

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's relations with the United States have seen several ups and down. The announcement of President Trump's new Afghan policy raised several questions regarding Pakistan's support to the US war on terror in Afghanistan. After Pakistan's cancellation of high level visits to the US, the relationship seems to fall in place. Rex Tillerson's visit to some extent tried to assuage Pakistan's dissatisfaction with the US and especially its effort to upgrade India's role in Afghanistan. However, the US remains firm that India needs to play a larger role in Afghanistan. Given the importance of Afghanistan in Pakistan's foreign policy, the Trump administration's Afghan policy occupied larger media space in Pakistan.

COMMENTARY

Tillerson's Visit to Pakistan

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Discussions during US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson's visit to Pakistan on 24 October, 2017 underscored the importance that the Trump administration attaches to Pakistan taking stringent action against militants and terrorists operating from bases within its territory, and facilitating the peace process in Afghanistan. Before that, Tillerson, during his visit to Afghanistan, revealed that the US has made "very specific requests" to Pakistan about dealing with militancy. He stated that relations with Pakistan would hinge on whether or not Pakistan was delivering on the actions expected of it. Such requests acquire a sense of urgency when seen in the context of President Trump's enunciation of a policy

of fast retribution against militants and the US Government's plans to remove certain restrictions regarding the use of drones. The threat of the use of drones to target militants within Pakistani territory, besides the tribal areas, remains.

Tillerson's visit is part of the ongoing negotiations at different levels of Government between the two sides as efforts towards implementing Trump's South Asia Strategy gain momentum. Even though strong reactions emanated from Pakistan in the aftermath of Trump's pronouncements, it is apparent that both sides have shown a willingness to engage. The continued mutual dependence of each country on the other persists. Pakistan remains a mainstay for US operations in Afghanistan due to the need for the use of its air and land corridors for transporting supplies. Yet, the US wields considerable influence in international financial institutions, on which Pakistan relies upon for development aid and for help in propping up its faltering economy. Given the precarious balance of payments situation, dwindling foreign exchange reserves and a widening current account deficit, a fall back to the IMF is a possibility. While Pakistan is hoping to take measures to reduce such dependence, the impact of any measures taken would likely be felt in the medium to long term, with the near term perhaps still needing to be managed with external help. Also, the US has in the last one and a half decades been a major source of arms for Pakistan, including not only those that can be used to combat terrorism and insurgency, but also those which are geared towards conventional warfare. Continued intransigence on the part of Pakistan could put military aid and highly valued arms transfers on hold. It is increasingly apparent that security assistance to Pakistan will be predicated on the cooperation received. Such realisation is implicit in actions taken on both sides. Recently, Pakistan helped

to free a Canadian-American couple and their children being held hostage by militants and in turn received praise from the US. Prior to Tillerson's visit to Islamabad, a US drone strike targeted the top leadership of Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a splinter group of the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and one that has engineered a number of attacks within the country, including on state institutions and law enforcement personnel. US help in elimination of terrorists fomenting trouble in Pakistan has been a key demand of Pakistan.

While Pakistan continues to be viewed as being part of the problem in securing and stabilising Afghanistan, US is increasingly looking towards India to play a larger role in Afghanistan. This expectation was portrayed in President Trump's address to the nation in August 2017 in which he earmarked plans for US engagement with Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Such thinking was further amplified during Rex Tillerson's talk at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C. a few days before his trip to the subcontinent. Any expansion of India's role in Afghanistan is considered inimical to Pakistan's interests by the Pakistani establishment and intelligentsia, and during talks the Pakistani delegation raised concerns about India acquiring a greater role in the region, and the US' deepening relationship with India. The National Security Council of Pakistan had earlier questioned the role envisaged for India and a statement emphasised that 'India cannot be a net security provider in the South Asia region...'. India's relevance to the US in terms of helping it to fulfil its objectives in the region was highlighted by the fact that India's help in combating extremism was acknowledged and appreciated by Tillerson during his visit to India. He also expressed concern about the threat posed by extremist groups to the stability of Pakistan. The visit of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to India after his meeting with Tillerson in Bagram, and just before Tillerson's visit to India, indicates closer policy coordination among the three countries on regional security issues.

Pushing India to the forefront in efforts towards building peace and stability in Afghanistan can provide the much needed impetus to Pakistan to act responsibly, given its reluctance to allow India extra space in the region. Pakistan has received a long list of terrorists from the US on which the US presumably wants action. It has in turn given a list of terrorists to the US which it would

presumably like help in reigning in. For the time being at least this brings hopes of a coordinated approach being followed in terms of intelligence sharing. Pakistan's deniability will perhaps be overridden more strongly as attempts are made to bring on board those elements within the Taliban who are prepared to set aside differences and join peace talks. Alternately, the fear of an ascendant India can also cause Pakistan to maintain its links with the Taliban, at the same time moving closer to China and Russia to offset any major losses from the US on the economic and military front. As the tolerance level of these countries towards terrorism is also low, Pakistan will not be completely free from pressures with regard to taking strong action against militants.

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THE WEEK AT A GLANCE

POLITICS

Sharjeel Memon sent on 10-day judicial remand

An accountability court remanded on Tuesday former provincial information minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader, Sharjeel Inam Memon, to custody of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for ten days for questioning in connection with a Rs5.76 billion government advertisements graft scam. The court also issued notices to the bureau on two applications moved by Memon, seeking medical facilities and B class in jail. On Monday, Memon was arrested by NAB officials after playing hide and seek for over six hours in and outside the Sindh High Court (SHC), which had cancelled his interim pre-arrest bail and ordered the anti-graft watchdog to arrest him, along with 11 co-accused.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1539915/1-sharjeel-memon-sent-10-day-judicial-remand/>

Partnership linked to new strategy, US tells Pakistan

The United States on Tuesday pressed Pakistan to accept President Donald Trump's new Afghanistan policy - with a greater role for India - if it desired partnership with Washington, The Nation has learnt. US Secretary of

State Rex Tillerson, who visited Islamabad, made it clear to Pakistan's civil and military leadership that his country would not change its Afghan policy on Islamabad's demand, officials privy to the meeting told The Nation. "Tillerson was straightforward in telling us that the only way out for Pakistan [if it wanted to continue partnership with Washington] is to accept new policies of the US. Tillerson emphasised the US wanted India's engagement on the Afghan issue," said one official, adding the US asked Pakistan to go for the kill against all terror outfits.

<http://nation.com.pk/25-Oct-2017/partnership-linked-to-new-strategy-us-tells-pakistan>

No surrender to US demands, Asif tells Senate

Ruling out any surrender before the US or a compromise on the country's sovereignty, Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif told the Senate on Wednesday that Washington had handed over a list of 75 wanted terrorists. Briefing the upper house on the recent visit by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and his statement about certain "specific requests", the minister said that many of the individuals on the list were not alive, while others were shadow Taliban governors in different provinces of Afghanistan. He said that while the Haqqanis were on top of the list, it did not contain the name of a single Pakistani.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366298>

Warrants out as Sharif skips court hearing

An accountability court on Thursday issued bailable arrest warrants against deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif after he failed to appear before the court in connection with three references filed by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). While issuing the warrants, Judge Muhammad Bashir dismissed Sharif's application for exemption from personal appearance. The judge issued warrants in two references against Sharif, while in the third reference, he issued notice to a surety giver. Sharif, in the application, filed through his counsel Khawaja Haris, pleaded that he had not been able to return to Pakistan, because of deterioration of the condition of his wife Kulsoom Nawaz.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1541570/1-accountability-court-issues-arrest-warrants-for-nawaz/>

ECONOMY

Petroleum division directors not paid for three years

The federal government is not paying salaries to the provincial directors working in Directorate General of Petroleum Concessions (DGPC) Petroleum Division, even after 30 months of their joining. In October 2016, the federal government agreed to provide MP-II scale to the provincial directors but the decision was not executed, official source told The Nation. The official said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had nominated its director to DGPC in 2014, followed by Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab but so far no salary was paid by the federal government. All the provinces are demanding the finalisation of pay structure for the provincial directors working in DGPC; however, in violation of Petroleum Policy 2012 and 18th amendment the federal government is not paying any salaries.

<http://nation.com.pk/23-Oct-2017/petroleum-div-directors-not-paid-for-three-years>

Power tariff increased by Rs1.2 per unit

After resisting for more than two years, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Tuesday approved Rs1.52 per unit average increase in the base tariff for all consumers of ex-Wapda distribution companies (Discos), involving annual additional revenue of Rs115.2 billion. With this, the base tariff for Discos would go up by an average Rs2 per unit including a 48-paisa per unit increase already determined by the regulator last month. The regulator issued 10 separate tariff determinations for respective Discos and forwarded to the government on Tuesday for an advice on increase in tariff for each category depending on the element of subsidy and uniform tariff methodology. The combined impact of two decisions has been worked at about Rs140bn.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366027>

Body formed to probe sale of PIA airbus to German firm

The Senate Special Committee on the Performance of PIA on Thursday constituted a sub-committee to probe the scandal of the sale of PIA Airbus (A-310) to a

German firm in violation of Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules. The sub-committee will comprise senators Farhatullah Babar, Tahir Hussain Mashhadi and Nauman Wazir Khattak and will probe Air Commodore Imran Akhter's role in the scandal. The committee, which met under the chair of Chairman Senator Muzaffar Hussain Shah at the Parliament House, was briefed by the Adviser to Prime Minister on Civil Aviation Sardar Mehtab Abbasi that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) were already probing the matter and their inquiries were underway.

<http://nation.com.pk/27-Oct-2017/body-formed-to-probe-sale-of-pia-airbus-to-german-firm>

PPP ready to review 18th amendment for Punjab industries uniform gas rates

On the demand of Punjab's industrial sector, the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) has shown its willingness to amend the constitution for supply of natural gas to all provinces on equitable basis and at uniform rate. Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue Chairman Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, who is a close aide of Asif Zardari and whose statement is considered as a policy statement of the party, has agreed with the industrialists of Punjab that RLNG and system gas should be provided at uniform price to industrial consumers both for captive and processing use across the country at the rate of Rs600/mmbtu as charged in Sindh.

<http://nation.com.pk/28-Oct-2017/ppp-ready-to-review-18th-amendment-for-punjab-industries-uniform-gas-rates>

SECURITY

Eight Ansarul Sharia militants killed in Karachi 'encounter'

Eight suspected militants belonging to the newly-formed Ansarul Sharia Pakistan (ASP) were shot dead in an 'encounter' jointly carried out by Pakistan Rangers, Sindh and the police's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Baldia's Raees Goth in the wee hours of Sunday morning, according to officials. Two personnel of the paramilitary force and one policeman were injured

during the heavy exchange of fire. The deceased militants were involved in nine major acts of terrorism this year, including an attack on the Leader of the Opposition in the Sindh Assembly, Khwaja Izharul Hasan, last month, said Col Faisal Awan. Speaking at a press conference at the Rangers headquarters, the official said the dead militants got training in Afghanistan and were "ideologically linked" with the banned Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1365608>

No confirmation of Khorasani's death in drone attack

The Senate Standing Committee on Defence was informed on Thursday that it could not be confirmed that Jamaatul Ahrar (JuA) chief Omar Khalid Khorasani had been killed in a US drone strike. Speaking at a meeting of the committee, Defence Secretary retired Lt Gen Zamirul Hassan Shah said that during the recent drone strikes by the United States in a Pakistani area along the Pak-Afghan border was targeted. He said JuA hideouts in Afghanistan were bombed by US drones.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366582>

Pakistan downs Indian spy drone

Hours after the Foreign Office sounded its opposition to a United States (US) plan to sell drones to India as part of a military deal, Pakistan Army Friday said it had shot down an 'Indian' quadcopter suspected of 'spying' on the Rakhchikri sector along the Line of Control (LoC). "Indian quadcopter spying across LoC in Rakhchikri sector shot down by Pakistan Army shooters," Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) tweeted. The army said it had seized the wreckage, likely for the analysis purposes.

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/131264/pakistan-downs-indian-spy-drone/>

Afghan deputy governor abducted in Peshawar

Unidentified gunmen abducted Muhammad Nabi Ahmadi, the deputy governor of Afghanistan's Kunar province, in Dabgari area of Peshawar on Friday – a

day after he arrived in the city for an appointment with a doctor, local police and an Afghan diplomat confirmed on Saturday. Afghan Consul General in Peshawar Moeen Mrastyal said that Ahmadi had come to Peshawar on Thursday where he had an appointment with a doctor in Dabgari. “There, he was abducted by unidentified

gunmen and we still haven’t heard anything about him,” he added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1543836/1-afghan-deputy-governor-abducted-peshawar/>



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