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FORTNIGHTLY REPORT ON PAKISTAN

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This report is based on the reading of Pakistani media during the last two weeks.

India-Pakistan

After a long spell of tension at the LoC and international border, a lull in cross-LoC exchanges between the two armed forces has been witnessed. However, the political temperature in Pakistan, especially over Kashmir, is not subsiding. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reiterated Pakistan's moral, political and diplomatic support to the "freedom struggle" of the people of Kashmir. His Chief of Army Staff Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa too echoed this view when he stated that for a lasting peace in the region the core issue of Kashmir needed to be resolved in the line with UN resolutions and aspirations of the people of Kashmir. Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaraia in his recent media interaction went a step further and stated that the relations with India would not improve until it stops persecuting Kashmiris.

During the Heart of Asia Conference in Amritsar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani lashed out at Pakistan for using non-state actors to destabilise the region. Although Prime Minister Modi did not name Pakistan for the terrorist activities in the region, President Ghani was blunt enough to turn down a Pakistani offer of \$500 million for development. Instead, he suggest that Pakistan should use the funds to counter terrorists inside their own country that create problems for other neighboring countries of South Asia. Pakistan interpreted the development as an Indian effort to drive a wedge between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Sartaj Aziz, responding to the development in Amritsar, argued that Indian effort to divide Afghanistan and Pakistan would not go far as the two countries were next-door neighbours.

Internal Politics

Internal political development in the country is taking interesting twists and turns. Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has asked Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf to submit all the necessary documents relating to its foreign funding or face the consequences. The full

bench of ECP has clearly told PTI to submit these document without fail and that too much before the next hearing of the case i.e. January 16, 2017.

In a quite disturbing development, Maulana Masroor Nawaz Jhangvi, the son of infamous cleric Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who was supported by the banned sectarian outfit Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) defeated the ruling PML-N candidate in a by-poll held for Punjab Assembly's Jhang constituency. PPP Chairman Bilwawl Bhutto argued that the Jhang by-election result had buried Pakistan's National Action Plan (NAP). He even demanded the removal of Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan and threatened to launch a "Go Nawaz Go" campaign if his demands were not fulfilled.

Having realised the problems and ground realities, Imran Khan led PTI announced to end its boycott of the parliament. It has now decided to table a couple of motions against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Other political parties including Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) welcomed this move. Siarjul Haq, the Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami not only appreciated PTI for its decision to end the parliament boycott but also urged opposition parties to unite for the accountability of the rulers.

Panamagate

The tension between government and the opposition over Panamagate is continuing. Jamaat-e-Islami has urged the apex court of Pakistan to appoint Enquiry and Trial Commission and declare the Panama Leaks papers as its basic documents. The JI Chief Sirajul Haq in his freshly filed application in the Supreme Court has also pleaded to make all person and their family members and business partners respondents whose name appeared in the Panama list. PTI Chairman Imran Khan too urged the apex court to decide the case itself instead of forming a judicial commission to hold an inquiry into the leaks. He was of the view that a commission would only be fruitful when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif resigned from his post. He also urged the Supreme Court to hear the case on a daily basis so that the issue could be resolved at the earliest. Earlier the Court had asked all the parties to decide if they wanted to form a commission or not.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has somewhat become the new national anthem of Pakistan which everyone sings proudly. In addition to Pakistan Army's Special Security Division (SPD), Navy has recently assembled a "Task Force-88" for the seaward security of the Gwadar port and protection of associated sea lanes against both traditional and non-traditional threats. The task force comprises Ships, Fast Attack Craft, Aircraft, Drones, and Surveillance Assets. Besides, marines would also be deployed at sea and around Gwadar for security operations.

Some of the media reports suggest that CPEC was also reviving a number of loss-making entities of Pakistan. As per one newspaper report, the Public Accounts Committee had asked the Privatisation Commission to remove the State Engineering Corporation from the list of organisations to be privatized because its loss-making subsidiaries were set to become profitable after the launch of the CPEC.
