

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 blast in Parachinar and the visit of Army chief to that area was a major highlight in Pakistan last week. Coupled with this, the memoir of Raymond Davis, the excerpts of which were carried in the media also drew sharp focus especially on the role of ISI in the release of Davis from the prison. US decision to declare Syed Salahuddin as a global terrorist got major attention of the media. In another major development, Pakistan also borrowed \$700 million from a European commercial bank to pay its debt which means that Pakistan's foreign debt is going to mount further and would have negative impact on the economy.

COMMENTARY

Parachinar Attacks: Government's Callous Response

*Sumita Kumar**

The twin blasts in Parachinar on 23 June, 2017 were the third attack this year on this predominantly Shia town in Kurram Agency, one of the seven Agencies comprising the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The sheer intensity of the violence perpetrated became evident as the toll of those killed in these two attacks went up to 75, as compared to the 104 people killed in 34 sectarian related terrorist attacks during the entire 2016. Likewise, the figures of those injured in Parachinar seem staggering at 300 people, given that 162 people were injured in the various sectarian attacks through 2016.¹ This recent episode, in which the

Lashkar-i-Jhangvi-al-Alami (LeJ-A) known for its virulent anti-Shia leanings claimed responsibility for the bombings is only a reflection of the fact that major faultlines in Pakistan are being sharpened.

Sectarian issues which surfaced with the anti-Ahmadiya protests in 1953, were further instigated by the regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution of 1979 as they funded extremist Shia and Sunni groups, respectively. While the deep rift between the Sunnis and Shias was accentuated due to the Islamisation programme of General Zia in the late 1970s, the Afghan War enabled Sunni mujahideen groups to strengthen their position through the 1980s. Until the mid 1990s Shia-Sunni violence seemed to be focused on killing leaders and activists, but later mass killings took place at Shia imambargahs. With the resurgence of the Taliban around 2005 and the growing convergence of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi with the Al-Qaeda and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, massacres of Shias took place with greater ferocity.

The importance of Kurram lies in its geographical positioning as it shares a border with both Nangarhar and Paktia in Afghanistan. It became a sanctuary for Pakistan based terrorist groups working in tandem with Afghan terrorist organisations, and was used to provide safe passage across the border. The Turis, a group of Pashto-speaking/Pashtun Shias based in Kurram have actively opposed the Haqqanis and the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan due to their adherence to the stringent Deobandi theology, earning their ire.

Even in the face of multiple military operations over the years, militant organisations have been able to relocate or regroup. The emergence of LeJ-A as the

new avatar of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and its ability to coalesce smaller militant groups with sectarian predilections, as well as find common cause with terrorist organisations like the Islamic State do not bode well for the stability of the Pakistani State. While there was a noticeable trend of reduction of sectarian violence in Pakistan over the last three years, Parachinar has been facing the brunt of attacks even during this period. While LeJ-A has warned Parachinar's Shia populace against any involvement in the Syrian conflict, locals have denied any involvement suggesting that the allegations are an attempt at ensuring "sectarian cleansing" in a strategically located area.

The dissatisfaction and anger over the perceived apathy of the Central Government and its response to the latest bombings in Parachinar became obvious as a large number of locals congregated for a sit in protest over a number of days, with the numbers going up to 70,000. It was felt that the Government had accorded less importance to the events in Parachinar as compared to the oil spill accident in Bahawalpur which occurred later. People were unhappy at the fact that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif did not find it possible to pay a personal visit to Parachinar, even though he cut short his visit to London and reached Bahawalpur soon after the tragedy. The protestors demanded a compensation package similar to what had been promised for the families of the victims of the Bahawalpur tragedy. They also demanded that the army chief and the interior minister pay a visit to Parachinar as no senior government official visited the area in the week since the incident. There was anger at the fact that the compensation package for the victims' families was announced after a gap of six days. When Chief of Army Staff, Qamar Javed Bajwa visited Parachinar on 30 June, 2017, he was presented with a list of demands which included higher compensation for those killed in the attack, replacement of the Frontier Constabulary by a militia force, a report on terrorist attacks in Parachinar to be made public, and the securing of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

As sectarian faultlines sharpen, it would behove the government to reign in militant organisations and take more vigorous steps to curb anti-Shia violence as envisaged in the National Action Plan. In addition, focussing on development initiatives and stepping up efforts to integrate FATA with the mainstream, will mitigate the feeling that the Centre is only interested in

the welfare of the populace living in the metropolises and not those living in the periphery.

¹ Figures for those killed and injured in sectarian attacks in 2016 are taken from Pakistan Security Report, 2016, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, Islamabad.

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

ECONOMY

Pakistan borrows another \$700m to ease pressure off reserves

Pakistan has obtained another \$700 million loan from a European commercial bank for 10 years in a bid to take pressure off its foreign currency reserves. In the past nearly one year Pakistan's borrowings has increased to around \$9 billion. The fresh \$700 million loan has been obtained at an interest rate of 4.47%, which is significantly lower than borrowings through Sukuk and Eurobonds. The cost is also lower than what Pakistan paid on the \$1 billion raised through a relatively cheaper mode of Islamic financing – Sukuk – in September last year.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1446537/pakistan-borrows-another-700m-ease-pressure-off-reserves/>

KP getting 400mw less electricity

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Senator Nauman Wazir has attributed the unscheduled power load-shedding across Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa by Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) to getting 400 MW less electricity than its allocated quota of 13.5 percent of the generated electricity. The PTI leader claimed that in the first week of June, PESCO had unwritten instructions to consume less than 13.5 per cent of its allocated quota.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Jul-2017/kp-getting-400mw-less-electricity>

Pakistan faces challenges in building economic corridor with China

Pakistan faces some challenges in steering an ambitious plan to build an economic corridor with China despite the economic benefits for the country, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said. China has promised \$57 billion in investment in projects along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, part of its ambitious Belt and Road plan linking China with the Middle East and Europe. Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road project in 2013, but it is still short on specifics. “There are actually many gaps that we have to correctly address. First and foremost is the coordination gap,” he said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1445284/pakistan-faces-challenges-building-economic-corridor-china-minister/>

POLITICS

Indo-US embrace worries Pakistan

Reacting to the US-India joint statement issued from Washington after President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s meeting urged Pakistan not to let the terrorists use its soil against other countries. It also called upon Islamabad to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai, Pathankot and other cross-border terror attacks in India, to justice. Pakistan said that the joint statement was “singularly unhelpful” in achieving the objective of strategic stability and durable peace in South Asia.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/29-Jun-2017/indo-us-embrace-worries-pakistan>

SECURITY

US sanctions Kashmiri leader Syed Salahuddin

The US State Department has imposed sanctions on Syed Salahuddin, the senior leader of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. The move means the United States now considers Salahuddin, also known as Mohammad Yusuf Shah, a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist”. The new sanctions mean American citizens are generally barred from doing business with Salahuddin, and all his assets subject to United States jurisdiction are blocked.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/world/27-Jun-17/us-sanctions-kashmiri-leader-syed-salahuddin>

Pakistan still on radar of terror financing watchdog

Despite taking a few significant steps against terror financing, Pakistan remains on the radar of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international watchdog tracking terror financing, over concerns that it is not fully complying with curbs against entities listed with the United Nations. At a meeting held in Valencia, Spain, the FATF referred Pakistan to its regional affiliate, Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), for further analysis and a follow-up report. FATF’s International Cooperation Review Group (ICRG), which analyses high-risk jurisdictions, has requested the APG to provide the revised follow-up report on Pakistan after discussing it at its (APG’s) annual meeting scheduled for July.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1342535/pakistan-still-on-radar-of-terror-financing-watchdog>

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