

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

The acknowledgement of the existence of terror groups inside Pakistan by the foreign minister created an uproar in the opposition circles which targetted the PML-N's failure and its lack lustre foreign policy performance. The debate on terror groups in Pakistan and its relevance, however, is an old one. In the meanwhile Sharif's reelection as party President continued to occupy large media space. For the first time, in the last four years, federal government substantially increased disbursements to the provinces for development spending which recorded more than 15 percent growth in the first quarter, bringing some hope for better financial distribution between the federal government and the provinces.

COMMENTARY

The Unending Debate on Terror Outfits: The 'Patriot' verses the 'Dehshadgards'

*Nazir Ahmad Mir**

Pakistan has been trying to sail on two boats when it comes to take action against the terror outfits that are operating from the country. On the one hand, it aims to project to the world that it is taking all possible steps actions to eliminate terror groups operating in the country and to dismantle its support structure. On the other, some influential sections of the country, which include some of the political parties like the Pakistan Tahreek-i-Insaaf (PTI), are in denial mode, refusing to accept the existence of any such terrorist network or their support structure in the country. This division of

opinion was clearly visible when the foreign minister of Pakistan, Khawaja Asif, while interacting with the Asia Society in New York said, "I accept, they (Haqqanis, Hafiz Saeed and Lashkar-e-Taiba) are liabilities but give us time to get rid of these liabilities because we don't have assets to match them and you are increasing the liabilities further." This statement invited severe criticism at home and was seen as tarnishing the image of Pakistan by accepting an enemy propagated accusation.

Khawaja Asif's statement came at a time when Pakistan was making all efforts to highlight the issue of terrorism and human rights violation by India in the 72nd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meet at New York. While addressing the UNGA, the Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, left no stone unturned to divert the attention of the international community from several statements issued by the US administration highlighting Pakistan's duplicitous role in fighting terrorism. Also, just before the UNGA session, the 2017 BRICS summit declaration had named some of these organisations that were mentioned by the foreign minister as terrorist groups that are operating in the region. The BRICS declaration was categorical in its position. While anticipating the security threats that the strengthening of these terror outfits can pose to the individual countries and to the region at large, the declaration stated that "We, in this regard, express concern on the security situation in the region and violence caused by the Taliban, ISIS...Al Qaeda and its affiliates, including Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Haqqani network, Lashkar-i-Taiba, Jaish-i-Mohammad, TTP and Hizbut Tahrir". A nudge from its closest ally, China, which is part of the BRICS, perhaps forced the foreign minister

to accept the reality.

Though the general perception in Pakistan has been that the US has been unfair and ungrateful in not recognizing Pakistan's enormous sacrifices in terms of loss of life in fighting what some in Pakistan call the "American war" in Afghanistan. The BRICS' rebuttal came as a surprise to many who consider it as a failure of Pakistan's foreign policy. Realizing the sensitivity of the matter, an editorial in *Dawn* wrote: "Pakistan's tolerance for externally oriented militant groups is no longer acceptable and a serious national effort needs to be made if the country is to remain on the right side of international opinion." It is to be seen how the future policies of Pakistan will unfold vis-à-vis these terror outfits. Apparently, it has taken some actions by launching operations like "Zarb-e-Azb", "Radd-ul Fasaad" and "Khyber-IV". It also arrested Jamaat-ud Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed (Saeed has been under house arrest since January 2017). However, no case has been filed against him pointing to the government's lack of seriousness in the matter. Rather, Saeed's organization, the JuD, has now floated a new political party with the blessings of the establishment that is trying to mainstream its strategic assets in politics which will facilitate a greater role for the Army.

Given the political context, therefore, it is not surprising that Khawaja Asif incurred the wrath of some sections in Pakistan. The vernacular media took a lead in launching scathing attack. They called Khawaja Asif a liability on Pakistan and argued that his speech was directed at the Indo-US lobby and was intended to please the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. Interestingly, opposition political parties joined the criticism. The PTI chief, Imran Khan, not only criticized Khawaja Asif but also tweeted that "Their (the PML [N] leadership) continuous targeting of our armed forces continues today as part of this Indo-US appeasement. No concern for Pak lives sacrificed". Others maintained that just having a foreign minister, as was demanded for a long time by many people in Pakistan, is not enough. Pakistan needs a robust policy and Khawaja Asif has no clue about that. He seems to be not knowing "even the ABC of international diplomacy and propaganda". Asif fulfilled the long wish of India by accepting that Hafiz Saeed and groups like the Lashkar as terrorists.

The statement of Khawaja Asif has highlighted the diversity of views that exist in Pakistan about the

relevance of various terror outfits that functions with the patronage of the Pakistani establishment and acts as low cost strategic assets. For the people who are opponents of the PML (N) and aim to undermine its support base in the 2018 general elections, any statement that is remotely seen as supporting the stand of US or India or acknowledging the existence of terror group is portrayed as someone who against Pakistan and its Army and the person who has made such a statement is portrayed as 'gadar'. In all these matters and debates in the vernacular press, the army continues to be seen as setting the agenda since journalists close to the establishment takes a lead role in the smear campaign. The army is so dominant that even Imran Khan seems to believe that without the support of the army, his chances of winning the next elections (and becoming the prime minister) remains remote. It implies that the army has to take final call for taking action against the *all* terror outfits in the country. The civilian leadership, when under international or internal pressure, can only accept or promise but when it comes to implementation, it will require the army's green signal. Pakistan will therefore continue to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

ECONOMY

Development schemes get more money as elections loom closer

The government has substantially increased disbursements for development programmes as it gets closer to the general election to be held next year. In the first quarter of current fiscal year — the last year of current assemblies — the government has disbursed about Rs169 billion for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), accounting for almost 17 per cent of total allocation. The PSDP allocation for the full fiscal year stands at Rs1,001bn. This is the first time in last four years that development spending has gone beyond 15pc in the first quarter. Last year, the government had spent 13.7pc during the same period.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361306>

Descos, KE caused over Rs132bn loss to national kitty: Nepra

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has noted that distribution companies (DISCOs) and K Electric caused around Rs49 billion and Rs83 billion loss respectively to the national exchequer in the year 2015-16 due to transmission and distribution (T&D) losses and poor recoveries. "The figures provided by DISCOs and K Electric regarding load-shedding in the range of 1 to 4 hours was also contrary to the ground realities and was, therefore, rejected by the NEPRA," said the performance evaluation report titled "XWAPDA DISCOs and K-Electric 2015-16 in comparison with 2011-12-13-14-15," released by the regulatory body here on Tuesday.

<http://nation.com.pk/islamabad/04-Oct-2017/discos-ke-caused-over-rs132b-loss-to-national-kitty-nepra>

MPs lament non provision of gas to Balochistan

Senate Committee on Energy on Wednesday lamented the non-provision of gas to Balochistan. During the meeting of the Senate Committee on Energy, which was chaired by Senator Mir Israrullah Khan Zehri, Senator Yousaf Badini said that even Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, is not getting gas completely. Senator Zehri showed concern over the non-provision of gas to the majority districts of Balochistan and said that the committee is continuously recommending the installation of LPG-air mix plants in the Balochistan but the implementation is very slow. He offered his personal land for the installation of LPG-air mix plants and said that now the directives should be implemented in letter and spirit.

<http://nation.com.pk/business/05-Oct-2017/mps-lament-non-provision-of-gas-to-balochistan>

Economic Coordination Committee talks sweeping measures to tackle growing deficits

The government decided on Friday to impose regulatory duties on up to 250 items, expanded the incentive package for exporters and increased the commission of dealers and oil marketing companies (OMCs) on the sale of petrol by 33 paisa per litre. In addition, it also allowed private OMCs and dealers to charge the

commission of their choice on diesel sales. These decisions were taken at a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet presided over by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362196>

POLITICS

Interior minister fumes as rangers disobey him

An apparent lack of coordination among state institutions and "overstepping" of powers by a component of the Civil Armed Forces led to a fiasco at the main gate of the judicial complex on the occasion of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's second appearance before the accountability court here on Monday, The Nation has learnt. The Rangers "suddenly appeared" and restricted the entry of general public as well as political figures into the complex "at their own and without any orders from the high ups", provoking Ahsan Iqbal to say that he did not order the Rangers to take up security duties and that he was not ready to work as a "puppet interior minister".

<http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Oct-2017/interior-minister-fumes-as-rangers-disobey-him>

3000 Afghan students to study in Pakistan on HEC scholarship

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has awarded scholarships to as many as 3000 Afghan students under Allama Muhammad Iqbal Scholarship Programme. These students will pursue their higher education in different universities of Pakistan in various fields including Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Management, Computer Science, etc. The scholarships will be awarded over a period of five years, said Chairman HEC, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad on Monday. In an exclusive talk with APP, Dr Mukhtar said that out of the total 3000 scholarships given on open merit, around 2400 are for under graduates while 600 are for Post graduate male and female students.

<https://www.app.com.pk/3000-afghan-students-to-study-in-pakistan-on-hec-scholarships/>

The comeback

A day after using its parliamentary majority to amend the law, the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Tuesday re-elected ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif as its leader, saying he is 'back with full force'. Jafar Iqbal, who headed a five-member election body, said Nawaz Sharif had been elected party president unopposed by the central executive committee of the party. "There have been attempts again and again to exit me ... but you will always keep giving me an entry again and again," Nawaz told party workers after his election. "I congratulate that you're bringing Nawaz Sharif back with full force." No one came forward to contest Nawaz Sharif, Iqbal said amid clapping, thumping and slogans in support of the former premier in televised proceedings of the party election at the Convention Centre in Islamabad. The former prime minister will lead the party for four years.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/04-Oct-17/the-comeback>

Multi-party moot demands Fata-KP merger before next elections

As Fata parliamentarians gear up for the Oct 9 mass protest in Islamabad to press the government for constitutional amendment to mainstream their region, a multi-party conference here on Tuesday demanded the merger of tribal areas with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa before the next general elections. The Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Sami organised the conference, which was attended by KP Chief Minister Pervez Khattak, Pakistan Defence Council chairman Maulana Samiul Haq, leaders of Awami National Party, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, Qaumi Watan Party, parliamentary leader of Fata MNAs Shah Jee Gul Afridi and elders from tribal agencies. "The government should make constitutional amendments for the merger of Fata with tribal areas and recognise the region part of the province," said a joint declaration, which was released at the concluding session of the conference.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361648>

Only state can declare jihad, says minister

The government has asserted that only the state has the right to declare jihad and asked religious leaders and muftis to reject edicts calling for jihad posted on social

media platforms for the recent minor amendments to election laws that related to Khatm-i-Nabuwat. It has expressed concern over "attempts to turn the country into a battlefield" even though the error is being rectified and the National Assembly has already approved insertion of the original clause — which had been changed, causing a furore — back into the Elections Act 2017 through an amendment. Taking up the sensitive issue in the National Assembly on Friday, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal said: "Only the state can declare jihad; no group has the right to declare jihad against another group."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362271>

SECURITY

Three terrorists executed in KP jail: ISPR

Three terrorists convicted of attacks on civilians as well as on security personnel were executed on Wednesday in a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa prison. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the terrorists were involved in firing on a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft, killing civilians, and attacking personnel of the armed forces as well as members of law enforcement agencies. All the three convicts were tried by military courts. They admitted to the offences before the magistrates and were awarded death sentences.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361839>

Suicide blast at Jhal Magsi kills 18

At least 18 people were killed and 30 others injured in a suicide attack at a shrine in Balochistan's Jhal Magsi district Thursday evening, officials said. The explosion took place outside Dargah Pir Rakhel Shah in Fatehpur town of the district where Urs celebrations were underway, officials said, adding scores of people had gathered at the shrine to pay their respects at the time of the blast. Thursdays are usually busy in terms of attendance at shrines as the day is considered spiritually significant. Jhal Magsi district police officer Mohammad Iqbal confirmed that it was a suicide blast. He said a constable was killed while attempting to stop the suicide bomber from entering the shrine. "Police grabbed him and the suicide bomber detonated the explosives," he

said. The death toll and nature of the blast was also confirmed by a district health officer.

<http://dailytimes.com.pk/pakistan/06-Oct-17/suicide-blast-at-jhal-magsi-shrine-kills-18>

Terror list with 37 names is fake, IB chief tells lawmakers

The director general of the Intelligence Bureau met several parliamentarians on Friday only to assure them that a list containing their names and accusing them of having links with banned outfits was a fake document and not issued by his agency. Having names of 37 lawmakers who were alleged to have links with banned outfits, the list first came to light when a private television channel aired a report claiming that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had directed the IB to keep a close watch on these legislators, who mostly belong to the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-N. The meeting between the parliamentarians and IB chief Aftab Sultan was arranged by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362269>

Pak actions “turned the tide” against terror, Maleeha Lodhi

A top Pakistani diplomat has told the United Nations that Pakistan has “turned the tide” against terrorism through a series of determined actions that led to the destruction of terrorist infrastructures and bases in its Tribal Areas and along the Pak-Afghan border region. “Terrorism in Pakistan is an unfortunate by product of the political and geo-strategic developments and foreign interventions in our neighbourhood over the past 40 years,” Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi, Pakistan’s permanent representative to the UN, told the UN General Assembly’s Sixth Committee, which deals with legal matters. Speaking in a debate on terrorism, Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi highlighted measures such as a dedicated counterterrorism force and an across-the-board military campaign, the largest anti-terrorism operation anywhere in the world, to destroy terrorist infrastructures and bases in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and Pakistani Tribal Areas.

<http://nation.com.pk/national/07-Oct-2017/pak-actions-turned-the-tide-against-terror-says-maleeha>

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