The conviction was not on corruption as alleged in the Panama papers rather pertains to salary that he was supposed to draw but did not; therefore he did not reveal it while filing his nomination paper. The Court has emerged as a new alibi of the military establishment to keep some politicians not likened by them away from politics.

Nawaz Sharif and its party have rejected the Courts decision underlining that judiciary has no right to declare a politician righteous or otherwise, rather it's the job of the Parliament or the Election Commission. Several rallies that Sharif addressed in a show of strength and political support he played the victim card, and attacked both the army and judiciary simultaneously blaming them for his ouster. This widened the rift between the civil-military and affected political-judicial relations, thus resulting in war of words between Nawaz-Judiciary and the army. But in a country like Pakistan where the security establishment has the ultimate power, challenging its might is not considered the ideal path and can have repercussions. PML-N as party had to pay the price of Nawaz's narrative and his harsh tone against the judiciary and the military. And this is where the biggest divisions in the PML-N are coming to the fore.

Internal rift

To some extent the sympathy card that Nawaz Sharif is playing might have played out positively to keep the party's vote banks intact, but his narrative against the army and judiciary has not gone done well within the PML-N party. Most of the party members including

the senior party leaders are of the view that the narrative that is being peddled would affect Party's electoral prospect in the upcoming general elections and impact on the very survival of the party in the long run. Most of the members are leaving the party and are partly citing this narrative as one of the reasons to defect from the party. For that matter even the current president of the party, Shahbaz Sharif, has displayed reluctance in following the anti-judiciary and army narrative of Nawaz Sharif and he sees it as the most prominent threat to the future of the party under him.

According to the Pakistani media, in the post-Nawaz era, the PML-N will witness a lot more defections, but they stress that a bulk of them will come "in the shape of electables choosing to go independent before the elections". This will create a new set of issues for a PML-N, for example the party may be contesting elections against its former candidates in a host of constituencies across the country. With the family dealing with several cases lodged against them in various courts, what will be left is a "PML-N with senior leaders, all battling to keep the structure in check".

With the rising threat of further defections, Nawaz Sharif has a tough job of convincing his party leaders to stand by him in the larger interest of the party. But analysts in Pakistan media are of the view that the harsh tone of Nawaz Sharif against the army and judiciary can damage the party in elections besides putting deeper cracks into the party ranks. At the same time various surveys show that the PML-N remains the most popular party.

Conclusion

In an unprecedented move, taking his battle with the military establishment forward, Nawaz Sharif almost tacitly admitted to Pakistan 'militants' role in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Sharif said in an interview to Dawn²: "Militant organizations are active in Pakistan... Call them non-state actors, should we allow them to cross the border and kill over 150 people in Mumbai? Explain it to me. Why can't we complete the trial?" This elicited a response from the Army which asked for the convening of the National Security Council (NSC) to discuss Nawaz's statement. The meeting was presided by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbas and Nawaz's statement was rejected his remarks as "incorrect" and "misleading"

and the statement said it was made in disregard to concrete facts and realities. While Sharif's remarks gained a lot of tractions in India, in a move to turn the tables the NSC even blamed the ruling government over delay in conclusion of the 26/11 case. However Sharif stood his ground in spite of senior PML-N leaders rejecting his views on 26/11.³ With Sharif's assertion, the already poor civilian-military relations in the country have deteriorated even further.

Many believe that more than scoring points with India, the latest Mumbai reference by Sharif is to gain international attention and play the sympathy card outside the country too. But back home, PML-N is reeling under a series of legal setbacks, faces a serious challenge of maintaining the unity within the party. With the countdown to the appointment of the caretaker government, the pressure on candidates to declare affiliations and pick sides ahead of the elections is getting intense. It cannot be denied that the attitude and rantings of Nawaz Sharif have resulted in a systemic crisis within the party which have seriously jeopardized the future of PML-N. Also, the latest controversy has come at an election year; many fear that the election schedule may be derailed given the current tense political situation.

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¹ Panama Paper Case, Tara Kartha, First-Post, 13 July 2017, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/panama-papers-walls-close-in-on-nawaz-sharif-mudslinging-in-a-long-drawn-trial-may-be-his-best-bet-3805521.html>

² For Nawaz it's not over till it's over, Cyril Almeida, May 12 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1407192>

³ Tariq Khosa who is a Former Director in the Federal investigation Agency in an article in Dawn wrote about Pakistan's role. See "Mumbai Attacks Trial", The Dawn, August 03, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1198061>. Also see, "Ex-ISI men likely behind 26/11 attacks, says Athar", Dawn, April 25, 2011, <https://www.dawn.com/news/623876>

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

POLITICS

Balochistan Roundup 2017

Major political issue in Balochistan has always been how to conduct negotiations with the Baloch insurgent leaders. This year again there was no headway on this matter and in fact the situation in terms of a possible patch-up with insurgent leader's further deteriorated. However, Gazzain Marri, son of Late Nawab Khair Baksh Marri returned to Balochistan after ending a 17 years self-imposed exile. Although, he was not directly involved in insurgent leadership but he still belongs to the family which allegedly founded the current wave of insurgency in the province. Now he is making desperate attempts to rejoin mainstream politics before 2018 elections. Politicians of Balochistan throughout the year bashed the federal government for ignoring Balochistan in CPEC projects. More than 20 press clubs still remain closed in Balochistan. That was perhaps the saddest way to see the end of 2017 in Balochistan.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/172692/balochistan-roundup-2017/>

Pakistan asks Trump to help fund border fence with Afghanistan

The 1,800-mile barrier being constructed will help end "the prolonged agony" of the Afghan war and reduce terrorism inside Pakistan, said Nasir Khan Janjua, the national security adviser to Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the prime minister. Janjua said that Pakistan would like the US president to pay for the barrier – or at least the Afghan side – arguing that the \$532m (£378m) price tag will be a lot cheaper than the \$45bn annual estimated cost of the Afghan war. Janjua said Pakistan wanted to cooperate with the US. "The Americans have blamed us, and said we are responsible for safe havens but when we say 'let's work together to find the safe havens, and isolate them', there is no answer."

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/15/pakistan-asks-trump-to-help-fund-border-fence-with-afghanistan>

Islamabad sit-in: Is anyone listening?

Hundreds of Pashtun men from across the country continue to sit outside Islamabad's press club in protest.

heir foremost demand is justice for Nageebullah Mehsud, a young man from South Waziristan, who was killed in a staged encounter on January 13 in Karachi by a notorious police officer, Rao Anwar. Mehsud's unlawful killing is not a first. It is in fact, say the protesters, just one example of the kind of oppression Pashtuns have to endure across the country, especially in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where seeking justice is difficult. Their list of grievances is long. The tribal areas, spanning seven agencies, are still being run under a draconian colonial law, the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR). Young Pashtun men are often ethnically profiled and targeted as members of the Taliban. Entire tribes are punished for the crimes of a single individual. The federal government's plans to merge FATA with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, to bring it at par with the developed areas of Pakistan, have been bunkered by religious parties, who see the mainstreaming as a threat to their vote bank.

<https://www.geo.tv/latest/181040-islamabad-sit-in-is-anyone-listening>

8 PML-N lawmakers break rank to demand new province for south Punjab

Khusro Bakhtiar, a PML-N leader from South Punjab, held a press conference on Monday flanked by like-minded lawmakers to demand a new province "for the security of the future of the children of south Punjab." He said "The size of South Punjab is almost the same as Khyber Pashtunkhwa. We have 46 MNAs in the [National] Assembly at the moment and yet they gave us just one seat in Senate." "It is time we are given equal rights," Cheema continued, adding that the demand for a new province is one that various South Punjab leaders have made throughout Pakistan's history.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1400561>

Will reviving MMA have an impact on the 2018 elections?

The latest incarnation of MMA, with JUIF's Maulana Fazlur Rehman as its chairperson and JI's Liaqat Baloch as its general secretary, is in keeping with the previous domination of the two parties, both of which have historically drawn their support from the Pakhtun areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Noticeably absent from the alliance is Maulana Samiul Haq's faction of the Jamiat

Ulema-e-Islam (JUIS). There were reports prior to the Senate election that, in exchange for a Senate seat nomination, JUIS would form an electoral alliance with PTI. However, this did not come to pass as PTI dropped Haq's name from its list of Senate nominees. JUIS's absence from MMA, however, indicates that the alliance's electoral prospects in its own backyard may not be as bright as in the past. At the same time, MMA cannot place too much confidence in its electoral rhetoric of being an anti-corruption party, which is also how PTI is likely to position itself. It is also important to consider other religious parties that are likely to chip away at the traditional vote bank of MMA parties. It will be more challenging for the new MMA to unite the conservative religious vote as it did in 2002 with these newer, more radical and aggressive political parties appealing to the same type of voters with even more hardline sectarian agendas.

<https://herald.dawn.com/news/1398502/will-reviving-mma-have-an-impact-on-the-2018-elections>

Imran lauds Nisar for challenging Maryam, invites him to join PTI

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on Thursday made a fresh bid to woo the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's maverick leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan and invited him to join his party so that they could work together to build a 'new Pakistan.' Mr Khan extended the invitation to the PML-N dissident while speaking at a ceremony to launch the PTI's logo and slogan for the upcoming general elections. At a time when Mr Khan was praising Chaudhry Nisar for "courageously" challenging Maryam Nawaz, the daughter of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, Punjab Chief Minister and PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif was busy persuading Chaudhry Nisar in a one-on-one meeting in Islamabad. Sources said it was the fourth meeting between Mr Sharif and Chaudhry Nisar during the last 10 days.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1402708/imran-lauds-nisar-for-challenging-maryam-invites-him-to-join-pti>

Pakistan Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal shot at election rally

Pakistani Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal has been wounded by an unidentified gunman at an election rally

in central Punjab province, according to officials. Iqbal, 59, was shot in the shoulder on Sunday after addressing the crowd gathered in his native Narowal district. Sajjad Hussain, a rescue services spokesperson, told Al Jazeera that Iqbal was getting into his vehicle to leave the rally when a "young man" fired at him "several times". "One bullet hit him in the shoulder. He was transferred to the local district hospital, where he is being treated," he added. Provincial authorities and Iqbal's son said the minister had not suffered any life-threatening wounds. He is conscious and out of danger.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/pakistan-interior-minister-ahsan-iqbal-shot-election-rally-180506135949029.html>

Alleged money laundering to India by Nawaz comes under NAB scrutiny

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has ordered an inquiry against former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for allegedly laundering US\$4.9 billion to India. The NAB Chairman took notice of media reports that highlighted the alleged laundering. These reports claimed that the laundering incident had been mentioned in the World Bank's 2016 Migration and Remittance Book. Further statements claim that this money was laundered to the Indian finance ministry which subsequently led to India's foreign reserves increasing, while Pakistan concomitantly suffered. The State Bank of Pakistan, however, had rejected these claims in a press release dated 21st September 2016. The Bank claimed that the World Bank's methodology of calculating bilateral remittance flows was faulty as was acknowledged by the creators of this methodology.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/237828/alleged-money-laundering-to-india-by-nawaz-comes-under-nab-scrutiny/>

ECONOMY

Government slows down spending on uplift projects

The government appears to have slowed down spending on development projects in an effort to rein in the country's fiscal deficit. The Planning Commission said on Friday that as of Jan 12 the government had disbursed Rs344 billion for the public sector development programme (PSDP), or about 34.4 per cent

of the total allocation of Rs1,001bn. Under its approved disbursement mechanism, the government should have released about 40 per cent of the allocated amount in the first half of the year, or about Rs400bn.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1382622/government-slows-down-spending-on-uplift-projects>

Balochistan CM wooing Chinese to invest in solar energy

The Chinese officials showed interest in solar energy and other public sector projects in the Awaran area of Balochistan for making investments. The other sectors in which the delegation expressed their interest included construction of micro grid station and transmission lines. The chief minister said that Balochistan has an important opportunity for development through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and “we will take advantage of this mega project for speedy development of the province”.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1636336/1-balochistan-cm-wooing-chinese-invest-solar-energy/>

China in talks with Baloch militants to secure CPEC projects, says FT

China has been quietly holding talks with Baloch militants for more than five years in an effort to protect the \$60 billion worth of infrastructure projects it is financing as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), *Financial Times* claimed on Monday. Three people with knowledge of the talks told the paper that Beijing had been in direct contact with militants in Balochistan, where many of the CPEC-related schemes are located. The paper claimed that the Pakistani officials welcomed the talks between Baloch rebels and Chinese envoys, even if they do not know the details of what has been discussed. “Ultimately, if there’s peace in Balochistan, that will benefit both of us,” said one official in Islamabad.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1390520/china-in-talks-with-baloch-militants-to-secure-cpec-projects-says-ft>

US sanctions seven Pakistani firms for ‘nuclear trade’

The Trump administration has added seven Pakistani companies to a list of foreign entities that presumably pose a significant risk to the national security and policy interests of the United States by allegedly engaging in nuclear trade. The move could undermine Pakistan’s ambition of joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), an elite club of countries that can trade fissile materials and nuclear technologies. The move forms a series of decisions aimed at putting a squeeze on Pakistan. The list, prepared by the US Bureau of Industry and Security, declares that all seven companies are “reasonably believed to be involved, or to pose a significant risk of being or becoming involved, in activities contrary to the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1397628/us-sanctions-seven-pakistani-firms-for-nuclear-trade>

Govt presents Rs. 5.9 trillion budget

Finance Minister Miftah Ismail Friday unveiling a budget outlay of Rs 5.932 trillion, announced a growth oriented budget setting the GDP growth target for 2018-19 at 6.2 per cent with the ever high proposed revenue generation at Rs 4435 billion against total expenditure of Rs 5246 billion. Presenting the sixth budget of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) government before the general election, Miftah Ismail said the main targets include keeping inflation below six per cent. He said the government is set to achieve a growth target of 5.8 per cent for the current year, the highest in the last 13 years putting Pakistan among the fastest growing economies. The minister told that Rs 44.7 billion is proposed for AJK and Gilgit Baltistan and Rs 24.5 for Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Rs 10 billion has been approved to implement a ten year development plan for FATA and Rs 90 billion for rehabilitation of millions of people who had to leave their homes in the areas of military operations.

<https://nation.com.pk/27-Apr-2018/govt-presents-rs5-9-trillion-budget>

SECURITY

Islamic State footprint on rise in Pakistan's northern Sindh, Balochistan: Report

The security report by Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) on Sunday stated that the Islamic State, especially active in northern Sindh and Balochistan, was also behind the abduction and killing of two Chinese nationals last year, *Dawn* reported. According to the report, despite a 16 percent decline in terrorist attacks last year, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its associated groups remained the most potent threats. They were followed by nationalist-insurgent groups, especially Balochistan Liberation Army and Balochistan Liberation Front.

<http://www.firstpost.com/world/islamic-state-footprint-on-rise-in-pakistans-northern-sindh-balochistan-report-4292843.html>

1,800 Pakistani religious scholars declare suicide bombings 'haram' in new fatwa

More than 1,800 Pakistani religious scholars have issued an Islamic directive, or *fatwa*, forbidding suicide bombings, a book due to be unveiled by the government on Tuesday says. Seeking to curb terrorism that has resulted in tens of thousands of casualties since the early 2000s, the clerics declared suicide bombings to be forbidden, or "haram". "This *Fatwa* provides a strong base for the stability of a moderate Islamic society," President Mamnoon Hussain wrote in the book. "We can seek guidance from this *Fatwa* for building a national narrative in order to curb extremism in keeping with the golden principles of Islam."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1610044/1-1800-pakistani-religious-scholars-declare-suicide-bombings-haram-new-fatwa/>

China urges Pakistan to solve citizen's killing

China on Tuesday urged Pakistan to rapidly bring perpetrators to justice after unidentified gunmen shot at two Chinese nationals in the southern city of Karachi, killing one of them. The two Chinese were in their car in an upmarket area on Monday when the attackers in another car opened fire on their vehicle, according to police, describing it as an apparent 'targeted attack'. "The

consulate general of China has sent officials to the hospital and urged the police to solve the case as soon as possible and bring the criminals to justice," foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang told a regular briefing. The two Chinese were working for a shipping company. Thousands of Chinese engineers and technicians are working in Pakistan.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/196899/china-urges-pakistan-solve-citizens-killing/>

Hazaras protest against 'targeted killings' of community members

A day after two Hazara men were shot dead at Jamaluddin Afghani Road, the community members blocked the western bypass in the Balochistan capital, demanding that the terrorists behind the attacks be brought to book at the earliest. The Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) had blocked the Bacha Khan road on Saturday to mark their protest against the government and the law enforcement agencies. The protesters were demanding full implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) to bust terrorist networks active in Balochistan. The protesters said, "We will not end our fasting till the visit of Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1698447/1-hazaras-protest-targeted-killings-community-members/>

UN terror list has 139 Pakistan entries

The United Nations Security Council's consolidated list of terrorist individuals and entities includes 139 entries from Pakistan. The list — updated and accessed on Tuesday identifies all those individuals who have lived in Pakistan, operated from there or have been associated with groups that used Pakistani territory for carrying out their operations, from Al Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri to known Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) activists. The first person on the list is Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's heir apparent. The UN data claims that he is still hiding somewhere "in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area". Several of his lieutenants are also on the list who, the UN believes, are hiding with him. The second person on the list is another internationally known terrorist, Ramzi Mohammad bin al-Sheibah, who

is identified as a Yemeni national, arrested in Karachi and handed over to the US authorities. More than a dozen suspected terrorists are listed in the same category, arrested in Pakistan and handed over to the US authorities. Some of them had Pakistani passport, issued

by various Pakistani missions in the Middle East and renewed in Pakistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1399445/un-terror-list-has-139-pakistan-entries>

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