

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 saw another attack on its minority Christian community in which 11 people were killed. Political situation remained messy as there were reports about five law makers quitting the PML-N demanding action against, Rana Sanaullah, Law Minister of Punjab. The debate over *Sadiq* and *Ameen* remained talk of the town since petition against Imran Khan was dismissed while the Supreme Court declared Jahangir Tareen as 'dishonest' and was disqualified. After the verdict, Tareen resigned as the General Secretary of the party calling the petition by PML-N's Hanif Abbasi "malicious". In a significant development the US cleared \$700 million as reimbursement to Pakistan ending uncertainty regarding release of fund.

COMMENTARY

The State of Minorities in Pakistan

*Smruti S Pattanaik**

On 17th December, a suicide bomber exploded himself in a Church in Quetta killing 11 people of the minority Christian community who had assembled there for a pre-Christmas celebration and wounded around 40 people. The ISIS claimed the responsibility for the attack. However, this is not the first attack on the Christian community of Pakistan. They have been systematically targeted by religious zealots, the worst incident being the incident in Kasur where a Christian couple working in brick kiln who were burnt to death over alleged blasphemy by a mob while police watched in the vicinity. Apart from this, the Gojra violence in 2009 and

Gujranwala attack on Christians, arson attack on Joseph colony, suicide attack on the All Saints Church in Peshawar all in 2013, suicide bomb attack on two churches in Youhanabad, Lahore in 2014, Easter attack in March 2016 are some among many attacks on Christian place of worship in Pakistan. The case of Asiya Bibi, a poor Christian woman whose case was defended by former Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, who demanded revocation of Bibi's death sentence and the repeal of the blasphemy law which has been misused to settle personal score. He was subsequently killed by his body guard Mumtaz Qadri of the so-called non-radical Berelvi faith, for demand repeal of blasphemy law, is very well known. Taseer's killing and the manner in which lawyers showered his killer, Mumtaz Qadri, with rose petals when he appeared for a hearing of his case in the court, illustrates the situation in Pakistan. The hanging of Mumtaz Qadri, killer of Taseer and the massive turn out of people when he was buried, points to the larger malaise of the state. Unlike the Hindus and Ahmadi's, the Christians are scattered all over the country and do odd jobs and many of them are extremely poor. Christians are estimated to make up for 1.6 per cent of the population.

The Christians, Hindus and the Ahmadi's are the target of jihadists. Very often their property and business is targeted. In the context of Hindus and Christians there are forceful conversion and Hindu girls are kidnapped and forcefully married to the Muslims or they are sometime compelled to change religion even to survive. From being 20 per cent of Pakistan's population after independence, the minority population, according to 1998 census has come down to 3 per cent. While ISIS and likeminded groups target the minorities' population and perpetuate violence and attack their place of

worship, it is clear that the institutions in Pakistan have failed to protect them. After Taseer's killing, Pakistan's minorities' minister, Shahbaz Bhatti, an advocate of reform of the country's blasphemy laws was killed in Islamabad by motorcycle-borne assailants in front of his house. These killings silenced all those who were openly advocating the repealing of blasphemy law.

Since 2001, Pakistan minorities are allowed to vote with the majority community after the separate electorate system was abolished. Yet, their plight hardly gets national attention and the government has done little to alleviate the situation. Interestingly, the joint electorate disenfranchised the Ahmadi community as they have to register themselves as non-Muslims to vote in the election. Some of the Hindus have migrated to India, but Christians and Ahmadi's bear the brunt of minority violence. Interestingly, behind the mob violence is Pakistan's notorious blasphemy law and especially section C. Blasphemy laws are used against the minorities to dispose them of land, settle a personal score and mostly used in property dispute to dispose the minority of his property. The allegation of desecration of Quran or insulting the prophet is often commonly used to incite mob violence. Even the law enforcing authorities are fearful of protecting the minorities if it involves the case of blasphemy.

Though the military regime of Musharraf wanted to bring in changes to the country's blasphemy law, introduced during General Zia's period, he met with a stiff resistance from the clergy. The blasphemy law especially 295 C states, "anyone who Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine." The option of life imprisonment was made null and void after a 1991 Federal Sharia Court judgement. Not just the blasphemy law is used to victimise a person belonging to the minority community but also not many lawyers agree to defend those who are accused of committing blasphemy. Any attempt to release the alleged offender may result in death threats. The blasphemy law has also targeted Muslims. One of the famous case was that of Prof Yunus, a teacher in Islamabad's Homeopathy College and the recent case relates to Mashal Khan who was beaten and shot dead for allegedly committing blasphemy. The Islamabad

court while sentencing the people who were behind Mashal Khan's brutal killing asked the government to repeal the law to prevent people from falsely filling cases as "currently, there is a very minor punishment for falsely accusing someone of blasphemy."

The minority issue remained a thorny issue in Pakistan in spite of the Liaquat Nehru Pact on the treatment of Hindu minorities. A ruling PML-N member of National Assembly Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani while speaking in the house said that every year 5,000 Hindus are migrating to India. The situations of minorities have become worse in Pakistan due to rising religious intolerance and institutional discrimination. As the state remains hand in gloves with fundamentalist organisations there is a little hope for the minorities in Pakistan

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

POLITICS

New challenge for PML-N as five legislators quit

Five legislators of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) all from Punjab announced their resignations at a 'Khatm-i-Nubuwwat conference. They announced their resignation while protesting against the government inaction over their demand for the resignation of Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah who has drawn the flak for his recent controversial remarks. The conference was organised on the call of Pir Sialvi who just a day earlier had claimed that 50 or so parliamentarians would tender their resignation at the gathering.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375913/new-challenge-for-pml-n-as-five-legislators-quit>

Five religious parties join forces to revive MMA

The decision to revive the alliance was announced on Wednesday by Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) chief Shah Ovais Noorani at his residence in Clifton where central leadership of the six component parties of the alliance

were present. They include Maulana Fazlur Rehman of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, Sirajul Haq of the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Allama Sajid Mir of Jamiat Ahle Hadith (JAH) and Allama Sajid Naqvi of Tehreek-i-Islami (TI). Announcing other decisions made at a meeting of the parties held prior to the presser, Mr Noorani said that the MMA would take part in the general elections next year with its previous election symbol (book) and its manifesto would be drafted within one month.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376520/five-religious-parties-join-forces-to-revive-mma>

Imran Khan not out, Jahangir Tareen disqualified for being ‘dishonest’: Supreme Court

The Supreme Court on Friday handed down its much-awaited judgement in the Imran Khan, Jahangir Tareen disqualification case, rejecting Hanif Abbasi’s petition for Khan’s disqualification but disqualifying Jahangir Tareen for being “dishonest”. The bench found PTI secretary general Jahangir Tareen to be dishonest under Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and Section 99 of Representation of People Act (ROPA) on one count among the multiple charges brought against him.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376766>

ECONOMY

In CPEC talks, Chinese drive a hard bargain with Pakistan

Pakistan appeared to have been pushed hard by the Chinese side to give in more than it secured in return during the recently held 7th joint cooperation committee (JCC) meeting of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This is evident from the minutes of the 7th meeting on a series of issues including revision in the completion deadlines of the energy projects, the Main Line-1 project and early activation of revolving fund in 30 days for payments to Chinese sponsors. The JCC agreed that Pakistan’s agencies in power sector and Chinese project sponsors should sign the supplemental agreements at the earliest and decided that “Pakistani

side will address timely payment of electricity charge in power projects under CPEC as soon as possible”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376231/in-cpec-talks-chinese-drive-a-hard-bargain-with-pakistan>

Trump signs bill that includes \$700m reimbursement for Pakistan

US President Donald Trump has signed into law a \$700 billion defence bill that includes up to \$700 million to reimburse Pakistan for supporting US military operations in Afghanistan. President Trump put his signature on this sweeping defence policy bill, which also authorizes additional spending on missile defence programmes to counter North Korea’s growing nuclear weapons threat. But half of this amount has been withheld and can only be released if the US secretary of defence certifies that Pakistan is taking demonstrable steps for curbing the Haqqani network. This was the first indication that the United States could show leniency in Pakistan’s disputes with India if Islamabad agrees to help it out in Afghanistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376517/trump-signs-bill-that-includes-700m-reimbursement-for-pakistan>

Industry raises red flag over imminent oil crisis

The oil industry has raised the red flag over imminent closure of local refineries and related inability of the oil companies to provide enough fuels for smooth operations of aviation and security aircraft. The oil industry has been struggling for a sixth week to cope with setback caused by closure of oil-based power plants in October. The jet fuels at almost all the airports had reached critical stage. The throughput reduction was “severely impacting the supply of all other petroleum products. The sources said the defence authorities had written a series of letters to the quarters concerned to keep a close watch on fuel supplies required for the Air Force in view of depleting stocks. Defence authorities are reported to have expressed serious concerns over the situation at a last week product review meeting and warned of serious consequences.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375912/industry-raises-red-flag-over-imminent-oil-crisis>

SECURITY

Two military men martyred near Afghan border

A young military officer and a soldier were martyred when terrorists opened fire on their vehicle near the Afghan border in North Waziristan Agency. “Freedom is not free; it costs sons of the soil. Freedom that we enjoy today is owed to so many such brave hearts. Salute to our martyrs,” Chief of the Army Staff Qamar Javed Bajwa was quoted as saying in a tweet by the ISPR director general. North Waziristan Agency has witnessed a surge in militant attacks during the past three weeks.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376346/two-military-men-martyred-near-afghan-border>

Vienna Convention doesn't apply to spy operations, Pakistan tells ICJ

Pakistan has told the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a counter memorial to the Indian claim that the Vienna

Convention on Consular Relations, 1963, applies only to the legitimate visitors and does not cover clandestine operations. In its memorial formally filed before the ICJ, Pakistan argued that Indian spy commander Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav was on an active duty and the only deduction that one could make was that he was a spy sent inside Pakistan on a special mission to carry out subversive activities. In its written pleadings, India had accused Pakistan of violating the Vienna Convention by not giving consular access to Jadhav and argued that the convention did not say anything that such access would not be available to an individual arrested on the allegation of espionage.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376534/vienna-convention-doesnt-apply-to-spy-operations-pakistan-tells-icj>

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