

January 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 23RD TO JANUARY 29TH 2017

‘PAKISTAN’S NUCLEAR REPROCESSING WILL DISRUPT TIES WITH US’

Dawn January 26th, 2017

KARACHI: In the light of Pakistan’s advances to build a reprocessing plant for extracting plutonium, a top Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official alerted the US government to the significant development, a declassified report highlighted.

The remarks were made by the then CIA deputy director to the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board in November 1982, in a document titled ‘World Events Affecting the US’.

Marked under the subheading ‘Pakistan’s nuclear weapons development’, the document contains a brief entry to US officials’ knowledge of Pakistan’s attempts at the time towards building a nuclear weapon.

“Pakistanis continue to move towards the fabrication of a nuclear explosive device. They are buying components and equipment for building a nuclear implosion weapon and reportedly will start up the reprocessing plant for extracting plutonium within the next two months or so. President Zia knows that any reprocessing operations — even those which the Pakistanis may consider legal — could disrupt the US-Pakistani security relationship”.

In the entry, the official also adds that no information with regard to China’s involvement in Pakistan’s nuclear activities or Indian reactions has come to the forefront.

A declassified worldwide report, ‘Nuclear Development and Proliferation’, features a German newspaper report — dated July 1981 — detailing how German scientists and then Libyan head of state, Muammar Qadhafi, ‘secretly’ helped Pakistan become an atomic power.

“Only a few days ago, Pakistani dictator General Ziaul Haq claimed that his country had no intention of developing atomic weapons. But he is secretly working on making a bomb. Pakistan’s helpers— Federal Republic of Germany scientists and Libyan head of state Qadhafi with his oil millions,” the article starts.

It goes on to describe a meeting between three Germans and four Pakistanis, including “a high government official”.

“Production is in works since April, 1980. By 1982 at the latest, Pakistan will have enough fissionable material to be able to build its first atom bomb, something the US, Soviet and Israeli intelligence services have been afraid would happen ever since the mid-seventies. Details are not known by them, however—particularly not the way Germans perceive but that Pakistan is rising to the level of an atomic power”.

The report claims: “Qadhafi and [Zulfikar Ali] Bhutto agreed in a secret accord that Islamabad would build the bomb, and that Tripoli would fund it and receive finished nuclear weapons in return.”

The article further claims that Qadhafi transported \$500 million to Karachi by air.

“To prevent Qadhafi’s oil millions for building the ‘Islamic bomb’ from going through state accounts that were checked by the International Monetary Fund, the deal between the two states was executed like smugglers. His couriers transported suitcases full of wad of dollars via Rome to Karachi in Pakistan International Airlines aircraft”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1310831/pakistans-nuclear-reprocessing-will-disrupt-ties-with-us>

PAKISTAN, TURKEY TO BOOST DEFENCE TIES

Dawn January 26th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Turkey opened on Wednesday their two-day defence talks aimed at increasing bilateral cooperation.

The Pakistani side at the talks was led by Defence Secretary retired Lt Gen Zamirul Hassan Shah whereas the Turkish delegation was headed by Turkish Deputy Chief of General Staff Gen Umit Dunder.

The talks are part of the bilateral dialogue group which was set up in 2003 and is the highest institutional mechanism steering the defence cooperation. Its mandate is to suggest policies and action plans for collaboration between the two countries in the defence sector.

The last round of talks was held in Ankara in October 2015.

Pakistan and Turkey have over the years made significant strides in their defence cooperation.

At the last year’s meeting of the group, Turkey had gifted 34 T-37 aircraft and spares to Pakistan. Turkey is, meanwhile, buying MFI-17 Super Mushshak aircraft from Pakistan besides upgrading three Pakistani submarines and jointly building the fleet tanker.

Several other projects are also under way. Troops from the two countries have also held joint drills.

A joint statement on the dialogue would be issued at the end of the talks on Thursday.

Gen Dunder, meanwhile, called on Defence Minister Khawaja Asif.

Talking to the Turkish official, Mr Asif expressed Pakistan’s strong desire to strengthen its partnership with Turkey in all fields, including the defence sector.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1310823/pakistan-turkey-to-boost-defence-ties>

STRENGTHENING DEFENCES

The Express Tribune, January 26th, 2017.

There is no direct connection between the invitation by President Trump to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he visit the USA ‘this year’ — and a missile test in Pakistan but the call that contained the invitation went beyond the symbolic. Also beyond the symbolic was the first successful test of the Ababeel surface-to-surface ballistic missile that uses the Multi Independent Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) to deliver its nuclear payload.

The two came within days of the inauguration of President Trump and geopolitical observers have already noted that President Trump reached out to India during his first week in office. India, it would seem, is America’s new Best Friend Forever — except that there is no such thing as forever in international relationships and America has an eye to the vast Indian market for its goods, a subject dear to the Trump heart.

For Pakistan the launch of this missile, capable of delivering multiple warheads is a considerable technical achievement, and there is now the capacity to engage with multiple targets with a high level of precision with the potential to disrupt or destroy the radars that are essential to India’s own missile defence system which is currently in development. With a range of 2,200 kilometres — three times the distance between Islamabad and New Delhi — the development of this weapon is being seen within the defence establishment as a minimal measure to restore balance to the deterrence equation. This balance is seen as essential to the wider maintenance of defence systems regionally.

Pakistan now has the capability to launch missiles that give it second-strike capacity from land, sea and air. Deterrence is the watchword, but it comes at a price. Defence parity does not come cheap and is expensive to maintain once operationalised.

This is the price that both India and Pakistan have to pay for failing to resolve one of the worlds’ most intractable conflicts — Kashmir. President Trump has already offered to lend a hand in its resolution, the task having defeated every other international player since Independence. The longer the failure persists the poorer are both countries, but Pakistan cannot afford to drop its guard to the east.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1306904/strengthening-defences/>

PAKISTAN, TURKEY TO NEGOTIATE COMPREHENSIVE DEFENCE ACCORD

Dawn, January 27th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Turkey agreed on Thursday to negotiate a comprehensive bilateral strategic framework agreement for promoting bilateral cooperation.

This was announced at the end of a two-day meeting of the High Level Military Dialogue Group.

At the talks, the Pakistani side was led by Defence Secretary retired Lt Gen Zamirul Hasan Shah, whereas Gen Umit Dunder, Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff, led the visiting delegation.

No details were given about the proposed agreement except for a single-line announcement that the accord would “encompass all facets of cooperation”.

The two countries already have High Level Strategic Cooperation Council, which the two sides say is meant to reflect the strategic nature of their relations.

At the talks, the two sides reviewed mutual defence and security cooperation and exchanged views on prevailing regional environment, particularly with reference to Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Defence cooperation between Pakistan and Turkey has increased manifold over the past few years.

“Delegation leaders resolved to work together for enhanced cooperation in defence and security related fields,” a joint statement issued at the end of the meeting said.

Gen Dunder also met Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gen Zubair Hayat, Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Bajwa and Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman.

“Matters relating to defence cooperation covering training, exchange of visits and co-production of defence equipment were discussed in these meetings,” a statement said.

The ISPR said that Gen Bajwa and Gen Dunder at their meeting agreed to optimise military-to-military ties, particularly in training and counterterrorism domain.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311019>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 16TH TO JANUARY 22 ND 2017

ASSUAGING CONCERNS: GOVT PONDERES BRIEFING TO MPS ON MILITARY COURTS

The Express Tribune, January 17th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: The government is considering a proposal to arrange a briefing by security officials for parliamentary parties in an attempt to assuage their concerns on possible extension in the term of military courts which have ceased to function earlier this month following the expiry of their two-year term.

The proposal was floated after opposition parties, particularly Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Peoples Party, and Jamaat-e-Islami, sought performance reports of the military courts.

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq is scheduled to meet leaders of parliamentary parties on Tuesday (today) where he might offer them a briefing by security officials, The Express Tribune has learnt. Or the offer might be held back until all other options fail to evolve consensus.

“Hopefully, a word from the horse’s mouth will help,” said a senior PML-N leader explaining the motive behind the proposal. “Politics aside, let’s place the right people for the right task.”

According to sources, at the government instructions, some ministers recently sought input from the security establishment, which has readily expressed willingness to allay concerns of opposition parties. “We approached them [security establishment] through informal channels and they are willing to assuage the concerns of opposition parties,” said one source.

PML-N leaders argue that briefings by security officials to MPs on security matters is not something new as security and intelligence officials periodically update federal lawmakers mainly from the platform of parliamentary committees. They refer to the 2011 confidential briefing by the military brass to parliament on the Abbottabad raid.

PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi doubts the government is serious in extending the term of military courts. "The government is playing a double-game. On the one hand, Punjab's law minister opposes military courts, while on the other hand, the federal law minister supports them," he told The Express Tribune.

"Publicly, the government is seeking extension in the military courts' term, but actually that doesn't seem to be the case," he added. "How can we trust the prime minister who has failed to convince his political allies, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and PkMAP leader Mehmood Khan Achakzai, to give up their opposition to military courts?"

Asked about the proposal of briefing to opposition parties, Qureshi said: "We will see in Tuesday's meeting what the government has to offer. We'll take a decision accordingly." He, however, added that the military courts had done a great job resulting in a remarkable decline in incidents of terrorism in the country.

On his part, PPP leader Syed Khursheed Shah said the government has so far not shared any such proposal with his party. "We have already made it clear: our decision on military courts would be determined by all relevant factors, mainly their performance," he added. "We have an important meeting with the speaker today. We'll see what the government is doing to allay our concerns."

JI chief Sirajul Haq said there was no harm in security officials briefing politicians on the military courts. "It helps in bridging communication gap and harmonize civil-military relations," he added. "We will see in today's meeting how far the government can go to take the political forces in loop on military courts."

Premier Nawaz Sharif's adviser Ameer Muqam offered a cautious response. "It is too early to comment. An important meeting is scheduled on Tuesday. The government wants to extend military courts' tenure and is trying to evolve political consensus. I would be in a better position to say something after the meeting."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1297440/assuaging-concerns-govt-ponders-briefing-mps-military-courts//>

LAW ENFORCEMENT: SUMMARY MOVED TO EXTEND RANGERS' POWERS

The Express Tribune, January 17th, 2017.

KARACHI: The home department sent a summary on Monday to the chief minister regarding the extension of the Rangers' special powers for 90 days. Policing powers were granted to the law enforcers on October 17, 2016.

Talking to The Express Tribune, home secretary Shakeel Mangnejo said, "We have sent the summary and the powers will be given the law enforcers soon". Officials at Chief Minister House said that the same powers will be given to the Rangers, with no changes.

"The Rangers have to get permission from the chief minister before taking action at government office or arresting any political figure," disclosed a senior official at CM House on the basis of anonymity, adding that the Rangers will not be able to take suspects into custody for 90 days. "The 90-day powers have already expired.

These powers were given under Section 11-EE of the Anti-Terrorism Act to detain suspects for three months but this law was passed for just two years and expired last year,” said an official requesting anonymity. He added that the Sindh government has asked the federal interior minister to promulgate an ordinance or pass the bill before giving the Rangers 90-day detention powers again.

“Now the Rangers can start snap-checking, conduct operations with the police, arrest suspects and hand over the same to the police within 24 hours,” said an additional secretary in the home department.

The power tussle between the Sindh government and Rangers is not new. It started when personnel of the paramilitary force started conducting raids on various government offices, arresting bureaucrats and politicians.

The Pakistan Peoples Party-led government refused to extend the powers last year and got a resolution passed in the Sindh Assembly curtailing the paramilitary force’s powers and asking them to seek the chief minister and chief secretary’s permission before proceeding with high profile cases. But the federal interior ministry, while setting aside the Sindh Assembly resolution, issued a notification from Islamabad asking the Sindh home department to give the same powers to the force.

Additional advocate-general Mustafa Mahesar refuted claims of a current dispute over the powers. “We have discussed this issue with the CM and special powers will be given with effect from Monday,” he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1297171/law-enforcement-summary-moved-extend-rangers-powers/>

ZARB-I-AZB IN NORTH WAZIRISTAN COST \$1.9 BILLION: EXPERT
Dawn, January 18th, 2017

PESHAWAR: A security analyst has disclosed that the Zarb-i-Azb military operation in North Waziristan Agency against militants has cost \$1.9 billion.

Speaking at the ‘2nd National Conference on the Economic Currents and Opportunities for Economic Development in Fata’ at the University of Peshawar on Tuesday, Maria Saifuddin Effendi, who teaches at the National Defence University of Islamabad, said the Pakistan Army was able to recover tons of explosives.

“Security forces shut down bomb factories and eliminated over 500 terrorists with an expenditure of \$1.9 billion,” she said.

The analyst proposed that local people be involved rather than non-locals and foreigners to ensure the successful peace building in Fata.

The Pakistan Army had stated that over 3,000 terrorists were killed in the offensive that was launched in June 2014.

The Cell for Fata Studies, University of Peshawar, arranged the event.

In the opening remarks, Vice-Chancellor of University of Peshawar Dr Mohammad Rasul Jan said Fata was a national issue, whose decision must be taken quickly to safeguard the well-being of local population and national interest.

He said peace in Pakistan was only possible if there was peace in its neighbours, especially Afghanistan.

Senior police officer Syed Akhtar Ali Shah in his presentation explained the impact of militancy on socio-economic dynamics of Fata.

He said it was high time to 'open' tribal areas.

The officer said security situation in Fata had deteriorated after 9/11 attacks.

He said during a survey, 60 per cent people of Fata had found to be insisting that their region was at peace before the Twin Towers terrorist attacks.

Mr. Shah said it had since become a central point for drug smuggling and illegal arms trade bringing billions of dollars to the region.

He recommended two-pronged strategy for the region: involve local people in development and give the maximum opportunities to locals and industries.

Dr Noor Shah Jehan, who teaches international relations at the University of Peshawar, spoke on the economic development in Fata from the perspective of Pakistan's foreign policy.

He said the local Taliban had been used as a non-state actor by Pakistan for advancing foreign policy goals towards India-occupied Kashmir and Afghanistan.

Mr. Shah said inequalities in the region were in part due to the Dubai phenomenon, smuggling of goods and maintenance of the Malik system.

He suggested that policymakers move from geo-politics to geo-economics in Fata.

Another speaker, Naeem Tahir, said the Pakistan Army should carry out the rehabilitation and rebuilding of infrastructure in tribal areas.

The analyst said the Army was already in the area and that although the GDP and economic development was a priority, it should not be the only goal.

He said the merger of tribal areas with KP would be good for the integrity of the people of Fata and Pakistan.

Chairman of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Dr Altafullah Khan gave presentation on the role of media in the building of Fata's human image.

He said a major problem was that the people of Fata were not presented in the media as the people with problems, but instead, sensationalist headlines were churned out of the area.

Dr Altafullah said the media failed to provide specifics in its coverage of Fata and until and unless journalism got specific, clear indicators about what's actually happening would remain missing.

He suggested that capacity of journalists be built to find data rich in details and offering solutions.

"The media should view Fata as part of the country and not an outsider," he said.

Chairman of the Department of Management Sciences at GIK Swabi Dr Sabir Afridi, senior research economist Dr Mohammad Nasir and former chief secretary Khalid Aziz also spoke on the occasion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1309208/zarb-i-azb-in-north-waziristan-cost-19-billion-expert>

MILITARY COURTS HELPED WIN TERROR WAR: RAHEEL

The Express Tribune, January 18th, 2017.

Shahbaz Rana

Switzerland / Davos: Former army chief General (retd) Raheel Sharif has said the military courts were the need of the hour and helped Pakistan win the war against terrorism by dispensing swift justice.

"The military courts had convicted 170 individuals but there is still a very long list. The military courts were the need of the hour," Raheel said on Tuesday while speaking at a session during the 1st day of the 47th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The session, titled 'Terrorism in the Digital Age', was also attended by UN Counter Terrorism Committee's Executive Director Jean-Paul Laborde, King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies Chairman Turki Al Faisal Al Saud, and Nigeria's Vice President Yemi Osinbajo.

The participants acknowledged Pakistan's efforts to curb terrorism.

Over 100 mothers of innocent children who had been martyred in a barbaric attack on Peshawar's Army Public School demanded that the culprits be hanged publicly on the school premises, he said, adding that "unusual times require unusual arrangements".

Raheel's comments came at a time when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government is trying to find a solution after the constitutional term of the military courts expired on January 7.

The former army chief spoke at length about regional and international security issues affecting global peace and said, "Free speech and human rights are limitations and difficult to handle when one is dealing with hardcore terrorists."

Responding to a question about how to deal with a terrorist who was willing to give his life, Raheel said there was always a mechanism to respond. "A whole-nation approach paid off and we successfully broke the network of terrorists," he added.

He said there was a time when 150 terror incidents were taking place each month but within three years Pakistan Army had brought the number down to a single digit. "Soon there will be the first year free of any terrorist incident in Pakistan," he said.

Raheel, however, warned that terrorists have the ability to act quickly due to the digital platform. "Terrorists, their sympathisers and financiers are effectively using this digital platform."

He advised the free world to join hands and react quickly against terrorist networks. "Terrorists are thriving on glorification and there is a need to tackle this issue," he said.

He also put emphasis on intelligence sharing, which, he said, is the key to success in the war against terrorism. Turki Al Faisal agreed with Raheel that reluctance to share intelligence with a third party was imposing limitations.

"The nation states are failing to cope with the terrorism challenge but Pakistan as a nation did well," Faisal said, adding that collateral damage was a big issue that the world needed to look at to counter the terrorists' narrative.

Raheel said like terrorist networks, the states should also effectively use the counter narrative to meet the challenges posed by these tech savvy terrorists. "In order to have a peaceful world resolution of longstanding Kashmir and Palestine disputes is required," he added.

To a question about role of Taliban sympathisers, Raheel said circumstances in Pakistan were different and challenging and there was a need to recognise these challenges. He said there were three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, a porous 2,400-km-long border and tribal linkages were creating problems.

"The environment is pretty different but we are successfully managing that," he said. The former army chief said there were pockets in Afghanistan where lots of terrorists were hiding. "A lot depends upon stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan is in favour of this stability," he said.

Raheel said there was a possibility that in future the west may have cyber terrorism problems, hoping that it should not happen. "I urge the international community to sit together and develop a counter narrative system," he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1298888/military-courts-helped-win-terror-war-raheel/>

BAJWA, SAUDI ENVOY DISCUSS DEFENCE COOPERATION

Dawn January 21st, 2017

Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa said the Pakistan Army held the defence of Saudi Arabia "at par with its own".

According to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement issued on Friday, Gen Bajwa said this while talking to the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Abdullah Marzouk Al-Zahrani, who called on him at the General Headquarters.

According to the statement, “issues of bilateral relations including defence and training cooperation” were the focus of discussion between the two sides.

The army chief reassured the ambassador that the Pakistan Army regarded the defence of Saudi Arabia in the same way as Pakistan’s.

Gen Bajwa, who became the army chief in November last year, had gone on a three-day official visit to Saudi Arabia in December.

In his meeting with Saudi deputy crown prince and defence minister Muhammad bin Salman, the army chief had “reiterated Pakistan’s commitment to the security and protection of the holy mosques and also the territorial integrity of the kingdom”.

The defence minister had reassured Gen Bajwa that his country supported peace and stability in Pakistan in every way.

The army chief had also called on Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud.

They acknowledged that both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were vital players in regional stability “with significant responsibility towards the entire Muslim ummah”.

The Saudi king and Gen Bawja emphasised the need to continue working to eliminate the menace of terrorism and reinforce the mechanism to roll back extremism with even greater vigour.

He had also met Chief of General Staff of Saudi Forces Gen Abdul Rehman bin Saleh Al Bunyan and discussed military-to-military relations, defence cooperation and regional security situation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1309795/bajwa-saudi-envoy-discuss-defence-cooperation>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 9TH TO JANUARY 15TH 2017

MILITARY COURTS HELPED LOWER TERROR THREAT: ISPR

The Express Tribune, January 9th, 2017.

The military’s media wing on Sunday said the military courts, set up under the 21st amendment for a two-year term, have played a positive role in reducing terrorism in Pakistan.

“During the period of their validity, 274 cases were referred to military courts. Their disposal has yielded positive effects towards reduction in terrorist activities,” Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement, issued hours after a senior Punjab minister suggested that courts’ performance had been ‘unremarkable’.

The ISPR said the military courts were established through a constitutional amendment ‘in an environment of heightened terrorism’.

“The routine judicial system was under stress wherein judicial setups/judges were also subjected to act of terrorism. Therefore special constitutional arrangements were made to effectively check the terrorists’ activities,” it said.

The military's media wing added that out of the 274 cases referred to military courts, "161 [convicts] were awarded the death penalty, 12 were executed and 113 were awarded imprisonment of varying duration."

"The cases were dealt through due process of law in the military courts. The military courts have ceased to function on expiry of their mandated period," ISPR pointed out.

Earlier on Sunday, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah claimed the military courts' performance during their two-year term had not been anything 'remarkable'.

"The performance of military courts over the last two years has not been good enough to suggest that the system could not run without them," he told reporters. "Military courts are not a solution," he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1288720/military-courts-helped-lower-terror-threat-ispr/>

GOVT BEGINS TALKS FOR REVIVAL OF MILITARY COURTS

Dawn January 10th, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: The government on Monday signalled its intent to revive controversial military courts for trial of civilians accused of terrorism, saying it had begun consultations for bringing a constitutional amendment for the purpose.

"The federal government has already initiated consultations for a constitutional amendment to continue the military courts for a period which is agreed by all political parties represented in parliament," Prime Minister's Office said in a statement after a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on foreign policy and security.

The meeting was attended by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, ISI Director Gen Lt Gen Naveed Mukhtar, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, Special Assistant to the PM Tariq Fatemi and National Security Adviser retired Lt Gen Nasser Khan Janjua.

The 21st constitutional amendment under which the military tribunals were established in January 2015 expired on Saturday after a two-year sunset clause contained in the legislation took effect.

During their tenure the military courts tried 274 cases of terrorism and sentenced 161 terrorists to death, whereas another 116 were given varying jail terms, mostly life sentences.

Twelve convicts have been executed so far.

The end of the military courts was generally welcomed by all major political parties and civil rights activists, who had, however, at the same time expressed concern over the government's failure to bolster the Anti-Terrorism Act for effectively succeeding the ad hoc arrangement of military courts after the end of their constitutionally mandated term.

The 21st amendment was unanimously approved by both houses of parliament in the aftermath of the Dec 2014 Army Public School tragedy.

The PM Office statement said the participants of the meeting praised the performance of the military courts for complementing Operation Zarb-i-Azb against terrorism.

The government's statement about its plans for restoring the military courts stirred a fresh debate among political parties over the trial of terrorism suspects by the military. The political parties, which were apparently caught unawares by the move after the government initially allowed the legislation to lapse, betrayed confusion.

Spokesman for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government Mushtaq Ghani told journalists in Peshawar that the provincial administration was in favour of continuation of the military courts. But he later retracted the statement and said it was his personal opinion and the KP government would give its position later.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader Shireen Mazari said her party would first like to study the government's proposal.

"The government is simply doing what it always does; introducing and extending ordinances without any regard for reforming the criminal judicial system, which was the original intention of this whole exercise," she said, adding that the PTI would first like to see a blueprint for the required legal reforms.

"Just extending the time frame will not do," she cautioned.

Pakistan Peoples Party secretary general Farhatullah Babar said that since his party had not been consulted by the government so far, there had been no deliberations on the matter within the party. He said the PPP had a lot of reservations over the track record of the military courts during the last two years when they had not only failed to achieve the objective of their establishment, but also exceeded their mandate.

Leader of the Opposition in the Senate Aitzaz Ahsan, talking to journalists at the Parliament House, said the PPP principally opposed military courts, but "we believe that without military courts terrorists involved in major cases like activist Sabeen Mahmood's murder and Safoora Goth attack would have remained unpunished".

Senator Tahir Mashhadi of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement said his party had also not been approached by the government as yet, but appeared open to considering the proposal.

"We have not seen any confirmed report, let's see what is the idea; we are waiting for confirmation of the news, we will study what they are planning to do and what is their proposal before giving any detailed reaction," he added.

National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq has, meanwhile, convened a meeting of the parliamentary party leaders in his chambers on Tuesday. It is expected that the matter will be raised.

Ms Mazari said she and her party colleague Shah Mehmood Qureshi would talk to the opposition parties for coming up with a joint stand.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307520/govt-begins-talks-for-revival-of-military-courts>

PAKISTAN TEST-FIRES NUCLEAR-CAPABLE SUBMARINE-LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILE

Dawn, January 10th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday attained the credible ‘second strike capability’ as it successfully test-fired nuclear capable submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM) Babur-III.

“The successful attainment of a second strike capability by Pakistan represents a major scientific milestone; it is manifestation of the strategy of measured response to nuclear strategies and postures being adopted in Pakistan’s neighborhood,” the military said after the test.

The 450km range Babur-III, a sea-based variant of Babur-II — a ground launched missile — was test-fired from a mobile platform in the Indian Ocean to hit a land-based target at an undisclosed location.

The land-attack mode Babur-III is said to be capable of delivering various types of payloads. The successful test, analysts say, would help stabilise the deterrence that had been strained because of India’s sea-based missiles K-4, K-15, Dhanush and Brahmos, which has got land, air and sea versions.

Meanwhile, India is developing another sea-based missile Nirbhay. Babur-III being a cruise missile, analysts believe, is better than the Indian sea-based ballistic missiles.

“Babur-3 SLCM incorporates state-of-the-art technologies, including underwater controlled propulsion and advanced guidance and navigation features, duly augmented by global navigation, terrain and scene matching systems,” the military said while sharing the features of the new missile.

“The missile features terrain hugging and sea skimming flight capabilities to evade hostile radars and air defences, in addition to certain stealth technologies, in an emerging regional Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) environment,” it added.

The reference to Indian BMD shows that the missile is designed to defeat India’s planned defence missile shield. Pakistani officials had criticised India for nuclearisation of Indian Ocean.

Defending Babur-III’s test, they say, Pakistan had been compelled to go in that direction because of India’s unrestrained behaviour and for maintaining the credibility of its deterrence.

In fielding a credible sea-based nuclear deterrent, Pakistan would now face two major challenges — attaining operational stealth capability for its submarines and ensuring reliability and survivability of communications with the submarines carrying the cruise missiles during war and the eventuality of a first strike by an adversary.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307531>

ARMY TO SUPPORT ALL INSTITUTIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

The Express Tribune, January 11th, 2017.

Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa said on Tuesday the army would continue to render full support to all state institutions working for national security.

He was chairing the first meeting of corps commanders since he took over the military command last month. The meeting was also the first since a major reshuffle in the army following the appointment of Gen Qamar as the army chief.

The corps commanders' conference took comprehensive review of the security environment and operational preparedness of the army. The commanders expressed satisfaction over progress of Operation Zarb-e-Azb and its positive effects on internal security.

The army chief directed that counterterrorism operations continue and already cleared areas be stabilised. He also directed to intensify efforts for return of temporarily displaced persons (TDPs).

The forum reiterated Pakistan Army's resolve to be prepared to respond to all types of threats. The forum also appreciated the performance of military courts during the prescribed duration which resulted in a reduction in incidents of terrorism, the military's media wing said.

The government and the military have decided to revive the military courts and for this purpose a new constitutional amendment would be introduced in parliament.

Gen Qamar said the army would continue to extend full support to all state institutions working for the national security. The statement appears to suggest that the new army chief wants to develop a smooth civil-military relationship, particularly in the areas of national security.

Meanwhile, the army chief congratulated efforts of strategic organisations on successful test fire of Babur-3 cruise missile.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1291074/army-support-institutions-national-security/>

OPPOSITION AWAITS GOVT BRIEFING ON MILITARY COURTS

Dawn, January 12th, 2017

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: The two major opposition parties — the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) — are awaiting a government briefing on the issue of revival of the controversial military courts before holding internal discussions for taking a decision in this regard.

Talking to Dawn on Wednesday, leaders of both parties severely criticised the government for seeking the opposition's cooperation only after the expiry of the law under which the military courts had been set up for trial of civilians charged with terrorism.

The opposition leaders also expressed their reservations over the government's move to initiate consultations with political parties through the National Assembly speaker, instead of the prime minister or the law minister.

The military courts were allowed to try civilians accused of terrorism for two years in January 2015, soon after a terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014, in which 144 people, mostly children, were killed by the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan's militants.

The courts were given a constitutional cover as both houses of parliament passed the 21st constitutional amendment despite fears among lawmakers that the tribunals they were authorising would not be able to ensure due process to the suspects and might undermine democracy.

The first meeting of the parliamentary parties on the issue of revival of the military courts remained inconclusive on Tuesday. The mainstream parties appeared reluctant to give a green signal to the government to extend their tenure, which expired on Jan 7. The meeting was called by National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq.

The government is seeking an extension of two years for the military courts. Besides the opposition parties, the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), which are allies of the government, also disagreed with the proposal.

It was decided that the parliamentary parties would meet again on Jan 17 when the government would provide reasons for extending the period of the military courts and a report on their two-year performance.

PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar, when contacted, said that although the party in principle was against the extension of the military courts, the final decision in this regard would be taken after a thorough discussion at its top forums, including the central executive committee (CEC).

Mr Babar, who had earlier spoken in the Senate on the matter, said a thorough analysis should be made as to how many of those sentenced to death by the military courts were ‘jet-black’ terrorists for whom they had been set up in the first place.

The procedure and collection of evidence in these courts should also be examined, he said, adding that it should be investigated whether some people kept at internment centres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had also been sentenced to death.

Mr Babar said 35 internees had disappeared from the Malakand centre and only seven of them had been produced before the Supreme Court.

“There is no place for military courts in a democratic polity,” he added.

Talking to reporters, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Syed Khurshid Shah said a meeting of the PPP’s CEC would be held after the government’s briefing.

Mr Shah also criticised the government’s decision to withdraw subsidy on fertilisers and warned that the PPP would protest in and outside parliament against “anti-farmers” policies.

PTI vice-chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi told Dawn that the party had already put six questions before the government for the next meeting. He said his party would decide to accept or reject the proposed reinstatement of military courts in view of the government’s reply.

He said he would put the whole situation before his party’s leaders after getting the government’s response.

Mr Qureshi said the government had failed to implement the National Action Plan (NAP) against terrorism and to form a much-desired national security committee of parliament as promised by it.

He said it was strange that the government wanted the cooperation of the opposition whereas it had failed to muster the support of its own allies, as both the JUI-F and the PkMAP had shown reluctance in supporting the military courts.

The PTI leader said the government had been allowed to set up the military courts for two years on the condition that it would bring reforms in the justice system. However, he said, the government had failed to introduce any reform.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307886/opposition-awaits-govt-briefing-on-military-courts>

NO COMPROMISE ON ARMY'S DIGNITY: COAS

The Express Tribune, January 13th, 2017.

Islamabad: Calling the Pakistan Army a great institution, General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Thursday vowed to uphold its 'dignity and credibility' through 'selfless performance of our role and duties.'

General Qamar made these remarks during a visit to Jhelum and the Kharian Garrison, where he was given a detailed briefing on operational preparedness at the Headquarters Central Command, according to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The military's media wing would not provide the context of Gen Qamar's remarks but sources said he was responding to questions raised by army officers during the interactive session.

According to the sources, some of the officers drew Gen Qamar's attention towards the recent statement by Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah questioning the effectiveness of military courts to curb terrorism. The army chief reportedly was also asked about the status of investigation into the controversial 'fabricated' news story published by Dawn in October last year.

Responding to those questions, sources said Gen Qamar made it clear that the army would not compromise on its dignity and credibility.

Since Gen Qamar took over command of the army, there was a hope that the civil-military relationship would improve. But the government's handling of some of the issues, including rumours about the appointment of former army chief Gen (retd) Raheel Sharif, may not auger well for a smooth working relationship with the military. These developments could be the possible reason behind Gen Qamar's statement vowing not to compromise on the 'dignity and credibility' of the army.

Speaking to Kharian Garrison officers, the army chief appreciated them for their contributions in counter-terrorism operations as part of Operation Zarb-e-Azb. He paid rich tributes to the "shuhada (martyrs) and injured who have rendered sacrifices for our beloved country."

Gen Qamar also visited the Para Ranges at Jhelum and witnessed concluding session of the Army Firing Competition. A total of 667 military and civilian shooters from across the country participated in the four-week long event. A special feature of the event was the participation of 86 war-wounded officers and soldiers in the competition, said the military's media wing.

Appreciating their performance, the army chief said that with more focused preparation, our teams should excel to represent Pakistan in international events.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1293267/great-institution-no-compromise-armys-dignity-coas/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2ND TO JANUARY 8TH 2017
UNCERTAINTY ABOUT MILITARY COURTS AFFECTS TERROR CASES FATE
Dawn, January 3rd, 2017

Azfar-Ul-Ashfaq

KARACHI: Since the federal government is still undecided about the fate of military courts set up two years ago under a special law, the Sindh apex committee deferred a decision about the referral of nine terrorism cases to the interior ministry on Monday.

Murtaza Wahab, adviser to the Sindh chief minister, told Dawn that the apex committee meeting took no decision about sending the nine cases to military courts as these courts will cease to exist this week if no fresh legislation is carried out.

The military courts were set up in January 2015 under the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Act, 2015, commonly known as the 21st Constitution Amendment. The special legislation, a part of the National Action Plan, had a sunset clause by virtue of which it would expire on Jan 7 and the military courts would cease to exist.

Sindh Home Secretary Shakeel Mangnijo told a meeting of the provincial apex committee on Monday that a subcommittee of the apex body — Sindh Legal Committee — had completed scrutiny of nine terrorism cases to be sent to the military courts for trial.

The legal committee, headed by the home secretary, includes the law secretary and one official each from the police, Rangers and Intelligence Bureau. The body thrashes out a list of the cases, presents them before the apex committee and then sends them to the interior ministry after the chief minister's approval.

The interior ministry carries out a scrutiny of the cases before rejecting or referring them to military courts.

The meeting, chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, was also attended by top military officials in the province.

Besides, the home secretary informed the meeting that over the last two years the Sindh government had recommended a total of 105 cases to the interior ministry, but the latter referred only 29 of them to military courts. Currently, he added, 19 such cases were being heard by military courts.

The 'indifferent' attitude of the federal government towards the implementation of key provisions of the National Action Plan also came under discussion.

A statement quoted Murad Ali Shah as telling the meeting: "We are holding the 19th apex committee meeting today which speaks louder of our commitment, but I am sorry to say that the federal government has failed to implement some important clauses of the National Action Plan."

The chief minister said the federal government's policy on issues like banned outfits and repatriation of illegal immigrants was "not clear". He also regretted that the National Counter Terrorism Authority had not started functioning as yet.

Maula Bux Chandio, the CM's adviser on information, later said at a news briefing that the federal government had not implemented the NAP provisions pertaining to seminaries, illegal arms and banned outfits.

He said illegal weapons were not manufactured in Sindh and it was the federal government's duty to stop transportation.

"Sincerity of purpose is needed for efficient implementation of the National Action Plan."

However, PML-N leader Talal Chaudhry contested Mr Chandio's statement, claiming that normality had returned to Karachi because of efforts made by the federal government.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306001>

EX-COAS RAHEEL LIKELY TO HEAD SAUDI-LED MILITARY ALLIANCE

Dawn, January 7th, 2017

Azfar-Ul-Ashfaq

KARACHI: Former army chief retired Gen Raheel Sharif is said to be on his way to becoming the top commander of a Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance.

Gen Raheel retired in November last year after completing his three-year term as the chief of the army staff. When he was in office, rumours were rife that Saudi Arabia wanted him to command the alliance of Muslim countries, to which Pakistan is also a part, for fighting terrorism and extremism.

According to media reports, Gen Raheel went to Saudi Arabia on Dec 27 on a special invitation of the Saudi government. Details of his visit were not made public, but social media was abuzz with reports that he had formally accepted the offer to command the coalition. The Wikipedia page of the Islamic Military Alliance also contained his name as the commander in chief.

When quizzed on the subject in a Geo News programme, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif indirectly confirmed that Gen Raheel had been made the chief of the 39-nation coalition to combat terrorism.

Talat Hussain, the host of the TV programme, asked the minister whether Gen Raheel had accepted the position after getting government's permission. "I don't know its details as this thing was finalised a day or two ago so...definitely it would include our government's approval as he could not independently assume a responsibility," he said.

The minister went on to say that any such assignment or posting required proper clearance both from the federal government and the General Headquarters (GHQ) and a due process was followed before finalising the agreement.

“As you are aware that this thing was in the pipeline for quite some time and the prime minister was also part of the deliberations,” he added.

The defence minister’s vague remarks notwithstanding, there is no official confirmation on Gen Raheel’s appointment.

In a thinly veiled reference to the exclusion of some countries, including Iran, Iraq and Syria, the minister said he believed that the whole Ummah should be part of this alliance “without any exception”.

If Gen Raheel heads the Saudi-led alliance, he would be the first army chief to have accepted a military job after retirement.

In recent history, former COAS Gen Jehangir Karamat was the only one who had accepted a government offer to work as Pakistan’s ambassador to the United States during the tenure of former military dictator Gen Pervez Musharraf.

Gen Karamat had returned to an active job in 2004 — six years after he resigned as the army chief.

The Saudi-led military alliance was announced on Dec 15, 2015, “to fight terrorism, with a joint operations centre based in Riyadh to coordinate and support military operations”.

It was said that the alliance had “a duty to protect the Islamic nation from the evils of all terrorist groups and organisations whatever their sect and name which wreak death and corruption on earth and aim to terrorise the innocent”.

Egypt, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Malaysia, Pakistan and many Gulf Arab and African states are included in the alliance. However, Iran is not among the member states.

Pakistan had confirmed its participation in the alliance but said at the time that it was awaiting further details to decide “the extent of its participation in different activities of the alliance”.

The United States had also welcomed the formation of the alliance and said that an intensification of the effort against the militant Islamic State group as well as against other terrorist network was a welcome move.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306927/ex-coas-raheel-likely-to-head-saudi-led-military-alliance>

February 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 20TH TO FEBRUARY 26TH 2017

PUNJAB FINALLY AGREES TO SEEK RANGERS’ HELP

Dawn, February 20th, 2017

Amjad Mahmood

LAHORE: The Punjab government has finally agreed to seek the help of Rangers in efforts to eradicate terrorism and extremism from the province, overcoming its reluctance to involve the paramilitary force in the task of improving law and order situation.

The provincial government had so far brushed aside suggestions to seek the centre's help in tackling terrorism, asserting that its own police and Counter-Terrorism Department were capable of doing the job.

The decision was taken on Sunday at a meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee, which was presided over by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

The modus operandi for calling in the Rangers will, however, be determined later and the meeting formed a committee for the purpose.

On the occasion, Mr Sharif said the political and military leaderships were on the same page vis-a-vis the war on terrorism and the terrorists would be "held accountable for each drop of blood of innocent citizens shed by them".

Opposition parties, particularly the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, have been calling for a Rangers-led operation in Punjab, much like the one being carried out in Karachi, against terrorists and extremists, but the ruling PML-N was opposing it.

The meeting was attended, among others, by National Security Adviser retired Lt Gen Nasser Khan Janjua, Lahore Corps Commander Lt Gen Sadiq Ali, provincial Minister for Counter Terrorism retired Col Muhammad Ayub, Punjab Rangers' director general Maj Gen Azhar Naveed Hayat, General Officer Commanding Maj Gen Sardar Tariq Aman, Chief Secretary Zahid Saeed, Inspector General of Police Mushtaq Ahmed Sukhera and Home Secretary Azam Sulaiman Khan.

The participants of the meeting, which lasted more than four hours, discussed various aspects of the counterterrorism measures needed, after being briefed on the arrest of suspects of the recent suicide attack in Lahore and the busting of the network behind the atrocity.

They also reviewed the progress made so far in the initiatives taken under the National Action Plan against terrorism, militancy, extremism and sectarian violence in the country.

They expressed deep concern over the use of Afghan soil by the terrorist network and pledged "to continue the war on terrorism until the elimination of the last terrorist".

Sources quoted them as praising the work of the Counter-Terrorism Department and the Safe City Project, whose cameras helped identify the facilitator of the Lahore attack.

They decided to widen the intelligence-based antiterrorism operations and focus on the border districts of Punjab.

They also vowed to improve cooperation between various intelligence networks to tackle the internal and external challenges. The meetings of the provincial intelligence committee will be held on a regular basis.

They said that religious schools functioning in the tribal belt would be monitored closely and financial resources of extremist groups would be choked by banning the collection of funds by banned outfits.

The meeting resolved that action would be taken against all workers of the banned groups and that an indiscriminate operation would be undertaken against terrorists and their facilitators.

The meeting vowed to provide foolproof security to foreigners, particularly the Chinese citizens working on projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315865>

PAKISTAN AWARE OF DESIGNS BEHIND CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS: COAS

Dawn, February 22nd, 2017

MUZAFFARABAD: In yet another loud and clear message to India, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday said that Pakistan was fully aware of Indian designs behind unprovoked ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) as well as New Delhi's support for terrorist elements in Pakistan and the region.

"Targeting of civilians along the LoC is deliberate, under a design and highly reprehensible," said the army chief during his visit to the restive dividing line in Mattewala and Munaawar sectors, located in Barnala tehsil of Bhimber district in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

It was Gen Bajwa's second visit to the LoC in Bhimber district, where three army soldiers were killed on Feb 13 and seven on Nov 13 last year in Indian shelling. Earlier, he had visited the area on Dec 2.

"On one side it is an effort to divert world's attention from her [Indian] atrocities against the innocent Kashmiris, and on the other, it is an attempt to dilute our response against terrorism and militancy," Gen Bajwa said, according to a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations.

He said Pakistan was fully aware of Indian designs and its support for terrorism in Pakistan and the region.

The case of Kulbhushan Jadhav was evidence of these Indian efforts and his case would be taken to its logical conclusion, Gen Bajwa said of the Indian secret agent who was arrested in March last year.

The COAS, who was received on the LoC by Rawalpindi Corps Commander Lt Gen Nadeem Raza, also attended a briefing by the General Officer Commanding on the operational situation.

Praising the operational readiness of the troops, he said: "Pakistan army soldiers are known for their professional competence, motivation and selfless devotion for defence of their motherland and are the backbone of the armed forces."

He ordered that unprovoked ceasefire violations by Indian troops be responded to effectively.

The COAS made it clear that the army would do its duty to protect the people of Pakistan and AJK against all forms of Indian aggression.

"We will continue our solidarity with people of Indian Occupied Kashmir who are struggling for their right to self-determination," he said.

In his statement during his earlier visit to the area, he had categorically stated that the core issue between Pakistan and India, of Kashmir, would have to be resolved in accordance with the UN resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people for a lasting peace in the region.

The heavily militarised LoC has been the scene of the worst skirmishes and artillery duels between Indian and Pakistani troops in a grievous breach of the historic 2003 ceasefire agreement struck by the two sides.

The situation worsened even further after an attack by suspected militants on an Indian army base in Uri on Sept 18, which left about 18 Indian soldiers dead. India had later claimed that it had conducted surgical strikes in AJK.

According to military and civilian sources, as many as 40 civilians and 15 Pakistan army personnel have lost their lives to unprovoked and indiscriminate Indian shelling from across the LoC in the ongoing spell of escalations since the Uri attack.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1316231>

ENTER THE RANGERS

Dawn, February 24th, 2017

Asha'ar Rehman

The Rangers are coming with a mission to Lahore and other parts of Punjab, just as they had arrived with an objective in Karachi. The occasion may bring some relief generally. But this does not mean that we have cause to celebrate. It is obvious that those in charge of affairs here were also unable to take sufficient and efficient steps to control the situation to prevent it from deteriorating to a point where the reluctant resort to Article 245 became inevitable.

Then again it will serve little purpose if we choose to go over all the occurrences and non-happenings which led to the ultimate call to the Rangers 'in aid' in the context of the high ideal of supremacy of civilian authority.

There has to be a more relevant reason for a comparison of the respective circumstances in Punjab and Karachi at a time when it was decided to press the Rangers into the job of establishing peace and order in these areas. What could justify that comparison? Perhaps, the differences may help us to better understand the nature of assignment for the Rangers and the Punjab-specific approach they may be required to adopt.

At the risk of being corrected by naturally keener and physically closer and emotionally more attached observers of Karachi, the grand city offered a less complicated case for the Rangers. It had long been established that the provincial government in charge of the city had lost all sense of direction.

The government's failure was personified by the chief minister whose constant misdoings made everyone frequently transcend the limits of decent criticism. The PPP, complete with its usual

blunders, was debunked every second of the day by the media. The party apparently had no idea about how to govern Karachi which, for the convenience of a law-enforcement entity that claimed political neutrality and avowedly pursued a non-political solution, was neatly divided into various parts held by political parties or ethnic groups.

The zones in Karachi — some of them more difficult to tread than others — signified just how enormous the challenge was. On the other hand, the black and white of it all also must have simplified it for an organisation trained to look at the problem with the certainty of a soldier who is committed to the truth of his mission and objective.

How does one even begin to compare that chaos with a monolithic Lahore and Punjab as they exist today? The province has been governed by a single hand for long. There's no decentralisation of power and hence no easy local administrators to blame. There are no ethnically divided zones in Lahore, meaning there are no ready suspects unlike those available to the raiders in Karachi.

There are some stereotypical suspects outside of Lahore, the much-talked-about militancy havens in southern Punjab that have been endlessly debated but yet to be truly unveiled. That is an extremely sensitive area.

No one knows how intense a reaction it would bring for Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif if a particular part of the province is targeted in isolation of other areas. Say that part is in southern Punjab, there will definitely be elements who would want to exploit any 'discriminatory' action in Multan and its surroundings in their long-drawn struggle against 'imperialist' Lahore. It will be tough for anyone to quickly balance this feeling of discrimination with an example provided from some other part of Punjab.

Since the divisions in the present case are less pronounced, it will be that much tougher for the law-enforcers to identify the elements that are to be uprooted in the cleansing drive. Some of these elements may be linked to the very system that has been evolved in the province. It will not be easy for the strong PML-N government to look the other way when that happens and that could have consequences for the party a year or so before a scheduled general election. Under the most powerful and self-assured Shahbaz Sharif, the PML-N government in Punjab will not appear helpless enough to convince its allies of its inability to protect them at a trying moment.

The people of Punjab are preparing for impending action amid stories from other areas where the Rangers have previously gone about establishing order. These stories, however, do very little to foretell what kind of measures will be tried to see the province through this critical phase. These steps are hard to predict since those who are to be operated against are so immersed in the population.

There have to be suspects who stand apart from the harmless crowd at the outset for clear and focused action. The PML-N for its part appears a little unsure as to how it wants to go about this definitive new phase in its life. It has been diligently applying fresh polish to ready suspects for the emergency law enforcers to consider going after. There has been, in recent times, greater emphasis on labelling the militants as outsiders, as some variation of aliens who do not have accomplices but facilitators, as if they are a lesser problem than a full-blown partner in crime.

Apart from this identification of the usual suspects, the PML-N has been forced to distance itself from some old friends and that will most certainly earn the government intensified criticism from the right

wing. In time, the operation could necessitate uncharacteristic gestures on the part of a chief minister who is used to taking action rather than explaining the steps of others operating outside his command. That will be new for a man known for issuing orders.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1316573>

GILGIT VISIT: ARMY PREPARED TO AVERT 'THREAT FROM EAST', SAYS COAS
The Express Tribune, February 24th, 2017.

Islamabad: Hours after a bomb blast in Lahore which killed at least eight people, army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said that despite internal security threats, Pakistan Army is fully prepared for effective response against "perpetual threat from the East".

In an apparent reference to the neighbouring India, the COAS made these remarks while talking to troops at Goma and Gilgit on Thursday, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

"We all are proud to be soldiers of Pakistan and defending it irrespective of terrain or weather difficulties."

He also visited Siachen, where he laid floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada of Gyari. "We owe our independence to sacrifices of our Shuhada. Nothing is nobler than laying one's life in defence of the motherland," the army chief was quoted as saying.

Later, the army chief also interacted with notables of Gilgit-Baltistan. "The COAS assured them that army was extending full support to all initiatives aimed at ensuring the rights of G-B as part of the federation," the military's media wing said.

Pakistan has been hit by a series of suicide bomb attacks in recent days, claiming more than 100 lives.

At least 88 people were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up at the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine in Sindh's Sehwan town last week. In response, Pakistan Army launched on Wednesday a countrywide security operation codenamed Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad.

During his visit to troops deployed along the Line of Control (LoC) at Mattewala, Munaawar Sector earlier in the week, the army chief vowed to take the case of Indian spy Kulbhushan Yadav to its logical conclusion and stated that Pakistan was fully aware of Indian designs and its support to terrorism.

"Pakistan Army soldiers are known for their professional competence, motivation and selfless devotion for defence of our motherland and are backbone of Pakistan Army," he had said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1337264/gilgit-visit-army-prepared-avert-threat-east-says-coas/>

CONSENSUS STILL ELUDES PARTIES ON MILITARY COURTS

Dawn, February 25th, 2017

Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: Although the government on Friday agreed to reduce the proposed term of military courts from three to two years, parliamentary parties could not reach consensus on whether to extend their jurisdiction to ‘religious groups’ and ‘sects’ or otherwise.

The government proposed a two-year term for the military courts in a meeting of parliamentary parties that remained inconclusive due to disagreement shown by opposition parties.

While the words “heinous and violent activities against the state” have been added to the proposed draft of the military courts bill, the government could not satisfy opposition parties — Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) — that demanded re-addition of words “using the name religious or sect” in the draft bill so that no one could commit terrorism in the name of religion.

The PPP called a multi-party conference on March 4 on the government’s move to amend Article 175(3) of the Constitution which had allowed the military courts to hold trial of persons “belonging to any terrorist group or organisation using the name of religion or a sect”.

In the new draft, the government has removed the words “using the name of religion or sect”, creating fear among political parties that the law could be used against them for their “arm-twisting or political victimisation”.

Another meeting of the parliamentary parties will be chaired by the National Assembly speaker on Feb 28 in which the government will try to address concerns of opposition parties.

The committee deliberating on the constitutional amendment for military courts will have two more members: Barrister Saif of the MQM and Talha Mehmood of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F).

In the first meeting of the parliamentary committee held on Feb 17, the government handed over to parliamentary leaders a draft of its proposed constitution amendment bill seeking a three-year extension for military courts.

On Friday, the first meeting of the committee which lasted for an hour was presided over by the National Assembly speaker. The meeting of its sub-committee which was chaired by Law Minister Zahid Hamid lasted for four hours. In this meeting it was decided that leaders of parliamentary parties would be given the new draft of the bill so that they could discuss it with their party heads before coming for the next meeting.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, the law minister said that if all parliamentary parties agreed the term of military courts could be reduced to two years.

He said some of the words had been incorporated in the draft bill on the recommendations of JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

The minister said a sentence of “heinous and violent activities against the state” has also been added in the draft bill. “The draft of the 23rd Constitution amendment will be sent to the parliamentary parties and all parliamentary leaders will give their final recommendations in the next meeting,” he said.

PPP leader Naveed Qamar said the government had agreed to reduce the proposed tenure of the military courts from three to two years. But, he added, his party would make a final decision on it after consultation with party’s co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari.

Talking to reporters, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that in wake of the fresh spate of terrorism incidents in the country revival of military court was the need of the hour.

The government, he said, had agreed to the point of view of his party.

Meanwhile, PPP Secretary General Farhatullah Babar told Dawn that the party would convene a multi-party conference on March 4. “We have given invitations to all parliamentary parties for the meeting,” he said.

Asked about the government’s decision to reduce the proposed term of military courts from three to two years, he said his party had not given any consent on this. “First we will see whether there is any need of revival of military courts in the country or not,” he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1316830>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 13TH TO FEBRUARY 19TH 2017

CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF VISITS FOREIGN NAVY SHIPS

Business Recorder, February 13, 2017

Karachi: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah today visited various ships of foreign navies participating in the Multinational Naval Exercise AMAN-17.

Upon his arrival, the Naval Chief was warmly welcomed by senior officers / Task Group Commanders /commanding officers of respective ships and was presented guard of honor by smartly turned out contingents.

The Naval Chief visited participating ships of Australia, China, Indonesia, Russia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and U.K where he held formal interaction with senior officers /Task Group Commanders /commanding officers. During the discussions with officers onboard, the Naval Chief highlighted that Pakistan Navy has always been a forerunner in the quest for collaborative security in this region of immense strategic importance and AMAN series of exercises are anchored on this concept. The Admiral further expressed that the camaraderie generated herein will grow in future and shall bring us closer to the mutual goal of regional peace and prosperity. He also appreciated and thanked for their participation in AMAN Exercise to fulfill common resolve of “Together for Peace”.

The senior officers/Task Group Commanders/commanding officers of the respective ships, highly acknowledged the strenuous efforts of Pakistan Navy by bringing together global navies towards a shared commitment of maritime peace, stability and lawful order at sea.

The Admiral had an informal interaction with the crew of visiting ships and appreciated their professionalism and morale.

The Naval Chief also recorded his remarks in guest books of visiting ships.—PR

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/02/13/17-page/849217-news.html>

37-NATION NAVAL EXERCISE DRAWS TO IMPRESSIVE FINISH

Dawn, February 15th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: It was an impressive show of strength and unity in the North Arabian Sea as each ship, which participated in the multinational Aman-2017, moved past in column formation in front of the Pakistan Navy ship Nasr.

On board several dignitaries, including Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, waved to them during the conclusion of the exercise on Tuesday.

The prime minister commented that the presence of such a large number of foreign navies reflected the confidence of the world navies on Pakistan.

Expressing his satisfaction, he lauded the strenuous efforts of the Pakistan Navy for successfully conducting Exercise Aman-2017, which he said was a manifestation of Pakistan's policy of constructive engagement with the comity of nations for peace and stability in the maritime commons.

He added that with this state of operational readiness, the Pakistan Navy was fully prepared and committed to ensure seaward defence and safeguard its maritime interests.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Secretary Defence retired Lieutenant General Zamirul Hassan Shah, Sindh Governor Mohammad Zubair, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat, Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of the Air Staff Sohail Aman, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Mohammad Zakaullah along with the Sri Lankan Naval Chief, National Security Advisor to PM, ambassadors, consuls general, diplomats and other high-ranking civil and military officials were also present on the occasion.

The conclusion of the exercise also involved spectacular sea manoeuvres and fleet review amid a joint resolve, 'Together for peace', of the 37 participating countries.

Following his arrival on board PNS Nasr, the PM was briefed on the overall conduct and operational perspective of the exercise. He was given a detailed account of the sea-based activities to be conducted at sea during the closing ceremony by the participating naval ships, aircraft, helicopters and PAF fighter jets.

These comprised replenishment of men and material from one ship to another, Rockets Depth Charge (RDC) firing and surface-to-surface firing on pre-determined targets. The prime minister also

witnessed an impressive fly past by various aircraft and helicopters of the PN, PAF and participating countries, including the Japanese P-3C Orion aircraft.

Aman-2017 was conducted in two phases — the harbour phase spanned from Feb 11 to 12 and the sea phase was from Feb 13 to 14. The harbour phase comprised the international maritime conference, seminars, talks, cross ships visits, call ons, an international band display and a maritime counter terrorism demonstration whereas the sea phase included the practical execution of operational plans and activities finalised during the harbour phase.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1314860>

IN SWIFT RESPONSE, 100 'TERRORISTS' KILLED IN COUNTRY

Dawn, February 18th, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: A day after a massive bomb attack at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sindh, security forces on Friday hit back at militant groups across the country and claimed to have eliminated at least 100 “terrorists” in a series of raids on their hideouts and gun battles.

In a statement about the raids that began late on Thursday night, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that “over 100 terrorists have been killed and sizeable apprehensions have been made”.

It was the highest number of “terrorists” killed in a day by security agencies in recent years. The raids, targeting militant hideouts in Karachi, Quetta, Rawalpindi, Tank, Faisalabad, Layyah, Sheikhpura, and other cities and towns, were conducted by the army, Rangers and civilian law enforcement agencies.

Scanty details were available about these operations. The identities and group affiliations of the dead were not disclosed either, except for a few killed in Karachi and Quetta.

Those killed in Karachi included Malik Tassaduq — Jamaatul Ahrar (JuA), Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ); Naushad Khan alias Mama — JuA and LJ; Shiraz Ahmed — LJ and the militant Islamic State (IS) group; Azizullah — the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and LJ; Sherzad — JuA and LJ; Amin alias Kala — JuA and LJ; Arman Ahmed — LJ and IS; Yasir Siddiqi — JuA and IS, according to the Rangers.

In Quetta, two of those killed were said to be important TTP leaders. They were identified by the Frontier Corps as Molvi Abdul Ghaffoor and Jan Mohammad Mehsud.

The JuA had claimed responsibility for attacks in Peshawar and Lahore, whereas the Sehwan shrine strike had been claimed by the IS.

The shrine attack was one of the deadliest since the Army Public School carnage in December 2014 after which a 20-point National Action Plan for bolstering the fight against terrorism was adopted. Many steps agreed under the plan have remained unimplemented because of various factors.

Soon after the shrine bombing, Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa had vowed to show no further restraint and avenge “every drop of [the] nation’s blood”.

The general, who also ordered closure of crossing points along the 2,600km-long porous Pak-Afghan border and summoned ‘Afghan diplomats’, had in another statement said: “Army is for security of people of Pakistan against all types of threat. Nation would stay steadfast with full confidence in their security forces. We shall not let the hostile agenda succeed whatever it may cost.”

The ISPR said the crackdown against the terrorist groups had been ordered by Gen Bajwa. “Intelligence agencies are making progress to unearth networks behind recent terrorist incidents,” it added.

Meanwhile, security sources say important leads about those involved in the Lahore attack had been obtained.

In Karachi, 27 suspected militants were killed in encounters with police and Rangers. The Pakistan Rangers, Sindh, claimed to have killed 18 ‘militants’ in two encounters. Officials said the encounters took place in Malir and Manghopir localities.

According to a spokesperson for the Rangers, acting on a tip-off provided by an intelligence agency, the paramilitary force raided a place in Manghopir in the early hours of Friday morning. During an exchange of fire with militants hiding in the area 11 suspects were killed. The exchange continued for about an hour during which the militants used heavy weapons.

SHO of Memon Goth police station told Dawn that seven suspected militants were killed in two clashes with Rangers — four in Malir-8 area and three in a village off the Superhighway near Ansari Bridge.

Meanwhile, police claimed to have killed nine ‘militants’, including a would-be suicide bomber, in an encounter in an area on the outskirts of Karachi.

Gulshan-i-Maymar SHO Mir Mohammed Lashari told Dawn that acting on a tip-off, a police party raided a place in Jinjal Goth near Rice Godown off Northern Bypass where in an ensuing encounter nine militants were killed.

In Quetta, security forces claimed to have killed two suspected leaders of the TTP during an operation in Darakhshan Housing Scheme area.

Two FC personnel suffered injuries during the operation.

Sources said the FC conducted the operation after receiving information about the presence of TTP suspects in the Darakhshan area near Quetta.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Fata and Afghan border areas, 36 militants were killed in clashes with security forces.

Border crossing points with Afghanistan, including Torkham in Khyber Agency, Kharlachi and Borki in Kurram Agency, and Ghulam Khan in North Waziristan Agency, remained closed for vehicular and human movement.

Long queues of loaded vehicles could be seen on both sides of the border at Torkham and Kharlachi.

Authorities suspended repatriation of tribal people from Afghanistan to North Waziristan via Ghulam Khan check-post for an indefinite period.

Imtiaz Ali in Karachi, Saleem Shahid in Quetta and Zulfiqar Ali in Peshawar contributed to this report

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315483>

PAKISTAN ARMY POUNDS MORE BORDER HIDEOUTS

Dawn, February 19th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Artillery shelling by Pakistan Army on militant camps on the Afghan border continued on the second day on Saturday, leaving 20 suspects dead and many others injured, late-night local TV reports quoted Afghan sources as saying.

The number of the suspected militants belonging to the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) killed in the past two days increased to 37 with many of their camps destroyed.

The two countries also found themselves in diplomatic tension when a senior Afghan official summoned the Pakistani ambassador to his office in protest over Friday's reported action by the Pakistani forces. Curiously enough, the two sides also disputed over the number of people killed in those strikes, official and other sources said on Saturday.

Afghanistan appeared to be dismissive of Pakistan's stance that Kabul did not act against the terrorist groups residing in sanctuaries on the Afghan soil and instead asked Islamabad to take action against groups involved in militancy in Afghanistan.

"Terrorists' hideouts on Pak-Afghan border have been effectively targeted," an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement said, adding that security forces had been ordered to be vigilant along the border.

The Afghan media said about Friday's action that JuA camps were targeted in Afghanistan's Lalpur district of Nangarhar province and the Sarkano district of eastern Kunar province. Overnight leaks from the military suggested that four JuA camps were destroyed in the shelling, including one run by the terrorist group's deputy chief, Adil Bacha.

Official sources told Dawn that at least 17 suspected militants were killed in Friday's artillery shelling. They said that army troops were deployed along with the Frontier Corps personnel in the border town of Loe Shalman, some 25km north of Landi Kotal.

The sources said that groups affiliated with the TTP (Khurasani group) had established bases in the Reney-Parchaw area across the Kabul river in Afghanistan.

The group had claimed responsibility for some of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

The security sources said that all the dead were affiliated to the TTP's Khurasani group. They said the number of the dead could increase.

Afghan General Qadam Shah Shaheem acknowledged that Pakistani troops had fired on Friday about 200 shells that fell in Nangarhar.

Annoyed over the shelling, Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai summoned Pakistani Ambassador Abrar Hussain to his office and told him that the shelling had left two people dead.

He also lodged a complaint about the closure of the Pak-Afghan border and the "large-scale arrest of Afghan refugees".

Interestingly, Mr Hussain was summoned to the Afghan foreign ministry on Friday, but the Afghans revealed this only after the Pakistani side leaked reports about shelling of JuA camps in the border region.

Mr Hussain told Mr Karzai that the shelling was in response to an attack on a border post by militants and that the Afghan population had not been targeted.

According to local TV reports on Saturday night, artillery shelling on Afghan border by Pakistani forces on Saturday left over 20 suspected militants dead and many others injured. These reports, quoting Afghan sources, said that the deceased included Rehman Baba, who used to train suicide attackers, and 'commander' Wali, who ran a terrorist training camp. Twelve of the JuA camps were also destroyed

Following the recent deadly terrorist attack in Sehwan, the Pakistan military had asked the Afghan government to either take action against the 76 terrorists hiding across the border or hand them over.

In its response, the Afghan presidency claimed that it had indiscriminately acted against "all terrorist groups without any distinction and irrespective of which country and people their targets are".

"The government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan once again demands Pakistan to take practical measures and initiate effective counterterrorism efforts against all those terrorist groups which operate in Pakistan and pose a threat to security and stability of Afghanistan," the presidency said in a statement.

It also reminded Pakistan of an agreement reached during the quadrilateral talks for dealing with terrorism and called for its implementation.

Meanwhile, the Voice of America reported that the Afghan military had promised to look into the Pakistani list of 76 suspected terrorists.

"We will investigate it [the Pakistani list], and if there is a need for more evidence and documents we will ask for it. But we also handed over a number of lists with enough evidence and documents to Pakistan and we hope they will also sincerely take action on them," asserted Gen Shaheem.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315660>

COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY: GOVT, MILITARY COMMAND TO WORK OUT THREE-PRONGED PLAN

The Express Tribune, February 19th, 2017.

Sardar Sikander

ISLAMABAD: The civilian government and the military command are scheduled to devise a three-pronged counterterrorism strategy after the latest wave of terror necessitated the need for swiftly implementing the almost stalled National Action Plan (NAP), The Express Tribune learnt on good authority on Saturday.

Following lengthy meetings, both sides have agreed to formulate a detailed strategy to prevent the situation from becoming worse.

An important meeting between top government and military officials soon is scheduled to be held soon to map out the outlines of the proposed strategy, it is learnt.

The proposed plan envisaged internally cleansing the country of terrorism, implementing effective counterterrorism laws and diplomatic moves to sensitise the global community against linkages between terrorist outfits and hostile states.

“These measures have to go hand in hand if we want long-lasting peace in our country,” said a close aide to the prime minister on condition of anonymity.

The ongoing targeted operations across the country were part of this strategy, the source said.

“A ruthless process of internal cleaning has to be complemented by a legal cover –military courts, counterterrorism laws and all that — besides taking up the issue of cross-border terrorism with hostile countries such as Afghanistan and India — and with the rest of the world — these initiatives need to be synchronised to achieve the desired goals.”

Deliberations between the government and opposition on the draft of the 25th constitutional amendment are also under way after opposition and ruling parties reached an informal consensus on extending the term of military courts, another insider said.

On taking up the issue of terrorism with hostile states, progress was made as Pakistan handed over a list of 76 hardcore terrorists currently hiding in Afghanistan against whom action was required. “This initiative will later be expanded for specifically taking up the issue of cross-border terrorism, involving Afghanistan and India with world powers and at international forums.” The success of the three-pronged strategy, the sources said, depended on the political will and “on the sincerity of the envisioned measures.”

After a gap of nearly three months, the federal government and the military command held a meeting on January 9 to review NAP’s progress after which an agreement emerged regarding the extension of military courts’ tenure. However, other proposed measures still await implementation. These include

setting up of a central record depository for stopping the influx of terror funding to banned outfits, disrupting financial nexus between criminal networks and terrorist organisations, strengthening counterterrorism laws and related measures for curbing religious extremism.

The PM's Adviser Ameer Muqam said effective counterterrorism measures were part of the federal government's policy laid down in 2014 following the launch of the Zarb-e-Azb operation and after the massacre of schoolchildren in Peshawar in December in the same year. "Stakeholders maintain an active and regular contact on NAP in the counterterrorism drive."

Asked about the three-pronged strategy being formulated in the aftermath of unabated incidents of terrorism, he said: "It's quite natural that you settle down a bit when things get to normalcy as a result of your effective action against terrorists— and things toughen up when the situation gets challenging—our counterterrorism measures are not something out of the blue. As I said, we have worked hard on these measures over the years. Yes, these are the challenging times and decisions have to be made accordingly but this is not something unusual. We have faced challenging times in the past and braved the odds. Pakistan's contribution in defeating the terrorism is matchless in the entire world."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1331874/counterterrorism-strategy-govt-military-command-work-three-pronged-plan/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 6TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH 2017

INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS BRIEF PARTIES ON MILITARY COURTS

Dawn February 8th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Top military intelligence officials on Tuesday briefed the parliamentary leaders on the working of military courts to remove their apprehensions about the judicial system under the army's supervision.

The absence of representatives of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F) and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) — the two government allies — from the in-camera briefing was conspicuous.

Later, the opposition parties criticised the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz for not taking their coalition partners into confidence before approaching them for a consensus.

When the opposition parties have not yet made any categorical comment on revival of military courts, the JUI-F and the PkMAP are openly opposing the government's plan.

Tuesday's meeting, which had been specially convened for the briefing, was presided over by National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq and also attended by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Law Minister Zahid Hamid.

The briefing was given by the outgoing and incoming heads of the Military Intelligence (MI). Officials of the Inter-Service Intelligence were also present.

Earlier, the opposition parties had rejected the two briefings on the same issue given by the law minister.

During the last such meeting on Jan 31, the parties had agreed to meet again on Feb 16. The opposition parties had asked the government to provide a roadmap of its plan to carry out judicial reforms and structural changes in the criminal justice system before seeking their cooperation for reviving military courts.

Military courts were established and granted permission to try civilians accused of terrorism in January, 2015, after the terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December, 2014. The courts were given a two-year constitutional cover as both houses of the parliament passed the 21st Amendment in the Constitution despite fears among lawmakers that the establishment of military courts might undermine democracy in the country.

The courts have been non-functional since Jan 7 after expiry of the two-year constitutional cover.

The government now wants a two-year extension for the military tribunals. Although the opposition parties, including the Pakistan Peoples Party, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), Jamaat-i-Islami and the Awami National Party (ANP), disagree with the government's point of view, they are keeping the option of talks open on the issue.

Talking to Dawn, PTI vice-chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi termed the briefing "satisfactory", saying the MI officials with the ranks of major-general gave replies to their questions in a "polite and dignified manner".

However, he criticised the government for its failure to take its allies on board on the issue. He said that he had also questioned the absence of the interior minister from such important briefings.

The PTI leader said the opposition was waiting for the Feb 16 meeting in which the government had promised to provide a complete roadmap about its future plan.

He said the government had failed to carry out judicial reforms as promised by it at the time of seeking the political parties' support for establishment of military courts.

Mr Qureshi said the parties had agreed that a parliamentary committee would be constituted to monitor and oversee the implementation of the government's plan to introduce judicial and structural reforms in the country.

Moreover, he said, the opposition wanted that any decision on military courts should be taken at the highest forum and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif should convene a multi-party conference for this purpose.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq expressed the hope that the issue would be resolved in the next one or two meetings. He said the final decision on the matter would only be made through developing a national consensus.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1313488>

36 COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE IN NAVAL EXERCISE
Dawn February 9th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: Thirty-six countries with host Pakistan as the 37th will be taking part in Pakistan Navy's (PN) four-day joint multinational exercise Aman-2017, which is to start from Feb 10 in the North Arabian Sea.

Sharing details about the exercise during a media briefing at the PN Fleet Headquarters here on Wednesday, Commander of Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Arifullah Hussaini said the idea behind Aman exercises, which started in 2007 and are held every two years, was building confidence among navies of the participating countries, hold discussions, exchange ideas and raise awareness about naval affairs.

The countries taking part in the exercise hail from every corner of the world. They include Australia (participating with a ship), Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Maldives, Morocco, Nigeria, North Sudan, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Russia (bringing three ships), Denmark, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan (bringing an aircraft), Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and United States of America.

"The people of these countries speak different languages and their work procedures are also not the same. But they will work and plan together as a team during the exercise in the name of peace and unity," the vice admiral said.

"Under the fold of the Coalition Maritime Campaign Plan in the North Arabian Sea, Pakistan was the first country here to join Task Force-150, intended to eradicate terrorism and human, arms and drug trafficking in the maritime domain," he said, adding that PN ships were also ensuring free sea trade in the Gulf of Aden.

"Coming to participate in Aman-2017, over 35 countries have shown their confidence in Pakistan. We are also going out of way to cooperate with all. With the US Navy... we are part of a combined task force looking to spread peace and security at sea," he said.

From Japan their self-defence force would be joining in, he said and added that there might be issues between some countries but it was good to see that all were willing to work together.

"This region, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea is very important as well as complex. It is from here that the world's oil is transported," Vice Admiral Hussaini said.

He said Somali pirates had at one time caused a lot of damage in the area but... the North Arabian Sea had now been cleared of piracy.

"Still, as a responsible country we need to keep our focus on the sea as there is still piracy in other areas. There is a need for a united front to combat it as the sea is vast and trade through the sea is important for everyone," he said.

Coming to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he said it would change the circumstances of the entire region. Activity at Gwadar port and in the North Arabian Sea will increase due to it. Many countries want to become part of CPEC.

“But for the CPEC it is not just the Pakistan Navy that is important. We need more ports, more ships and a modern logistic base,” he said. “The PN’s job is to provide security in the maritime sector and take care of civil defence but we now also need to focus on the CPEC.”

Replying to a question about India’s show of muscle by increasing their sea assets, the vice admiral said Aman-2017 was an exercise to promote inter-operability and not to prepare for war. “Still, Pakistan’s navy can protect its waters and harbours. We will ensure that our international interests are not jeopardised. We are not into escalating adventurism at sea. Pakistan is committed to international peace,” he concluded.

A conference will be organised by the Bahria University and the Maritime Policy Research Centre on the sidelines of Aman- 2017.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1313669>

TOGETHER FOR PEACE, 37 NATIONS START NAVAL EXERCISE
Dawn, February 11th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: The multi-nation Aman-2017 naval exercise formally began after an opening ceremony held at the Navy Dockyard on Friday.

The ceremony saw flags of 37 countries, which are participating in the exercise, lining up in alphabetical order. The flags were hoisted after a three-volley gun salute. Pakistan Navy personnel holding a folded flag of each country smartly marched up to the flagpoles in their crisp white uniforms, with the PNS Gwadar Band playing ceremonial tunes. Everyone then rose for Pakistan’s national anthem as all personnel in uniform saluted. They were all there, together for peace.

Representatives of the participating countries were standing in front of their country flags for many memorable photographs. Some of them shared views with media personnel gathered there to cover the event.

In his message, read out at the opening ceremony, the Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Mohammad Zakaullah said: “The vastness of the oceans and threats posed in maritime security also do not respect boundaries as their effects are felt globally.

“Consequently, there is a strong realisation that no one nation can single-handedly cope with the quantum of this prevailing threat, making cooperative maritime strategy a matter of compulsion rather than choice.”

Speaking on the occasion, Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Arifullah Hussaini, who was chief guest at the ceremony, said that Arabic word ‘Aman’ meant peace. But, just the absence of war could not be defined as peace, he said, adding that peace came by ensuring security. “So, ‘Aman’ cannot be complete without security. The concept of making arms and preparing for war is peace and not actually war.”

He said the preparation for war was to ensure the safety. “In the next five days all the 37 nations participating in the Aman-2017 will stand together and cooperate to maintain a lasting peace in the world,” he added as balloons were released and doves were freed.

Commodore Zakaur Rehman of Pakistan Navy said that it was good to see more and more countries joining in the Aman exercise and seeing the PN’s viewpoint on the issues of counterterrorism and counter-piracy.

Lieutenant Commander Sigrid Hansen from Denmark and Scandinavia said that it was great to meet all these people from all around the world. “It is so great working together to spread peace in the world,” she said.

Colonel Kin Schmidt, also of Denmark, said that the Scandinavian country was mainly participating in the exercise as an observer and wanted to see what was going on in the region and cooperate with Pakistan Navy.

Commander Markus Hember, captain of Royal Navy’s HMS Daring, a huge destroyer, said that cooperation at sea was indeed very important to overcome some of the challenges all participating countries faced. “I am very happy to be here. We are here to learn as well as contribute,” he said.

Commander Task Group, Bai Yao Ping of China, said that China and Pakistan had always maintained good and traditional friendship. He said he was very happy to be here again to participate in the fifth exercise in the Aman series.

Lieutenant Oner Yokuva of Turkey also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1314121>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 30TH TO FEBRUARY 5TH 2017
GOVT, OPPOSITION STILL DEADLOCKED OVER MILITARY COURTS REVIVAL
Dawn, February 1st, 2017

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: A deadlock over revival of military courts continues as the third round of talks between the government and opposition parties ended here on Tuesday without arriving at a decision.

Speaking separately to reporters after attending an in-camera briefing on the National Action Plan (NAP) and its achievements, several members of opposition parties expressed concern over the continued absence of Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan from these meetings. National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq presided over Tuesday’s meeting and the session will now be held on Feb 16.

Sources told Dawn that opposition members had expressed their dissatisfaction over the briefing given by Law Minister Zahid Hamid. They had asked the government to present its proposals and a

roadmap in clear terms so they could discuss them within their parties before arriving at a final decision.

They were of the view that a decision on the revival of military courts should be made at a larger forum and that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif should convene a multi-party conference (MPC) on the issue as he had done previously.

There is an impression among political circles that all political parties, including the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, are not willing to revive military courts and so the matter is being dragged intentionally.

Military courts were established and granted permission to try civilians accused of terrorism in January 2015, after a terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in December 2014. These courts were given a two-year constitutional cover as both houses of parliament passed the 21st constitutional amendment with the inclusion of a sunset clause. There was the fear that these tribunals would not be able to ensure due process to suspects and could undermine democracy.

Talking to Dawn, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi said he had asked the government if it had taken its allies into confidence as the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) had expressed reluctance in supporting the military courts.

He said he had also questioned the absence of the interior minister and other senior security officials from the briefing. He said the PTI wanted to know if the government wanted to develop a consensus at the committee level since similar decisions had been made earlier at a meeting of parliamentary leaders and heads of all parties presided over by the prime minister. Lastly, he said, they wanted to know what steps the government had taken to reform the judiciary, since military courts were set up on the condition that the government would introduce judicial reforms.

The Pakistan Peoples Party's Syed Naveed Qamar termed the meeting fruitless, while Law Minister Zahid Hamid claimed that the government had replied to all questions raised by the opposition.

The meeting's participants were told that the military courts had awarded death sentence to 161 persons in two years, and 13 of them had been executed. A total of 56 cases were pending with the interior ministry and 92 cases were pending with provincial home departments.

The participants were told that 17,563 people — 12,400 civilians and 5,163 security personnel — had lost their lives in 17,704 terrorism-related incidents since 2001.

The participants were informed that there had been significant decline in terrorism and other crimes in Karachi since the operation was launched. There has also been an 80pc decline in terrorism incidents in the city.

They were told that there has been a 69pc decline in incidents of targeted killings, 50pc in

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311967>

COAS SAYS ARMY HAS ALWAYS LIVED UP TO NATION'S EXPECTATIONS
The Express Tribune, February 2nd, 2017.

Islamabad: Drawing inspiration from war veterans and their spirit of sacrifice, Pakistan Army has always measured up to the challenges and expectations of the nation, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa said on Wednesday.

The army chief visited the 16 Baloch Regiment at Sialkot Cantonment, where he was commissioned as Second Lt.

Both the COAS and his father have commanded this battalion, the Inter Services Public Relations pointed out.

Gen Qamar spent the day with serving and retired soldiers and war veterans of the battalion who felt proud to see an officer of their battalion as the army chief.

Recollecting the memories, Gen Qamar said that a unit is a grooming place for the soldiers as well as the officers who undertake the challenges of professional life together.

Earlier, on his arrival to Sialkot, the army chief was received by Corps Commander Lt Gen Ikramul Haque. The chief of army staff visited the elite Strike Corps at Multan Garrison on January 23.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1314456/16-baloch-regiment-visit-coas-says-army-always-lived-nations-expectations/>

INDIA VIOLATING CEASEFIRE ALONG LOC, WB: BAJWA
Dawn February 4th, 2017

RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Friday said that India was trying to divert the world's attention from atrocities against Kashmiris by violating ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and the Working Boundary (WB).

He stated this during a visit to Lahore Garrison, where laid a wreath at Yadgar-i-Shuhada.

The army chief was briefed on operational preparedness and other matters at the Corps Headquarters and Headquarters Pakistan Rangers, Punjab, a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Gen Bajwa expressed satisfaction over the operational readiness and praised Rangers for their effective response to the ongoing ceasefire violations along the Working Boundary by Indian troops.

Later, addressing officers and troops of the Lahore Garrison, he said the army and Rangers had played an important role in reducing internal security threats, adding that the nation acknowledged and fully supported the army's contribution to the fight against terrorism and militancy.

"We shall always come up to the expectations of the people of Pakistan who are our real strength," he added.

About Indian provocations along the LoC and the Working Boundary, the army chief said India was trying to divert the world's attention from its atrocities against innocent people in held Kashmir. The

Pakistan Army and Rangers were fully prepared to give a befitting response to any misadventure from across the border, he added.

Earlier on arrival, Gen Bajwa was received by Lt Gen Sadiq Ali, Commander of Lahore Corps.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312640>

March 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 27TH TO APRIL 2 ND 2017

PTI OPPOSES NOC FOR RAHEEL TO HEAD SAUDI-LED MILITARY ALLIANCE

Dawn, March 27th, 2017

Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has opposed the government's decision to allow former chief of army staff (COAS) retd Gen Raheel Sharif to assume the command of a yet-to-be-formed, Saudi-led 39-nation military alliance of Muslim states.

"We strongly oppose this decision and will soon raise the issue in the parliament," PTI spokesman Fawwad Chaudhry told Dawn.

He said PTI Chairman Imran Khan had tasked three parliamentarians of the party — Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Shireen Mazari and Shafqat Mehmood — with preparing a strategy under which a privilege motion and a calling attention notice would be moved in the National Assembly so that a threadbare discussion could take place there on the issue.

The PTI's reaction came after an interview of Defence Minister Khawaja Asif was published in some newspapers on Sunday in which he revealed that the government had issued a no objection certificate (NOC) to the former army chief to lead the military alliance.

The PTI spokesman said his party was of the view that all parliamentary parties had decided in the parliament that Pakistan would remain neutral in the Middle East crisis. But the decision to issue the NOC to Gen Sharif is contrary to the parliament's decision. "Even if the government had decided to issue the NOC to the former army chief, it should have come again to the parliament to give reasons why it wanted to do so," he said.

The PTI spokesman said the 39-nation military alliance of Muslim states was apparently being formed against Iran and, therefore, the appointment of Pakistan's former army chief as its commander would send a negative message that the country was also against Iran.

Mr Chaudhry said the government's decision could further expand the already existing divide between Sunni and Shia communities in Pakistan. "Our Shia brothers have already been targeted in the country and this decision will intensify sense of insecurity prevailing among them," he added.

The proposed military coalition has reportedly been envisaged to serve as a platform for security cooperation, including provision of training, equipment and troops.

The PTI spokesman said the Middle East crisis was not confined to the Muslim states but super power Russia and Turkey had also been involved in the bloody war in Syria. “Raheel Sharif’s actions can also affect Pakistan’s relations with Iran, Russia and Turkey,” he expressed the fear.

He said under the country’s laws it was mandatory for all government officials not to take up a new job until two years after their retirement. And therefore Defence Minister Asif had told the Senate on Jan 11 that retd Gen Sharif would be required to seek NOC from the government before accepting the Saudi offer to assume command of the military coalition.

Mr Chaudhry said a statement of Federal Minister for Safron retired Lt Gen Abdul Qadir Baloch against issuance of the NOC to retd Gen Sharif was evident of the fact that the government had not taken even its cabinet members in confidence on the decision. “Neither the parliament nor the cabinet has been taken into confidence,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1323049>

RABBANI TO OPPOSE EXTENSION OF MILITARY COURTS BILL IN SENATE

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: Senate Chairman Mian Raza Rabbani said on Sunday the state wanted to produce a brand of citizenry that could not question its authority.

“When you make one [detached] from history, one will also be looking for moorings,” said Mr Rabbani in his keynote speech at the launch of a book — Pakistan: Historical Legacies, Contemporary Issues — authored by Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed at the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi.

The programme was organised by the Arts Council in collaboration with the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research and S.M. Sohail Trust.

The Senate chairman said the state destroyed the ‘coffee culture’ from the country, which only augmented violence and terrorism. “Terrorism can be fought against through literature and poetry, through culture.”

He said the state did not do anything but to crush the opponents, as it defaced the very foundation of Pakistan and rubbed off the truths from textbooks and everything in the control of the state, which was bitter enough for it to swallow.

“We could not find Quaid-i-Azam’s August 11 [1947] speech anywhere till not in the near past; and we still could not find his Quetta Staff College speech in which he defined the army’s role.”

He took the audience back in General Ziaul Haq’s regime when the military dictator recklessly rubbed off the word ‘freely’ while including the Objectives Resolution in the Constitution through the infamous Eighth Amendment when it said for the citizens belonging to the minority faiths “to go to their religious abodes...”.

“Such were the tricks that the state had been playing with the country since it came into being 70 years ago,” said Mr Rabbai, who has been opposing the legislation, recently passed by the National Assembly, allowing the extension of the military courts in the country for the next two years.

He said the curricula being taught in the schools of Sindh and Punjab had scrapped the illuminating chapters of the people’s history for democracy “as if they had never been a part of Pakistan’s record”.

He said the state mercilessly threw the country into the fire of intolerance and sectarianism.

Mr Rabbani countered the author’s sanguine view, in which the latter said the state had finally desired to have a counternarrative against the one it had own nurtured in the past, saying, the state was still not there to search for the panacea to treat the ills caused by itself.

“The state is not searching for a counter-narrative against its own decades-long narrative. The state is still not ready to accept that it was at fault when it nurtured a narrative that brought so much mess to the country. It is Pakistan’s academia, intellectuals and students who are vying for a counter narrative,” said the vocal politician, who is famous for showing disagreement with certain policies of his own party, the PPP.

He said the state should have held conferences in which intellectuals and scholars would have been invited to formulate a counter-narrative. “But, unfortunately, the state is still looking towards the madressah, which wouldn’t give it something that we call as counter narrative.”

He said his position vis-a-vis the military courts was crystal clear. “I am against the [establishment of] military courts.”

He said two years back it was not the constitution that stopped him from opposing the military courts, but it was his own ‘timidity’. “Had I not been timid, I would have resigned from the Senate. I did not resign and opted for an escape route.”

About the latest legislation on military courts, he said he had two options — either to skip the Senate proceedings and sign the bill clandestinely or to oppose the bill while sitting in the house. “I deem the second option advisable.”

He admitted that the political parties in Pakistan were plagued with dynastic tendencies, and the 18th Amendment to the Constitution gave their heads huge powers. However, he said political parties could not get fully democratised because of the fact that they had been busy in extinguishing the fires that had been triggered in their way by the establishment from time to time.

Former Balochistan chief minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch expressed his concern over the increasing number of “jihadi madressahs” in Sindh and Balochistan, calling it a ‘dangerous’ trend which would have destructive consequences.

“One can pay a visit to my constituency and look how increasingly such madressahs are being established there. This reflects how the state has resorted to dangerous policies,” he said.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Rashid A Razvi said the same religious parties which vehemently opposed the notion of a secular Pakistan were unrivalled champions of secularism across the border in India.

Terming it duplicity, he added that the country's authoritarianism began when the Quaid was alive and Dr Khan's government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [then NWFP] had been dislodged undemocratically.

Author Dr Ahmed said the state finally realised its mistake of nurturing the narrative that dominated the country for seven decades and now was itself in search of a counter-narrative.

Labour rights activist Karamat Ali moderated the proceedings. Writer Zahida Hina, Arts Council President Ahmed Shah, Dr Riaz Shaikh, Mehnaz Rehman and Dr Syed Tariq Sohail also spoke.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322977>

PRESIDENTIAL ASSENT REVIVES MILY COURTS FOR TWO YEARS

Dawn, April 1st, 2017

Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: President Mamnoon Hussain gave on Friday his approval to the revival of military courts for another two years with effect from Jan 7, more than two months after a tug of war between the government and opposition parties over the way of their functioning.

The government says the revival was imperative keeping in view the recent spate of terrorism in the country.

The president's spokesman said: "President Mamnoon Hussain on Friday gave his formal assent to the Pakistan Army Act 2017 and the 23rd Constitutional Amendment Bill."

Both pieces of legislation are aimed at granting legal cover to the military courts for trying civilians charged with terrorism.

The president also approved the Inquiry Commission Bill 2017, paving the way for the formation of the commission to investigate any matter.

When the military courts bill was tabled in parliament it was titled the 23rd Constitution Amendment Bill, but now it will be called the 28th Constitution Amendment Bill.

The Senate passed the bill on March 22, a day after it was approved by the National Assembly with 255 votes in favour and four against, exceeding the two-thirds majority required for its passage.

Giving reasons for the revival of military courts, the 23rd Constitution Amendment Bill said: "An extraordinary situation and circumstances still exist which demand continuation of the special measures adopted for expeditious disposal of certain offences.

“The Constitution (Twenty-first Amendment) Act, 2015 was passed (with a sunset clause of two years) enabling trial under the Pakistan Army Act, 1952 for expeditious disposal of cases related to terrorism. These measures have yielded positive results in combating terrorism. It is, therefore, proposed to continue these special measures for a further period of two years through this Constitution Amendment Bill.”

The Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl lawmakers abstained from voting on the bill, saying they had reservations over its legal language, especially the phrase “terrorism in the name of religion”.

The government and the opposition had until recently struggled to reach a consensus on the courts’ revival despite frequent discussions. The primary concern of critics was the mystery surrounding military court trials: no one knows who the convicts are, what charges have been brought against them, or what their defence is against the allegations levelled.

The government and opposition parties have decided that it will be the last two-year extension for the military courts and formed a high-powered parliamentary committee comprising parliamentary leaders of all parties to oversee the government’s efforts over the much-demanded judicial reforms to make the existing judicial system stronger to deal with terrorism-related cases and to monitor the National Action Plan and other issues pertaining to national security.

The government held a series of meetings on the issue mainly because of reservations expressed by the main opposition Pakistan Peoples Party which stuck to its stance that since the term of the present government will be over in May 2018, the extension of military courts for two years (beyond 2018) will be illogical.

Secondly, the PPP was of the view that like in the past, military courts should be presided over by a sessions judge who would be assisted by an additional sessions judge.

However, the party later withdrew its both demands, thus paving the way for the revival of military courts.

The Pakistan Commission of Inquiry Act 2017 signed by the president was tabled by the government in the Senate in the wake of the Panamagate controversy last year.

The bill was introduced after former chief justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali refused to form a “toothless” inquiry commission on Panamagate under the Pakistan Commission of Inquiry Act 1956.

Earlier this month, the Senate passed the bill with four amendments, one of which makes it mandatory for the government to make the commission’s report public within 30 days of its submission.

The bill was presented in the National Assembly for a second time after the Senate made amendments to it. It was passed by the assembly last week.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324117/presidential-assent-revives-mly-courts-for-two-years>

SHIFT IN INDIA’S NUCLEAR POLICY?

Dawn, April 2nd, 2017

THE complexity of nuclear deterrence should not prevent a wider understanding of how subtle shifts can lead to a profound increase in threat and danger.

A recently released memoir by former Indian national security adviser Shivshankar Menon and comments by an MIT academic have combined to suggest that a shift in India's nuclear 'no first use' policy is being undertaken, moving it away from its explicit policy of not using nuclear weapons first in a conflict with Pakistan and towards a policy of so-called preemption.

The effect of that change, or even the possibility of such a change, can be twofold: a continuing nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan; and perhaps a lowering of the nuclear threshold, the point at which nuclear conflict becomes a real possibility. Unhappily, South Asia appears poised for another round of accusations and recriminations in the most dangerous of arenas.

No first use was always a political statement by India that could change in wartime and it has never been a policy on which Pakistan could base its own nuclear strategy. Simply, in the realm of nuclear weapons there is no room for concessions based on perceived intent, only strategy based on the other's capabilities.

But in the ongoing evolution of Indian strategy, a distressing spiral towards ever greater danger in the region is discernible. The Indian and western explanations for the shift are rooted in the perceived threat of a large-scale terrorist attack on Indian soil emanating from Pakistan. That was the justification for the destabilising Cold Start doctrine that led Pakistan to venture down the road to tactical nuclear weapons.

Now, in response to Pakistan's response to Cold Start, India is flirting with the idea of a preemptive nuclear attack on Pakistan to ostensibly deter it from considering using tactical nuclear weapons.

What the Indian and western explanations take for granted, however, is that India is a benign power that will only act defensively. For Pakistan, while India must be engaged in dialogue diplomatically, military strategy must be based on the possibility that India will not always have benign intentions. Indeed, in the current climate of growing right-wing political sentiment in India, it is an affront to Pakistan to suggest that Indian policy is necessarily and always will be benign towards it. For all right-minded and sensible people in India and Pakistan, the urgency for dialogue between the two countries is greater than ever.

In the cause-and-effect, chicken-or-egg security dynamic between them, the only reality thus far has been an ever more armed region with an ever greater array of the most dangerous weapons known in the history of mankind. The Cold War proved that military logic can lead to ruinously expensive outcomes and wildly disproportionate weapons capabilities. Pakistan and India should take heed before it is too late to pull back from a race to mutual destruction.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324240>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 20TH TO MARCH 26TH 2017

COAS DISMISSES INDIA'S DIVERSIONARY PROPAGANDA

The Express Tribune March 24, 2017

Indian propaganda about the presence of militants along the Line of Control (LoC) is aimed at spreading unrest in Kashmir, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) quoted Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa as saying.

“People of Azad Jammu and Kashmir are fully aware of Indian atrocities in held Kashmir and [of] Indian agendas,” General Qamar said during his visit to the LoC at Kel Sector and the forward post at Sharda on Friday. “Pakistan Army shall continue to ensure protection and security of people along [the] LoC.”

The statement came a week after a 60-year-old woman was killed in unprovoked Indian firing along the Indo-Pak border.

Both sides routinely accuse each other of violating the 2003 ceasefire agreement. However, it is impossible to verify claims from either side due to lack of access to the heavily militarised zone.

The army chief, who was briefed on the continuing ceasefire violations (CFVs), appreciated army’s “state of operational preparedness and response to CFVs”. He was also apprised about the army’s support to ongoing housing and population Census.

Gen Qamar also directed the authorities to ensure progress and development works in the area in coordination with the AJK government.

The restive Himalayan region suffered a rise in violence last year after the killing in July of a popular young rebel leader in a gun battle with soldiers.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1364812/indian-propaganda-loc-aims-destabilise-kashmir-gen-qamar/>

INDIA MAY USE NUCLEAR OPTION FIRST TO PRE-EMPT ATTACK: EXPERT

Dawn, March 22nd, 2017

WASHINGTON: There is increasing evidence that India could launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike to prevent Pakistan from using the option first, says an expert.

“India will not allow Pakistan to go first. And that India’s opening salvo may not be conventional strikes trying to pick off just Nasr batteries in the theatre,” Vipin Narang, an Indian-origin nuclear strategist from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), told a seminar in Washington on Monday.

Nasr is a vehicle that Pakistan uses for carrying its tactical battlefield nuclear warheads.

India would launch “a full ‘comprehensive counterforce strike’ that attempts to completely disarm Pakistan of its nuclear weapons,” Dr Narang said.

He explained that policy-makers in New Delhi decided to go for the nuclear option to ensure that “India does not have to engage in iterative tit-for-tat exchanges and expose its own cities to nuclear destruction”.

Mr Narang said he was not basing assessment on fringe extreme voices such as those of Bharat Karnad or retired Indian Army officers frustrated by the lack of resolve they believe their government had shown in multiple provocations.

This assessment, he said, was based on what he learned from no less than a former Strategic Forces Command C-in-C Lt Gen B.S. Nagal and from the highly respected and influential former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon.

“We may be witnessing ... a ‘decoupling’ of Indian nuclear strategy between China and Pakistan. The force requirements India needs to credibly threaten assured retaliation against China may allow it to pursue more aggressive strategies — such as escalation dominance or a ‘splendid first strike’ — against Pakistan,” Dr Narang said.

The MIT expert argued that the conventional wisdom that a nuclear war in South Asia could start with a terrorist attack from Pakistan may no longer be valid.

The conventional wisdom envisages that a strong Indian reaction to a terrorist attack from Pakistan would lead to Islamabad using its tactical nuclear weapons to slow down the Indian offensive, Dr Narang explained.

“India then promises what most presume is massive counter-value retaliation against Pakistani cities, leaving aside how credible or incredible that might be. This is how nuclear first use would unfold in South Asia,” he added.

But Dr Narang argued that this “conventional wisdom” might not be true any longer.

Speaking at the Carnegie International Nuclear Conference in Washington on Monday, he said that India was willing to reverse its stated no-first-use policy if it feared a nuclear attack was imminent. But a pre-emptive Indian strike, however, would target Pakistan’s nuclear installations, not urban centres, he added.

But nuclear experts in Washington warned that a strike on nuclear installations could be equally devastating as it would wipe out the adjacent urban centres as well. The experts also pointed out that Pakistan was a thin strip of land where nuclear installations were not far from urban centres.

The mainstream Indian media — including some of its leading newspapers — prominently displayed Dr Narang’s warnings on their websites. The Hindustan Times reported that Dr Narang told the conference “there is increasing evidence” to support his claim that “India will not allow Pakistan to go first”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322079>

FENCING OF BORDER WITH AFGHANISTAN BEGINS

Dawn, March 26th, 2017

Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: Pakistan has begun fencing of its borders with Afghanistan.

The fencing, beginning along the border areas in Bajaur and Mohmand, is part of a multibillion rupee border management plan that involves building hundreds of small forts and installation of radars, sensors and other technical surveillance equipment to effectively check cross-border movement, officials familiar with the plan said.

The commencement of the fencing was announced by Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa during a visit to border areas in Mohmand, the Inter-Services Public Relations said in a statement on Saturday.

Gen Bajwa described both Bajaur and Mohmand 'high threat zones' which was why, he said, they were being accorded priority in the plan.

Both Mohmand and the adjoining Bajaur which abut Afghanistan's Nangarhar and Kunar provinces have seen a frequent spike in attacks, including the ones by the banned militants groups, including Jamaatul Ahrar and Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.

Pakistan's security forces carried out targeted surgical strikes on Ahrar's bases just across the border following successive bomb attacks in parts of the country and shut down its border with Afghanistan for little over a month.

The statement quoted Gen Bajwa as telling troops that additional technical surveillance means were also being deployed along the border besides regular air surveillance.

Officials familiar with the plan said that fencing would be done at selective places and it would be augmented by a robust border patrolling, radar and border surveillance equipment.

Officials told Dawn that Pakistan was building 423 small forts along the 2,430km-long border with Afghanistan, roughly at a distance of 6km from each other, for effectively border patrolling and monitoring.

More than 60 such forts had already been built while work on others was in progress, officials said.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has sanctioned Rs12 billion to the military to put in place an effective border management system and more resources could be provided if needed, the officials Dawn spoke to said.

They said that radars and sensors were being deployed that could detect movement across the borders. Some had been deployed while others were in the process of being installed, they added.

"These have been useful in detecting movement recently, enabling our security forces to effectively respond to the threat," the officials said.

To further augment the plan, the military was planning to install sensors along the border, they said.

Pakistan has already tightened visa and travel regime for Afghans besides introducing a system for tribesmen, replacing the age-old rahdari system.

Besides, in order to better manage the borders with Afghanistan, the post of Inspector General Frontier Force, South, has been created, thus dividing the border region between the IGFC North, including Khyber, Mohmand, Bajaur, Orakzai and Kurram and the IGFC South to look after North and South Waziristan.

The ISPR statement quoted the army chief as saying the military would employ all resources required for the defence of the country and for the safety and security of peace-loving Pakistani tribes.

Bilateral security mechanism

He said efforts were being made to evolve a bilateral border security mechanism with Afghan authorities. A better managed, more secure and more peaceful border, he added, was in the mutual interest of both brotherly countries, who had given phenomenal sacrifices in the war against terrorism.

He said mainstreaming of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) was in the best national interest. Development works, he added, were also being carried out expeditiously to bring enduring peace and stability to the tribal areas.

Gen Bajwa was given a detailed briefing on border security arrangements, cross-border terrorist threat and recent terrorist attacks from across the border on Pakistani posts.

The COAS interacted with troops at Suran and Kalaya, and hailed their high morale, operational preparedness and effective response to recent cross-border terrorist attacks.

He appreciated the killing of five terrorists, including high-value terrorist Duran, in a recent intelligence based operation and greatly valued 'Shahadat' (martyrdom) of Major Mudassar and two soldiers during the operation, the statement said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322894>

RAHEEL SHARIF MAY ASSUME COMMAND OF SAUDI-LED FORCE NEXT MONTH Dawn, March 26th, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Retired army chief Gen Raheel Sharif is likely to assume in April the command of a yet-to-be-formed Saudi-led, 39-country Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT), which is being dubbed as a 'Muslim Nato'.

The government had issued a no-objection certificate for Gen Sharif to join the alliance after an understanding was reached between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on the matter, retired Maj Gen Ijaz Awan, a defence analyst and close associate of the former army chief, told Dawn on Saturday.

He said the former army chief would be taking charge ahead of a consultative meeting of the defence ministers of the alliance's members, scheduled for May, in which the participating countries would decide about the force's structure, their contributions in terms of personnel and armaments, the coalition reserve and other modalities.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said in a media interview that Saudi Arabia had been intimated in writing about the government's consent.

The approval was apparently given after relaxing the official rules, which only provide for permission for post-retirement re-employment of retired army officers by a government ministry or division.

The matter was taken up by the Senate in January after the first reports emerged that the former army chief would be moving to Saudi Arabia to join the IMAFT.

The defence minister assured the upper house of parliament that no such request had been received and he would inform it whenever there was a development in this regard. Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz had also said that he would make a statement about the foreign policy implications of retired Gen Sharif's appointment, whenever and if it happened.

Mr Awan said a contract for three-year employment with the IMAFT would be signed by the former army chief in the coming days.

Moreover, he said, the General Headquarters (GHQ) would be formally intimated by the government that retired Gen Sharif's services for the new alliance had been permitted as part of "state policy".

The government has apparently remained ambiguous about whether or not it has formally joined the alliance due to dominant public opinion against becoming a party to the Middle Eastern politics. The deliberate official ambiguity notwithstanding, retired Gen Sharif last March accompanied the prime minister to Raadal Shamaal, the first military exercises of the alliance in which Pakistani troops also participated.

Mr Awan said the former army chief's immediate tasks at his new job would be the capacity building, interoperability and training of the force and developing mechanisms for experience sharing and intelligence coordination.

He said Pakistan Army's institutions would be used for training cadets and officers from the member states.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322891>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 13TH TO MARCH 19TH 2017

DEADLOCK PERSISTS OVER MILITARY COURTS

Dawn, March 14th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: A deadlock between the government and main opposition Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) persisted on revival of military courts during a meeting of parliamentary parties in the Parliament House on Monday.

According to PPP leader Aitzaz Ahsan, the government and the PPP will meet again on Tuesday. "The deadlock on the military courts continues and we are meeting again on Tuesday evening," he told reporters after the conclusion of the latest session of two rounds of meetings on the issue, which continued till 7pm.

He said no decision was taken in the meeting, but the government and the PPP agreed to continue talks to resolve the issue.

The government introduced the 23rd constitutional amendment bill (on revival of military courts) in the National Assembly on Friday, but it has been rejected by two opposition parties — the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Q. The two parties have presented their recommendations and it will be discussed in the next meeting whether PPP proposals can be incorporated in the bill or not.

Earlier, leaders of almost all parliamentary parties met to discuss the issue and the meeting ended after midday. It was followed by a second session which was attended only by parliamentarians of the ruling PML-N and the PPP.

The PPP has proposed one-year term for military courts instead of two years and recommended that the courts should be presided over by sessions judges.

“PPP stuck to its proposals as we want to give basic right to the accused to be tried in military courts,” Mr Ahsan said.

Talking to Dawn, PPP leader Farhatullah Babar said his party would continue to stick to its stance on the issue.

Elaborating, he said first of all there was no room for military courts in a democratic set-up and if their presence was inevitable, maximum safeguards should be taken to ensure protection of basic rights of the accused.

Military courts were established in Jan 2015 to try civilians charged with terrorism after a deadly terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar in Dec 2014. The courts have ceased to function since Jan 7 after the expiry of the two-year constitutional cover given to them.

Replying to a question, Mr Ahsan said the PPP had the options of opposing the bill, not casting its vote in its favour and boycotting proceedings of the lower house.

Law Minister Zahid Hamid did not talk to reporters after the meeting. Later, he could not be contacted for comments despite efforts.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320340>

SEVEN INJURED IN INDIAN SHELLING

Dawn, March 14th, 2017

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Seven persons, including two women and an infant, were injured when Indian troops shelled different villages of Azad Jammu and Kashmir from across the Line of Control (LoC) on the second consecutive day on Monday, officials said.

“Indian troops resumed shelling at about 6.10am in the morning, targeting Pakistan Army posts as well as civilian populations in Dharra, Batol, Polas, Kakota and Chirikot,” said Taskheer Awan, additional deputy commissioner (general) in Abbaspur in Poonch district.

He identified the injured as Kabir Hus-sain Magray, 42; Rabia, 25; Abdul Aziz, 70; Mohammad Rasheed, 45; Mohammad Tayyab, 28; Nadia and one-year-old Ahad Shafaat. They were taken to Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan Hospital in Rawalakot, where the condition of two of them was stated to be critical.

In a related incident, a 70-year-old cardiac patient, identified as Afsar Jan, died from panic when a shell landed in the courtyard of her house in Polas village. The house was badly damaged.

Poonch Deputy Commissioner Raja Tahir Mumtaz told Dawn that he had ordered closure of all vulnerable educational institutions along the LoC within his jurisdiction to avert any casualty in the face of “unprovoked and sudden” shelling by Indian troops.

He said he had dispatched two additional ambulances to Abbaspur, besides ensuring presence of doctors and paramedics in all health facilities along the dividing line.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320342>

NAVAL NETWORK PROVIDING SECURITY TO GWADAR PORT

Dawn, March 15th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

GWADAR: Commander Shahid Ahmed, the commanding officer of PNS Akram, said here on Tuesday that without maritime security of the Gwadar port and its approaches, dividends of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could not be accrued.

PNS Akram, set up in 1983 at Gwadar, is a surveillance station, considered the eyes and ears of Pakistan Navy, from where they don't just monitor activities at the Gwadar port, but also in the North Arabian Sea.

As the commanding officer pointed out at a press briefing, Gwadar port has enormous strategic importance for Pakistan as it is the focal point of the CPEC.

For the protection of Gwadar, there is also PNS Siddiq in Turbat, which is the primary airbase for fixed wing aircraft. The unit also provides facility to anchor to foreign naval units.

There is also PNS Makran at Pasni, which is the secondary airbase for naval aviation and is used for both rotary wing and fixed wing aircraft. The naval base at Jiwani is another surveillance station coordinating with the maritime headquarters in Karachi. The 3rd and 4th battalions have been raised to protect the Gwadar port and provide harbour defence.

Commander Ahmed said that the navy had been entrusted with the security of the Gwadar port, including the fish harbour, the entire hammerhead-shaped peninsula, including Koh-i-Batil, and the Chinese nationals residing in Gwadar. To safeguard the Gwadar port, the navy has also raised the maritime security Task Force-88 on Dec 13, 2016.

“The area of responsibility of Task Force-88 starts from Gwadar Bay to Basol, extending seaward up to six nautical miles from the baseline of Pakistan. This includes the approaches to Gwadar port as well,” he shared.

“The area includes a number of bays, including Gwadar Bay, Gwadar West Bay, East Bay and Pasni Bay,” Commander Ahmed said. Astola Island in the south of Pasni and a number of water indentations also come in the area of responsibility of Task Force-88.

“The major fish harbours in our area of responsibility are at Gwadar, Jiwani, Pishukan, Surbander, Kabbar Jhal and Pasni but other than these, about 29 more fishing areas from where fishing originates also fall in our area of responsibility,” he said.

Fishing is carried out on fishing boats. Group fishing is also conducted in Gwadar, Jiwani and Pasni.

“Over 700 registered and 1,200 unregistered fishing boats operate in our area. The unregistered boats might be used for smuggling and illegal trafficking. The possibility of terrorists using such boats cannot be ruled out,” he said, adding that registration of the boats was not the job of the navy or the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA). The Balochistan fisheries department is responsible for it.

A rare defence mechanism is being followed for the security of the Gwadar port. “Surveillance is maintained through sectors and radars at PNS Akram through which we coordinate with the entire area on land and the sea. For vigilance, we have patrolling boats. The PN ships and helicopters are also operating and we are doing all this in close coordination with the PMSA,” Commander Ahmed concluded.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320631>

THREE CONVICTED BY MILITARY COURT HANGED

Dawn, March 16th, 2017

Shafiq Butt

SAHIWAL: Three terrorism convicts were hanged at a prison here in Farid Town at dawn on Wednesday.

They had been sentenced to death by a military court.

Said Zaman Khan of Swabi district, Mohammad Zeeshan of Abbottabad and Shawalay Khan of South Waziristan were brought to the high-security prison on January 25 after their mercy pleas were rejected by the army chief.

They were accused of attacking the armed forces and members of law enforcement agencies.

Zaman Khan and Shawalay Khan were members of a banned outfit called Harkatul Jihad al-Islam, while Zeeshan belonged to the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.

Prison officials confirmed that the bodies had been handed over to relatives of the deceased later in the day.

Foolproof security arrangements were ensured in and around Farid Town and other public places prior to the execution.

Last month, five convicted terrorists were hanged at the same prison.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320788>

NAVY CONDUCTS TEST LAUNCH OF ANTI-SHIP MISSILE

Dawn, March 17th, 2017

Karachi: Pakistan Navy successfully conducted the test launch of a land-based anti-ship missile on Thursday.

The missile has advanced technology and avionics, which enables it to hit targets at sea with high accuracy, according to a Pakistan Navy press release.

The trial was conducted from the coastal region and the missile successfully hit the target placed at sea.

The event was witnessed by Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Khan Hasham bin Saddique and senior officers of Pakistan Navy.

The vice chief of the naval staff commended accomplishment of objectives of the trial and lauded hard work and efforts of all those involved, especially the crew of the missile unit.

The Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Zakaullah, in his message felicitated the officers and crew. He said the latest weapon system had added a new dimension to the operational reach of Pakistan Navy as the PN would be able to bolster seaward defence of the nation by having the capability of launching long-range anti-ship missiles from land.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320984>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 6TH TO MARCH 12 TH 2017

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN: ARMY CONCERNED AT SLOW PACE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Business Recorder, 10 March 2017

Islamabad: the corps commanders have stressed that implementation of the national action plan (nap) needs to be expedited-jointly by relevant stake-holders for a lasting peace and stability in the country. A corps commanders meeting was held under it chairmanship of chief of army staff general qamar javed bajwa in ghq, rawalpindi, on thursday.

Reviewing the implementation of the nap, the corps commanders expressed concern over the slow implementation of the nap and undersigned to need for as speedy implementation.

The forum expressed its confidence in the performance of military courts. However, the decision for reinstatement of military courts rests with the government. The dawn leaks issue was also discussed in the meeting.

The army chief informed the participants about the discussion with the government authorities during last security conference, which included phased fencing of the pak-afghan border, repatriation of afghan refugees, judicial, police and madrassa (seminary) reforms, and restarting execution of death sentences to terrorists awarded by the military courts.

The forum also reviewed the support of pakistan army in conducting 6th housing and population census. The army chief said the army shall undertake this task as a national service.

The forum reaffirmed the resolve to thwart the sordid designs of hostile agencies against the security and development of the country with the support of the nation.

The meeting said that the pakistan army will play its due role towards defence and security of the motherland. It said that sacrifices made by the resilient people of pakistan and its brave soldiers will not go waste.

The corps commander conference also reviewed geo-strategic and security environment with special focus on internal security. Pak-afghan border situation and a ceasefire violations along the line of control (loc) by india also came under discussion.

The forum expressed satisfaction over the performance of security forces, including police intelligence and law enforcement agencies (leas), for their effective response to recent terrorist incidents and security arrangements for psl final at lahore.

The participants of the forum discussed operation raad-ul-fasaad in detail. On the occasion, the army chief said that raad-ul-fassad is a comprehensive operation against terrorism. He said the operation is not against any particular race, sect or group.

The forum also acknowledged participation and support of pakistan air force and pakistan navy in the ongoing operation.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/10/1-page/856460-news.html>

MILITARY COURTS NOT A LASTING SOLUTION: SHAH

The Express Tribune, March 11th, 2017.

Hyderabad: Calling for long-term planning to end terrorism, Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Khursheed Shah on Friday said military courts are not a permanent solution to the problem. “We supported [the setting up] of the military courts for two years so that peace can be established [in the country]. The situation then necessitated our support,” he told reporters in Hyderabad.

Shah also accused the federal government of adopting a non-serious attitude over extending the tenure of the military courts.

“If the PML-N’s government wanted to draw out their term, consultations should have been started with other political parties by December 2016 when the two-year period expired.”

“Now, suddenly the government has come under pressure and the issue has been taken up,” Shah said.

The opposition leader said terrorism was a mindset which could not be eliminated by bullets alone.

He voiced regret that the National Action Plan had not been implemented — especially in Punjab where, unlike Sindh, the paramilitary Rangers had not been given policing powers.

“There are safe havens of terrorists in Punjab,” he said. The opposition leader also criticised Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for not taking parliament into confidence over the issue of terrorism, as well as the situation on the country’s borders.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1352312/military-courts-not-lasting-solution-shah/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 27TH TO MARCH 5TH 2017
10 RANGERS COMPANIES TO PERFORM ONLY ‘ASSIGNED DUTIES’ IN PUNJAB
Dawn, March 5th, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: As many as 10 companies of Rangers have been posted in Punjab, five each for anti-terrorist operations and the PSL final to be held today (Sunday) and unlike in the past the provincial government is at ease because of an understanding that the paramilitary force will perform only the “assigned duties”.

“Rangers should have been here last year to help police eliminate terrorists and their networks in Punjab. But it could not happen because of various reasons, including the suspicion of the force acting beyond the limits that too could not be determined. Now, the lines have clearly been drawn with the provincial additional chief secretary home’s pivotal role in the (new) scheme of things,” a senior official told Dawn on Saturday.

Punjab government had been reluctant to call Rangers, as it apprehended a Karachi-like situation with the paramilitary force acting independent of provincial authorities.

According to him, five companies of Rangers were summoned after the Punjab Apex Committee decided to launch an anti-terrorist operation in the province with the help of the paramilitary force following the Charing Cross suicide bombing here.

And an equal number of Rangers were requested after the political and army leadership decided to hold the PSL final in Lahore to give a message to the terrorists that they could not intimidate the nation. The Rangers would maintain an inner cordon inside the Qadhafi Stadium, where the match would be played.

The official said that out of the five Rangers companies summoned for intelligence-based anti-terrorist operations, two were detailed in Dera Ghazi Khan and one in Attock. The remaining two had not been detailed but were on their toes to hunt down terrorists when and where required in the province, he added.

The official said the two districts were chosen for the deployment of Rangers because of their strategic location. He said as Attock bordered Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there was a need to conduct combing operations, besides keeping an eye on the routes to Punjab. Similarly, DG Khan was situated

on the Balochistan-Punjab-Sindh border. It has 180km-long rugged and porous terrain with a tribal area in Rajanpur, posing a threat of infiltration of terrorists into Punjab.

“The government is at ease because any further decision of posting Rangers in the province or an extension in their stay if required will be decided by the Apex Committee which meets under the chief minister. They have been given policing powers only to provide legal cover to their raids, arrests etc. They have not become police,” the official said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318519/10-rangers-companies-to-perform-only-assigned-duties-in-punjab>

April 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 24TH TO APRIL 30TH 2017

TRANSMISSION LINE BEING RE-ROUTED OVER MILITARY'S CONCERN

Dawn, April 27, 2017

Khalid Hasnain

LAHORE: The 878km-long route of the Matiari-Lahore transmission line project is being realigned after the military objected to it and insisted that the line be built at least 30km away from the cantonment and its border areas in Bahawalpur.

Following the military's concern, the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC), a subsidiary of the Ministry of Water and Power, and the China Electric Power Equipment and Technology Company Ltd (CET) — the firm executing the \$1.6 billion project — have started conducting a detailed route survey keeping in view its realignment, under the guidance of military officials.

The Matiari-Lahore transmission line, a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is the country's first mega project based on direct current. It will have the capacity of transmitting about 4,000MW.

According to a preliminary survey, the transmission line will be built from Matiari (Hyderabad) to Balloki (near Bhaipheru and Lahore), and will pass through Ghotki, Rahim Yar Khan and Bahawalpur. The cost of the project may increase by up to 10 per cent if the route is realigned after the detailed survey.

“The route's survey conducted previously was only a preliminary one and now the Chinese firm is conducting a detailed survey of the route for acquisition of land with a special focus on realigning the line 30km away from sensitive areas of the military, in light of fresh directions we have received,” an official of the water and power ministry explained.

“The line was previously supposed to pass near an army training camp and other sensitive areas, but the military raised objections...since the project and military areas both are strategically important,” the official, requesting anonymity, added.

He said that soon after receiving the objections, officials of the water and power ministry and the NTDC held meetings with military officials and eventually decided to change the route. They also decided that military officials would guide the survey teams comprising Chinese and NTDC engineers while finalising the new route, especially near Bahawalpur.

“Revisions or amendments to the route will not, hopefully, increase the 868km planned length of the project. If it does increase, the project’s cost could go up by five to 10pc of the total cost. The Chinese contractor will bear the increased cost under the agreement,” the official maintained.

Another senior official of the ministry confirmed the development, saying the work on realigning the route was under way. “It was necessary to amend the route keeping in view the input from the quarters concerned.”

Land acquisition for the transmission line in various districts of Sindh and Balochistan would commence soon after finalising the realignment of the project route.

The government has already handed over possession of two tracts of land to the Chinese company to start construction of converter stations for the 660kV high voltage direct current transmission line. The control of the pieces of land measuring 175 acres (each) was given to CET, a company owned by the State Grid Corporation of China, in January this year after the NTDC acquired the land from private owners. One tract is located near Balloki, about 50km from Lahore, while the other in Matiari, near Hyderabad, Sindh.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1329542/transmission-line-being-re-routed-over-militarys-concern>

PAKISTAN MILITARY TEAM DISCUSSES SECURITY DURING VISIT TO KABUL

Dawn, April 28, 2017

ISLAMABAD: In a significant confidence-building move, a top-level Pakistan Army delegation visited Kabul on Thursday and held negotiations with the Afghan officials on various issues relating to security.

The Inter-Services Public Relations in a statement issued after the day-long visit of the army delegation, led by Chief of the General Staff Lt Gen Bilal Akbar, said “terrorists are common threat and shall be defeated”.

The resolve was conveyed to acting Defence Minister Tariq Shah Bahramee and Afghan Chief of the Army Staff Gen Mohammad Sharif Yaftali.

“Afghan authorities were conveyed that Pakistan Army has control in all areas on Pakistan side of the border and shall not allow its soil to be used against Afghanistan,” the ISPR quoted the Pakistani delegates as saying at the talks.

“The delegation held talks on bilateral border coordination measures..,” the ISPR said.

Kabul has long complained about terrorists using sanctuaries on Pakistani soil for launching strikes in Afghanistan.

Gen Akbar's visit, which according to the ISPR happened on the army chief's direction, was the continuation of contacts agreed during Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz's talks with Afghan National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar in London, which had been brokered by Britain. The London meeting had been arranged to help the two countries overcome the impasse in their ties over terrorist sanctuaries that had led to weeks' long closure of the border crossings.

The understanding reached in London — known as agreement on bilateral cooperation mechanism — paved the way for reopening of the border crossings.

During the talks, the Pakistani delegation condoled over Afghan army's casualties in a terrorist attack on a base in Mazar-e-Sharif last Friday in which close to 200 soldiers were killed. "Free medical treatment in Pakistan to [the] injured of Mazar-e-Sharif attack was also offered by the delegation," the ISPR said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1329706>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 17TH TO APRIL 23RD 2017

CRITICISM OF ARMY ROLE IN CENSUS REJECTED

Dawn, April 17th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The government on Sunday vehemently rejected international objections to the involvement of the armed forces in the sixth housing and population census that is currently under way across the country.

"They should apply their standards in their [own] countries. We have to work in the light of our circumstances," Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said on the completion of the first phase of the national exercise.

He was reacting to criticism from United Nations agencies for involving the armed forces in the census exercise, who dubbed it against international standards and best practices. The minister said that such objections from international observers were not valid in the context of Pakistan.

The housing census would not have been scrapped unanimously by the Council of Common Interests (CCI) in 2011 had it been possible to carry out the process without the armed forces, he said.

"The government had to postpone the census in 2016 due to the non-availability of army personnel, even though civilian authorities were fully prepared. It was not possible for the army to spare so many people because of their engagement on the borders and in Operation Zarb-i-Azb," he said.

The minister said that census staff, including military personnel, were being welcomed by the people with tea and cold drinks wherever they went in all four provinces, adding that "nobody was objecting to the process and its transparency because of the 'ideal partnership' between civil and military authorities".

He termed the involvement of the armed forces crucial to ensuring the credibility, integrity and authenticity of the process.

The finance minister criticised Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah for raising questions over the transparency of the census process. “It is the easiest thing to raise questions [but] decisions cannot be made on someone’s whim; we have to follow the law,” he said.

Mr Dar said that the Sindh chief minister had written to him and that his concerns had been addressed in a reply, which explained the requirements of the law passed by the PPP government.

The chief minister had been advised to consult Farooq H. Naek, who was PPP’s law minister at the time and current counsel, the minister said. Mr Shah was also advised to sit with Mr Naek and Khawaja Zaheer, the PM’s special assistant, to iron out issues.

Mr Dar denied having received a purported second letter from the Sindh chief minister, saying he didn’t know where Mr Shah was getting his population figures from.

He also declined to say whether the demarcation of constituencies for the upcoming elections would be based on the results of the census, saying that the issue fell within the jurisdiction of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). He, however, said that provisional results of the census would be compiled in two months and then made public, giving the ECP enough time to fulfil its responsibility.

The finance minister was flanked by Chief Census Commissioner Asif Bajwa, who paid tribute to members of a census team who lost their lives in a suicide attack in Lahore. Four soldiers and three passers-by were killed and 19 others injured in that incident.

One enumerator was killed in a road accident in Mansehra, while two others were kidnapped in Kech district of Balochistan, he said.

Mr Dar said that the son of the deceased enumerator had been absorbed in the education department and his widow was given Rs1 million as a token of sympathy. “All those who lost their lives while on census duty are martyrs, because they were performing a national duty,” he said.

Mr Bajwa said the national exercise was being carried out at a total cost of Rs18.5 billion. Of this, Rs6bn would be spent on civil and armed personnel and the remaining Rs6.5bn on hiring vehicles.

He said the first phase, which began on March 15 and involved 63 administrative districts across the country, had been completed successfully. Phase 1 involved the enumeration of these districts into 80,702 blocks and 188 census districts.

He said 200,000 army personnel had been deployed — 44,000 for enumeration work and the remaining for security of the field staff. In addition, six teams of international observers, led by the United Nations Population Fund, were conducting independent and unbiased monitoring of the census process.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327531/criticism-of-army-role-in-census-rejected>

NO CHANGE IN RANGERS’ ASSISTANCE TO POLICE, SAYS GOVT
Dawn, April 18th, 2017

“An impression has been created in a section of print and electronic media that the government of Sindh has withdrawn duties and functions of Rangers in the province. That impression is legally and factually incorrect,” said a press note issued by the provincial home ministry.

It said the legal position was that the assistance of Pakistan Rangers had been requisitioned in aid of civil administration from the federal government under Article 147 of the Constitution for a period of 12 months.

Last time, the statement said, the Rangers’ assistance had been extended from July 20, 2016 to July 19, 2017. In this connection, it added, the Sindh government had specified the role of Pakistan Rangers [Sindh] by way of a notification issued on August 1, 2016, which included setting up of pickets, patrolling on roads, protecting high-value establishments, providing back-up support to Sindh police during religious events, large public gatherings and protection of foreign dignitaries and the president and the prime minister visiting Karachi and other such functions.

Moreover, the home ministry said, the Rangers were mandated to have their own independent intelligence network and carry out intelligence-based operations in accordance with the law.

“It may be appreciated that legally Pakistan Rangers may still carry out [their] mandated role.

“The government of Sindh expresses its firm resolve to curb crime in the province by employing all available means under the law,” the statement concluded.

The paramilitary force, too, came up with a statement on Monday saying that they continued to assist the provincial authorities as “backup support” in case of any “extreme emergency”.

However, the Pakistan Rangers, Sindh made it clear that its troops were no longer engaged in search, arrest and independent operations after the special policing powers last awarded to the paramilitary force under Section 4(3)(I) of the ATA, 1997 in January 2017 ended on April 15.

The paramilitary force spokesperson in a brief statement to the media stated that the Rangers were present in Karachi under Article 147 of the Constitution. Referring to a notification issued by the Sindh government on August 1, 2016, the official said the Rangers could not carry out any operation ‘independently’. However, as per code of the provincial government, the force would provide ‘backup support’ to the police or the district administration when called in case of extreme emergency, operation or need.

Furthermore, providing security to vital installations was also included in notified responsibility of the paramilitary force.

“This is also being clarified that the powers pertaining to search, arrest ... granted to the Pakistan Rangers Sindh under Section 4 (3)(I) of ATA [Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997] has ended on April 15,” concluded the Rangers’ statement.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327612>

UN PANEL RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT MILITARY COURTS

Sarah Eleazar

LAHORE: The United Nations Committee Against Torture (CAT) raised tough questions about military courts, “continued enforced disappearances” and “torture of prisoners in detention”, in its first review of implementation in Pakistan of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, held in Geneva on Tuesday and streamed live.

The state delegation was led by Senator Kamran Michael, the minister for human rights, who was joined by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Human Rights Barrister Zafarullah Khan and Saima Saleem from the Foreign Service.

In his opening remarks, Mr Michael said the Constitution of Pakistan had prohibited the use of torture under Articles 9, 10 and 14. He said the state recognised that torture was an outmoded practice that violated human dignity.

“Pakistan continues to uphold provisions of the UN Convention... Its commitment to the protection of human rights precedes the ratification of the UN Charter.”

Quoting a news article from 2016, Alessio Bruni, of the CAT, said media reports, however, claimed that a majority of prisoners were tortured in Pakistani prisons and a significant proportion underwent sexual abuse in detention.

Felice Gaer, the country rapporteur on CAT for Pakistan, asked whether there was an independent mechanism for redress in such cases. She asked that while under the law prisoners could write to the chief justice of Pakistan in the case of torture, “What is the number of complaints? Is there data to support this?”

Ms Gaer and Essadia Belmir raised the issue of powers of military courts to try civilians, asking why the trials were conducted in secret and why no monitors were allowed? She noted that there were no written judgements of cases tried in military courts.

Ms Gaer asked if the government intended to amend the Anti-Terrorism Act so that confessions obtained under duress by police were made inadmissible. She also mentioned the lynching of Mashal Khan in Mardan and asked what the state had done to meet requirements of due diligence to prevent private acts of violence.

Commenting on the CAT’s reservations against military courts, Saroop Ijaz of the Human Rights Watch pointed out that the government had not fulfilled its commitment to introduce reforms to improve the civil justice system. In fact, it could continue ad infinitum as the government no longer had the motivation to introduce the reforms it promised in January 2015.

Reema Omer of the International Commission of Jurists pointed out that the state report submitted to the CAT last year did not present a single example of a state official who had been successfully prosecuted for torture. “They repeatedly asked the delegation to give data on number of complaints, number of prosecutions and number of convictions, including of intelligence and military officers.”

Sarah Belal of the Justice Project Pakistan said the CAT had raised some difficult questions, the answers to which would inspire some much-needed reform in a system that had turned a blind eye to the use of torture for too long. “Custodial abuse is pervasive as are the confessions they often induce.

If the government of Pakistan wants to retain its standing in the international community, they will have to bring its domestic legislation in line with its international commitments,” she said.

Pakistan ratified the Convention against Torture in 2010 and presented its initial report on the implementation of the treaty last year. The CAT posed various questions and sought clarifications on the report in the first session, while the state delegation will respond to these questions at the second session on Wednesday.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327921/un-panel-raises-questions-about-military-courts>

NISAR MULLS OPTIONS IF TERM OF RANGERS IN SINDH NOT EXTENDED

Dawn, April 20th, 2017

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said on Wednesday that the federal government would consider alternative legal options if the Sindh government did not extend Rangers powers in public interest.

In a statement, he said Rangers could fully discharge their duties in Karachi only when there was no dilly-dallying in giving them powers under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

Referring to the indications to give Rangers limited powers, he said this would be against the law and the rules as no law could be restricted through an administrative order.

He regretted that the Rangers’ performance and sacrifices in Karachi were unnecessarily made controversial every three months.

He said it was ridiculous that the Sindh government wanted to use Rangers as their guards, but was not ready to give them powers under the relevant law for protection of the people.

He said Rangers were not a security company and could not be deployed for security of VIPs.

He said this excuse was also uncalled for and illogical that the Sindh government wanted to give powers to Rangers on the pattern of the Punjab government. He said in fact, Rangers had been given powers in Punjab under ATA 1997 and had not been limited by the Punjab or federal government.

Chaudhry Nisar said people of Karachi were satisfied with the performance of Rangers and trust the force.

He said it was not only surprising, but also alarming that the Sindh government wanted to compromise the security of people for its specific political objectives.

The deployment of Pakistan Rangers, Sindh, in Karachi is requisitioned under Article 147 of the Constitution and Clause 1 of Sub-section 3 of Section 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, authorising the paramilitary force to prevent the commission of terrorist acts or scheduled offences in the notified area for the punishment of terrorists in accordance with the provision of the ATA, 1997.

Meanwhile, the interior ministry extended policing powers of Punjab Rangers for another 60 days.

The term was to expire on April 22, but a notification for extension was issued on Wednesday by the ministry following a request from the provincial government. Powers have been given to the Rangers under ATA, 1997.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328110>

RAHEEL LEAVES FOR RIYADH TO COMMAND MILITARY ALLIANCE

Dawn, April 22nd, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Former army chief retired Gen Raheel Sharif on Friday left for Riyadh to assume the command of the 41-nation Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT) after the government quietly cleared him to serve the coalition, which is gradually taking shape.

“Gen Raheel Sharif has been issued an NOC to join IMAFT after GHQ’s consent and meeting legal formalities,” Defence Minister Khawaja Asif told a TV channel, as a special aircraft sent by the Saudi government landed in Lahore to take the retired army chief to Riyadh.

Gen Sharif was lauded at home for leading Operation Zarb-i-Azb that centered on North Waziristan, once considered the hotbed of terrorism, but his decision to serve the Saudi-led alliance has been severely criticised. The alliance, believed to be the brainchild of ambitious Saudi defence minister and deputy crown prince Muhammad bin Salman, was formed to help member states deal with the problem of terrorism, but people fear that it may get involved in the Middle East’s political disputes.

This perception got strengthened after Saudi defence forces spokesman Gen Assiri told the Wall Street Journal that the alliance wasn’t restricted to confronting terrorist organisations like the militant Islamic State group and Al Qaeda. He said the coalition could, at the request of a member, move against rebel groups and militias posing a threat to member countries such as Yemen’s Houthis, which are supported by Iran.

The absence of countries like Iran, Iraq and Syria, which have been at the forefront of fighting terrorism, from the alliance has led many to believe that the coalition is nothing but a sectarian show of force to counter rising influence of Iran in the region.

Iran has publicly expressed its reservations about a Pakistani leading the alliance. Pakistani officials have in both private and in bilateral engagement tried to assure Tehran that Gen Sharif would not act against Iranian interests.

The final terms of reference of the alliance and its structure are expected to be announced at the upcoming conference of the defence ministers of the member states. Contributions by the individual member states, both in terms of hardware and personnel, will be made at the conference.

The alliance will be governed by a council of defence ministers of the member states. The Joint Command Centre would, meanwhile, be based in Riyadh.

The government had in a statement in the Senate assured that the house would be informed before issuance of the NOC, which had so far not been sought by the former army chief. The assurance was not fulfilled and the announcement regarding the NOC was made only when the general prepared to leave.

Apparently the government and the military processed the entire issue with great secrecy after strong public criticism of the earlier disclosure that Gen Raheel would be joining the alliance.

The Wall Street Journal quoting Pakistani officials had earlier reported: “Under pressure from Riyadh, close ally Pakistan will provide a separate force of some 5,000 men to Saudi Arabia to help guard its vulnerable south, close to the border with Yemen.”

The report further said that the troops “to be dispatched will be an operational deployment, aimed at protecting installations against terrorism and repelling any incursion into Saudi Arabia”.

The deployment, it is said, would be in addition to any commitments that Pakistan could make for the alliance which Saudi Arabia is building up for ‘fighting terrorism’.

Pakistan already has 1,180 troops in Saudi Arabia under a 1982 bilateral agreement. The deployed troops are mostly serving there in training and advisory capacity.

The army says Saudi Arabia has so far not formally requested for additional troops deployment.

“Formal” request “for troops has not been yet received”, ISPR Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor told Dawn. “If (additional) troops are sent they will not operate outside KSA,” he added.

During his visit to Saudi Arabia soon after assuming the command, Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa had assured the kingdom’s leadership of continued commitment to security and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia had after the start of offensive against Houthi militia in Yemen asked Pakistan for troops deployment. However, due to domestic pressure the government did not then commit any troops for Yemen war. The Saudi request was then politely declined on the pretext of military’s extensive involvement in Operation Zarb-i-Azb.

Any deployment, if it happens, would test a 2015 parliamentary resolution that asked the government to “maintain neutrality in the Yemen conflict”. The resolution adopted after a five-day joint parliamentary session had at the same time stated that Pakistan should stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Saudi Arabia to protect the latter’s territorial integrity.

A source told Dawn that discussions on additional troops deployment were at an advanced stage between the two countries.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328531>

RANGERS’ POLICING POWERS EXTENDED FOR 90 DAYS IN KARACHI
Dawn, August 2nd, 2016

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: Ignoring the federal government's as well as the Rangers' desire to grant the paramilitary force policing powers for the whole of Sindh, the PPP-led provincial government on Monday decided to keep the arrangement unchanged: the Rangers will enjoy special powers for three months to be applicable to Karachi division.

Twelve days after the authority of the paramilitary force to police the provincial capital expired, newly-elected Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah signed a summary prepared by the home department, allowing the Sindh Rangers to continue to conduct raids and arrest criminals in Karachi's six districts for the next 90 days.

Mr Shah also approved another summary, allowing the Rangers to stay in Sindh for another year.

In 1989, the then government of the Pakistan Peoples Party had called Pakistan Rangers, Sindh, to assist the police in Karachi under Article 147 (power of the provinces to entrust functions to the federation) of the Constitution.

The issue of extension in Rangers' powers and their mandate to entire Sindh was first raised by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on July 19, when he wrote to then chief minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, requesting him to extend the Rangers' policing powers to the whole of province.

The PPP government and party leadership deliberated upon the issue against the backdrop of a controversy involving Asad Kharal and a demand of the establishment seeking removal of then home minister Sohail Anwar Siyal.

While Qaim Ali Shah lost his job in the process, Mr Siyal managed to be included in the new cabinet, though this time he would be heading the agriculture ministry instead of the powerful home ministry.

On Sunday, PPP co-chairman Asif Zardari directed the CM to sign the summaries pertaining to Rangers' special powers and their stay in the province.

On Monday, Mr Shah presided over a meeting on law and order at which he signed the summaries.

He said at the meeting held at CM House that the Rangers and police had performed wonderfully by restoring peace in the provincial capital.

"We must appreciate their struggle and sacrifices they rendered for restoring law and order in Sindh," he said and added that the role of the two forces in eradicating terrorism was commendable.

"They have performed exceptionally well in nabbing target killers and successfully carried out crackdown against extortionists, which is undoubtedly commendable."

Chief Secretary Siddique Memon presented the summaries in which the home department had recommended for an extension in the stay of Rangers in Sindh for another one year and granting them special power for 90 days.

The chief minister approved the summaries and asked the chief secretary to coordinate with the federal government for issuance of notification at the earliest.

Maula Bux Chandio, adviser to chief minister on information, said that the Rangers' powers issue had been resolved amicably that would help maintain law and order in Karachi.

"Chief Minister Shah has granted special powers to Rangers soon after assuming office that will pave way towards stability and peace and encourage business environment and social milieu," he added.

"The Sindh government is committed to maintaining law and order in the province to ensure development and prosperity of its people," Mr Chandio said in a statement.

He said the federal government now needed to adopt a positive attitude towards Sindh and desist itself from putting unwarranted pressure on the provincial government.

"The Sindh government is running its affairs as per the Constitution for good of masses. Business community and civil society are also fully satisfied with our endeavours to bring forth peace. Hence, there is no need to put hurdles in democratic process in Sindh.

"With changes in the Sindh cabinet, institutions providing security and essential services will strengthen, and people will soon heave a sigh of relief," Mr Chandio said.

During the meeting at the CM House, Inspector General of Police A.D. Khowaja briefed Mr Shah on the law and order scene in Sindh and invited the CM to visit the Central Police Office, which the latter accepted.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1274785>

'30PC WATER LOSS IN IRRIGATION SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE PLUGGED'

Dawn, April 23rd, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Water is becoming scarce with each passing day; the per capita availability of fresh water in Pakistan has decreased by about 800 per cent since 1950.

The situation can be improved if the huge 30pc water loss occurring in the irrigation system — the country's largest consumer of water — is avoided, said an expert at an Earth Day programme held at Karachi University (KU) on Saturday.

Organised by the KU's geography department, the event focused on subjects related to the challenges posed by climate change, increasing water shortage and man-made factors contributing to environmental degradation.

Speaking about the serious threats Pakistan faces on account of shrinking water resources with growing population, Dr Badar Ghauri, head of the remote sensing and geographic information system department at the Institute of Space Technology, said that the country's per capita availability of water had reduced from 5,300m³ in 1951 to 1,066m³ in 2010.

“If the present trend (of population growth and reduction in water resources) continued, the per capita availability of water may reduce to 915m³ in 2020, the year in which Pakistan is estimated to have 209m population,” he said, adding that 1,000m³ per capita was the threshold value as per global criteria.

According to him, efficient and judicious use of irrigation water is the only sustainable option left to the country as irrigation system consumes 69pc of all available water (domestic 8pc and industry 23pc).

“Irrigation system is overburdened and losing its efficiency due to increasing gap in actual and required operational and maintenance expenditures,” he said, adding that the government subsidised a major portion (around 70pc) of the operational and maintenance expenditures.

While showing different slides with data on the current irrigated area and losses at different levels, he also pointed to the loss of reservoir capacity due to increasing sedimentation as a factor which immediately needed government attention.

Other areas of concern, he said, included inequitable distribution of water, low efficiency in delivery and use, excess seepage and wastage in the system and insufficient cost recovery (operational and maintenance expenditures are more than water tax).

Dr Ghauri also presented data on receding glaciers in Pakistan, citing international estimates and local data which showed that Passu, Gulkin, Batura, Yazghil and Jutmau glaciers decreased considerably during 1992 and 1999 whereas during 2000-2009, this process slowed down.

“Water tables will continue to fall and the gross per capita water availability in Pakistan will decline, thus severely affecting Pakistan’s economy mainly dependent on agriculture,” he warned.

In his presentation on water resources management, engineer Mohammed Umer Karim, presently associated with the Food and Agriculture Organisation, showed how the irrigation system evolved in Sindh over the centuries and what its present features were.

“The groundwater in Sindh has been over-exploited over the years, which should be an area of serious concern. Over-pumping of groundwater leads to sea intrusion and land subsidence,” he told the audience.

He underlined the need for reforms in the irrigation sector and said: “The situation in Sindh should serve as a wake-up call. More than half of waterlogged area in Pakistan is in Sindh experiencing migration from tail-end areas due to water shortage and environmental degradation. The annual expenses of the irrigation system come to around Rs4bn whereas the annual recovery from abiana (water tax) is Rs0.6bn. The irrigation department has about 32,000 staff members.”

Prof Jamil Kazmi, head of the geography department, Dr Shahid Ali, Dr Lubna Ghazal Rao and Mohammed Zahid Khalil also spoke.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1328603>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 10TH TO APRIL 16TH 2017

CONTOURS OF SAUDI ALLIANCE WILL SHAPE UP NEXT MONTH: ASIF

The Express Tribune, April 12, 2017

Irfan Ghauri

Islamabad: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Tuesday that the contours of the proposed Saudi Arabia-led Islamic military alliance to fight terrorism would shape up in a meeting of defence ministers of the member states which is expected next month.

Delivering a policy statement in the upper house of parliament, he tried to clear the 'mist of confusion' surrounding the Saudi-led alliance and Pakistan's role in it. According to him, the terms of reference (ToRs) of the proposed alliance are yet to be finalised.

Asif said Pakistan would not become a part of any alliance created to foment sectarian strife in the region and added that it was also Pakistan's duty to protect Saudi Arabia. "Pakistan will never become a part of any alliance which will be against any country, particularly if it is against any Muslim country," he added.

In the same breath, the minister said he was sure that the proposed Saudi-led alliance was not against any country. He particularly mentioned neighbouring Iran and said Pakistan would always maintain brotherly ties with its southern neighbour.

The idea of the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAF) had been floated by Saudi Arabia's Minister of Defense in December 2015. Former army chief Gen (retd) Raheel Sharif has been named as the first commander-in-chief of the proposed multinational force.

The defence minister disclosed that Pakistan's armed forces are already in Saudi Arabia under what he called an 'arrangement' of 1992.

"Their numbers keep on increasing and decreasing. Our navy and air force was also there till two years back," the minister revealed, apparently referring to some arrangement made between the two countries at the time of the first Gulf war.

He said Pakistan was committed to internal defence of Saudi Arabia and Harmain Sharifain.

"However, our forces will not be used against any Muslim country," he said while citing the example of Yemen.

The minister shared with the Senate that Riyadh had written a letter requesting Pakistan to allow Gen (retd) Raheel Sharif to head the alliance. The government responded that the former army chief could be sent to join it whenever the Middle Eastern country was in need, he added.

"Pakistan is the only nuclear state of the Muslim world. We will continue to use this status for mediation in case any issues arise between Muslim countries and use our diplomatic channels [to settle them]," he remarked.

He said given the multi-sect population dynamics of Pakistan, the government was fully cognisant that Pakistan could not become a part of any move that beget sectarian strife.

The minister made it clear that Raheel Sharif has yet to apply to his ministry for an NoC to lead the Saudi-led alliance's force. "The question of his applying for the NoC does not arise at this stage," he said.

According to the minister, as per law if an ex-serviceman has to take up another job within two years after his retirement, he has to get an NoC from the Ministry of Defence.

The same procedure was followed when former ISI chief Gen (retd) Shuja Pasha joined a job in the UAE soon after his retirement during the previous PPP government.

The minister said once the NOC is issued to Raheel Sharif, he would inform parliament accordingly.

"The ToRs of this alliance has not been finalised yet. A meeting of defence ministers of all 41 members of proposed alliance is expected in Saudi Arabia in May. After this ToRs will be decided. As of today it is an alliance against terrorism and this will be translated in the ToRs," he remarked.

Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani observed that once the ToRs of the proposed alliance are finalised the government would be bound to table them in the two houses of parliament before the cabinet ratifies them. The minister promised to do that.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1381134/contours-saudi-alliance-will-shape-next-month-asif/>

MILITARY RULES OUT COMPROMISE ON JADHAV

The Express Tribune, April 13, 2017

Pakistan's top military commanders have made it clear that no compromise will be made on anti-state acts such as the one perpetrated by Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav, who has been sentenced to death by a military court for espionage and subversive activities against Pakistan.

The statement came on Thursday following a corps commanders conference presided over by army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa at the GHQ in Rawalpindi. In its statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), said the commanders were briefed about Jadhav and the death sentence awarded to him for his involvement in creating instability in Pakistan.

Jadhav – a commissioned officer in Indian navy – was arrested in March last year from Balochistan during a counter-intelligence operation. Later, he confessed to having been working for the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) since 2003 with a mission to create instability in Balochistan and Karachi.

Based on his confessional statement as well as other evidence, Jadhav was finally handed the death sentence last Monday by the Field General Court Martial (FGCM) under the Pakistan Army Act 1952 – a conviction that sparked a diplomatic spat between the hostile neighbours.

The Indian parliament on Tuesday passed a resolution condemning the death sentence with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj threatening that her country would 'go out of its way to save' the spy.

Some Indian media reports suggested that New Delhi was considering several options, including 'high-level' prisoner exchange to secure the release of the RAW agent.

Reports also claimed that New Delhi might request Washington to use its influence and resolve the issue. However, the statement from the corps commanders indicated that Islamabad was not in a mood to compromise on the India spy anytime soon.

On Thursday, the corps commanders also reviewed national security environment and recent developments in the region. "[The] forum reviewed progress of operation Radd-ul-Fasaad and provision of support to ongoing National Housing and Population census," the military's media wing said.

The army chief appreciated formations, intelligence agencies and the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) for successful execution of operations, the ISPR added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1382801/no-compromise-kulbushan-yadavs-sentence-corps-commanders/>

NUCLEAR BAN TREATY: PAKISTAN ADVISED CAUTION

Dawn, April 16th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The start of negotiations to ban nuclear weapons at the United Nations could have unseen implications for Pakistan particularly with regard to its position on Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT).

"The Foreign Office needs to be cautious about it; a new trend is being set up. The UN is negotiating the nuclear ban treaty. FMCT can be taken to the UN as well," an official said at a roundtable organised by the Centre for International Strategic Studies (CISS) titled "Nuclear ban treaty: debating the missing Link". The roundtable was held to discuss the start of talks at the UN on proposed treaty for outlawing nuclear weapons.

The first round of talks was held from March 27 to 31 at the UN as a result of a resolution adopted last December calling for negotiating a legally binding treaty. Pakistan was among the 40-odd countries including other nuclear weapon states that boycotted the talks. The second round of negotiations is slated for June/July, when the draft text of the treaty would be considered.

The official expressed fears that this "dangerous precedent" could lead to FMCT being negotiated out of Conference on Disarmament (CD), which he said was the appropriate forum for such deliberations. He recalled that there were "already lots of voices" complaining about the deadlock at the CD on FMCT.

Pakistan has been applying a hold on the start of negotiations on the grounds that FMCT, which only bans future production of fissile material without taking into account the existing stockpiles, would freeze the existing asymmetries, thus putting Pakistan at a permanent disadvantage and compromising its interests.

He further worried that some other countries, at the same time, might try to extract political mileage by deceiving others with their interest to join the treaty.

The official said the proposed ban could also undermine Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), causing it to unravel.

Other speakers expressed apprehensions that the goal of global disarmament, even though a noble cause, may be an impractical pursuit.

Executive Director of CISS Amb Sarwar Naqvi said the concept of nuclear ban looked fanciful, though a manifestation of human desire of creating an ideal world.

Dr Christine Leah, visiting research fellow with CISS and Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer at Yale University, said she wasn't convinced that the general idea of global nuclear disarmament was a good one.

She said nuclear weapons were here to stay and called for a rethink of arms control concepts developed during the Cold War period to adjust to multi-polar Asian maritime context. In her view, the move towards global disarmament could cause deterrence to rely on conventional force imbalances.

Dr Zafar Khan, who teaches at the National Defence University, Islamabad, opined that the "prospects for universal arms control and nuclear ban were dim". He said for complete disarmament to happen the international community would have to address issues of discrimination, negative security assurances, conventional imbalances, conventional and nuclear force modernisation, need for restructuring of non-proliferation regimes, and conflict resolution.

President of the Strategic Vision Institute Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema cautioned against complete nuclear disarmament in the absence of a conventional arms control regime, saying that doing so could push the world into an era of destruction and chaos. "Idea of disarmament looks noble, but under what circumstances do we intend to achieve it," he wondered.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327257>

‘MOTHER OF ALL BOMBS’ CAUSED DAMAGE IN KURRAM: RESIDENTS

Dawn, April 16th, 2017

PARACHINAR: The powerful non-nuclear bomb dubbed mother of all bombs (MOAB) which was dropped by the US on an area in Afghanistan on Thursday also left impact on this side of the border, damaging buildings in Kurram Agency, locals said.

Wide cracks appeared in several houses, a mosque and an Imambargah at Malana village in the foothills of Speen Ghar also known as White Mountain.

The snow-covered White Mountain serves as a natural barrier between the Afghan province of Nangarhar and the Kurram tribal region in Pakistan.

US officials claimed that MOAB targeted a base of the militant Islamic State group in Achin district which lies in the foothills of the White Mountain on the other side of the border.

According to latest reports, MOAB left at least 90 people dead and destroyed the IS infrastructure. Initially, the death toll was put at 36.

Residents at Malana village told Dawn they felt a tremor that shook their houses. “We felt light shocks, but did not realise it was because of a bomb,” said Muhammad Hassan, a resident of Malana.

He said that wide cracks had appeared in several houses and mosques in the area. It also caused slight damage to houses in the Zeran area. The US forces had carried out intense bombing in the Tora Bora area of the same Achin district after 9/11 attacks to dismantle what it claimed was a cave complex of Al Qaeda.

AFP adds: The unprecedented MOAB attack triggered global shockwaves, with some condemning the use of Afghanistan as what they called a testing ground for the weapon, and against a militant group that is not considered a threat as big as the resurgent Taliban.

“At least 92 Daesh (IS) fighters were killed in the bombing,” Achin district governor Esmail Shinwari told AFP on Saturday, adding that three tunnels that sheltered the insurgents had been destroyed.

Mr Shinwari said that American and Afghan ground forces were slowly advancing on the mountainous area, which is blanketed with landmines, to clear the site, but there are still some pockets of resistance from insurgents.

“New fighters have probably come from the other side of the border (Pakistan) to collect the dead bodies,” he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1327249/mother-of-all-bombs-caused-damage-in-kurram-residents>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 3 RD TO APRIL 9 TH 2017

ALLIANCE WON'T INTERFERE IN YEMEN CONFLICT: ASIF

Dawn, April 5th, 2017

KARACHI: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Tuesday that the 39-nation military alliance, put together by Saudi Arabia and to be led by Pakistan's former army chief Gen Raheel Sharif, would not interfere in the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

Recently, the Iranian envoy to Pakistan expressed reservations over the federal government decision to allow Gen Raheel to head the Saudi-led military alliance.

In an attempt to allay Iran's concern, the defence minister said Pakistan was ready to talk to the neighbouring country if it had any reservation over the appointment of a former Pakistani chief of army staff as the head of the military alliance.

“When Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Saudi Arabia officially, the Saudis expressed their wish that they want to appoint General Raheel [as the head] of this alliance,” he said in an interview with Samaa television. “When General Raheel went [Saudi Arab] to perform umrah he was personally approached [by Saudis]. Now he is part of that alliance and would be paid by them. And let me tell you...neither that alliance nor Pakistan has anything to interfere in the Yemen conflict.”

Recalling historic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, he said that the country had always offered its service for the protection of Harmain Sharifain.

“Our 1,200 soldiers are already in Saudi Arabia. We offer training to their army, their officers and soldiers. We have decades-old strong ties with that country. But at the same time we are also ready to talk to Iran if they have any reservation over General Raheel’s appointment,” he said.

He said it was in Pakistan’s own interest to invest in the defence of Arab states as several other countries were also showing interest in assisting them.

About the appointment of the incumbent COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa and retirement of General Raheel, the defence minister said some people within the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz were in favour of giving an extension to the former army chief.

“But Nawaz Sharif was against that,” he said. “He had said it should not be done. He believes in the supremacy of institutions and he didn’t want any extension.”

He said he did not know much about the agenda of a recent meeting between Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan and Gen Bajwa.

“But I know that Imran Khan had sent a request to see him [COAS] for long. We don’t have a tradition to keep record of such meetings but I think there should be a proper mechanism to maintain such a record,” he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324945/alliance-wont-interfere-in-yemen-conflict-asif>

PAKISTAN WISHES TO RESOLVE ALL ISSUES WITH INDIA: COAS

Business Recorder, Apr 5th, 2017

Chief of the Army Staff (CoAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday said that Pakistan wished to resolve all unresolved issues with India including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. “Pakistan is a peace-loving country and wish to resolve all unresolved issues with India,” he said speaking at the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), a London-based UK think

tank during his official visit to the UK. The army chief shared his thoughts on regional and international security environment, challenges and way forward, according to the media release of Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). General Bajwa talked in detail about security situation in Afghanistan and its impact on peace and stability in the region and beyond.

He also apprised the participants of Pakistan’s achievements in its efforts against terrorism and militancy. Pakistan army chief highlighted prospects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) towards economic development of the region. Earlier, he spoke at another think tank – Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) where he shared his thoughts on same topics mentioned above. He also spoke on the role of Pakistan and Pakistan Army towards peace and stability in the region. He said that Pakistan is positively engaged to bring about peace and stability in the region including Afghanistan.

The Forum acknowledged and appreciated Pakistan Army's contributions towards peace and stability. At a reception hosted by Pakistan High Commission in his honour, the CoAS interacted with UK based Pakistani community. He apprised them of environment in Pakistan, achievements in efforts against terrorism and militancy and its results.

The CoAS hailed the role of overseas Pakistanis towards progress of Pakistan and assured them that Pakistan Army shall perform its due role towards security of Pakistan. All Pakistanis expressed their pride in contributions of Pakistan Army towards well being of the country Earlier, on arrival the CoAS was received by Pakistan's High Commissioner to UK, Syed Ibne Abbas.

<http://fp.brecorder.com/2017/04/20170405163837/>

May 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 29TH TO JUNE 4TH 2017

THE CORRECT NARRATIVE ON PRESSLER

Dawn, May 29, 2017

Rabia Akhtar

THE Pressler amendment, passed by the US Congress in August 1985, was a blessing in disguise for Pakistan. Thirty-two years since its passage, it is time to set the record straight.

An examination of the legislative history of the Pressler amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, Section 620 E (e) reveals that it saved Pakistan-US security relationship at a critical time, allowing the US to continue providing economic and military assistance to Pakistan under the aid package passed in 1981-82 to fight the Soviets in the region.

A year before the amendment was passed by Congress, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 28, 1984, had adopted an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, proposed by two Democrat senators, Alan Cranston and John Glenn. Their proposed amendment to Section 620 E (e) was quite stringent in its terms suggesting that no military or technology equipment was to be provided to Pakistan unless the American president certified that Pakistan did not “possess” a nuclear explosive device and that it was neither “developing” nor “acquiring” a nuclear explosive device.

On April 3, 1984, the committee deleted this amendment in favour of a revised amendment with a 9-8 vote. The adopted revision to the original Cranston-Glenn amendment was co-sponsored by three Republican senators, Charles Percy, McC. Mathias Jr. and Larry Pressler.

This revised amendment was enacted in a separate bill in August 1985, popularly called the Pressler amendment. It stated that no military or technology equipment was to be provided to Pakistan unless the US president certified that Pakistan did not “possess” a nuclear explosive device and that the assistance provided by America would “reduce significantly the risk that Pakistan will possess a nuclear explosive device”.

The Pressler amendment made US economic and military assistance to Pakistan conditional upon two certifications, one factual and one judgemental. The certification on Pakistan's "non-possession" of the nuclear explosive device was a factual finding where the US president was required by law to review the relevant intelligence information about Pakistan's nuclear weapons-related activities and report to Congress that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear explosive device. The second certification was a judgemental finding where the US president was required to testify on the non-proliferation impact of US assistance to Pakistan in reducing the risk of Pakistan possessing a nuclear explosive device.

There are interesting elaborations on both. While the term "nuclear explosive device" was clear, there were issues with respect to making the judgement about what "possession" meant. Terms like "manufacturing" or "acquisition" of a nuclear explosive device were commonly used, but the word "possession" of a nuclear explosive device had never been used, leaving it open to interpretation and a "matter of first impression".

A report prepared by legal advisers at the State Department who analysed the language used in the Pressler amendment justified the Reagan administration's position on what "possession" and "non-possession" meant in Pakistan's case. On possession it stated that if a country had "manufactured" or "assembled" a nuclear explosive device then it "possessed" such a device.

If a country had the necessary components to assemble a functioning device but decided to keep it disassembled in different locations, it "possessed" such a device. But a country did not "possess" a nuclear explosive device if "one or more of the essential elements required to assemble a device" were lacking, be it due to technical or policy constraints. In either event, the report argued, what the country possessed was not "yet" a "nuclear explosive device".

However, interestingly, the report stated that the finder of the fact about a country possessing a nuclear device should be alerted to the consideration that there were "grey areas" between "possession and non-possession" relating to the "timing" of the country's policy decision to stop short of "possessing" the nuclear explosive device which should be taken into account.

The second certification (judgemental) was dependent on the first certification that Pakistan "did not possess" a nuclear device and therefore the assistance was to aim at significantly reducing the risk that Pakistan in future would "possess" a nuclear explosive device.

Although this report did not represent the official view of the State Department, it clearly explained the innuendos in the Pressler language that could have allowed Pakistan to avoid Pressler sanctions had the administration chosen to share it with the Pakistani government. The language of the amendment, however, was ingenious. If analysed carefully, it favoured the continuation of economic and military assistance to Pakistan by using ambiguous terms like "possession" of a nuclear explosive device, which as the report discussed, was open to interpretation.

This ambiguity enshrined in the language of the amendment also gave the president enough flexibility in case his certifications were later challenged in the court of law. The president could say that he made the certification based on his best judgement given the available intelligence at the time on Pakistan's nuclear activities. And as is obvious, intelligence on any country's nuclear explosives programme that is being run clandestinely could never be complete since facts about the programme would always be shrouded in secrecy making it unreasonable to expect foolproof intelligence.

There is no evidence whether this report was shared with Pakistan. But there is evidence that Pakistan was informed about the Pressler amendment before the Congress passed it in 1985. Pakistan was told that it was the only way for continuance of the aid package. Pakistan was also given a clear understanding that the presidential certifications required by the Pressler amendment would be provided for the duration of the aid package.

Pakistan was taken on board and gave consent to the passage of the Pressler amendment. Pressler sanctions were imposed on Pakistan in October 1990. The popular account of the sanctions relates to the 'disposability' of Pakistan for the US after the latter had achieved its strategic foreign policy objectives by 'using' Pakistan to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan. However, that too was not a surprise for Pakistan for it had been forewarned..

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335979>

RIYADH CONFERENCE WIDENED SECTARIAN DIVIDE: AZIZ

Dawn, June 2nd, 2017

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Conceding that the recent US-Arab-Islamic summit in Riyadh widened the sectarian divide in the world, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz observed on Thursday that Pakistan would have to tread carefully in pursuing efforts for greater unity.

While addressing the Senate on a calling attention notice concerning the mandate of the 41-nation military alliance, Mr Aziz ruled out the possibility of an attack on Iran by the coalition. He said the Saudi foreign minister had clarified that the coalition members would be free to decide the activities they wanted to participate in. These activities included political consultations, intelligence-sharing, capacity-building, building counter-narratives and military cooperation.

He made it clear that the parliament's resolution of April 10, 2015 would continue to serve as a guideline for Pakistan to maintain a balanced position in regional conflicts. He said that Pakistan would support the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia and protect the sanctity of Haramain Sharifain. "We will not do anything in deviation of the resolution," he assured the house.

He said the military coalition's terms of reference were yet to be finalised, and added that statements by Saudi authorities would not become ToR.

Mr Aziz made it clear Pakistan would not deploy troops out of Saudi Arabia. He said Pakistan's foreign policy would remain unchanged and the coalition would not affect it in any manner.

Senate Chairperson Mian Raza Rabbani, however, pointed out that the Saudi king, in his speech, had said that the coalition was against terrorism, but then named Iran. "Expecting that he who is playing the flute will not be calling the shots is being a little optimistic. But I [will] go along [with] you in that we should be optimistic for the time being."

He asked if the government would disassociate itself from retired General Raheel Sharif if the coalition decided to target a particular country. To this, Mr Aziz said that Gen Sharif realised the

importance of maintaining a balance with Iran. “In fact his presence will restore a certain balance in what this coalition should do and what it should not,” he said, insisting that the focus of the coalition would remain on counterterrorism.

The adviser lamented that several global conflicts — whether in Iran, Syria or Yemen — had a sectarian dimension. “It is sad for the Muslim world, that in each case, Muslims were fighting against Muslims...Our approach is to create unity among the Muslim Ummah. We will continue this effort with many countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey,” he remarked. He described the summit’s focus on Iran as ‘political’.

The defence ministers of the 41 member countries were yet to meet and finalise the terms of reference, purposes, aims and objectives of the coalition, he said. Once the contours of the coalition were finalised, they would be presented before parliament before being ratified by the cabinet, he added.

Earlier, Senator Farhatullah Babar said initially parliament was told that the alliance was meant to fight terrorism, and that Pakistan would not have to take sides in the conflict in the Middle East.

Reading out the verbatim Senate records of April 11, he said the defence minister had informed the House that a conference would be held in May to finalise the terms of reference of the alliance. He followed with the chairman’s ruling: “When the ToRs were finalised in May and before the Cabinet rectified them, they should be laid before the Senate and the National Assembly so that they are discussed in both the houses.”

Subsequently reports surfaced, he said, quoting Saudi authorities that the alliance was not restricted to confronting terrorist organisations, but on the request of a member state, could also move against rebels and militants posing a threat to member countries.

He then posed five questions: have the ToRs of the military alliance been finalised, if yes, what were the terms and why had they not been placed before the Senate as was promised on April 11; if the ToR had not been finalised, why was Gen Raheel Sharif allowed to join the alliance; in view of the emerging reality of the actual purpose of the alliance, would the government consider recalling Gen Raheel Sharif; what were the conditions of Gen Raheel Sharif’s appointment as head of the alliance and did it provide for recalling him in case it became necessary?

Responding to another calling attention notice, Mr Aziz said the arrest of Commander Kulbushan Jadhav and deaths of Indians in the recent US Massive Ordnance Air Blast in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan showed continued Indian presence in Afghanistan, from where they orchestrated attacks inside Pakistan.

He added that India’s barbarities in held Kashmir continued unabated and the situation had worsened after the Srinagar by-elections held on 9 April, 2017.

He said he had written to the UN secretary general, the UN Security Council, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to draw attention towards Indian barbarities in held Kashmir.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336819>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 22ND TO MAY 28TH 2017

PAKISTAN WILL NOT ALLOW ITS TERRITORY TO BE USED AGAINST ANY COUNTRY,
REITERATES ARMY CHIEF

The Express Tribune, May 22, 2017

US Ambassador David Hale has thanked army chief Gen Qamar Bajwa for his commitment of not allowing militants use Pakistan's soil to conduct attacks against any country, specifically Afghanistan.

In a meeting with Hale at the GHQ in Rawalpindi on Monday, both the COAS and the US ambassador reiterated their nations' commitment to a secure, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan, said a statement issued by the US Embassy Islamabad.

Ambassador Hale, the communique said, reiterated US President Donald Trump's call during his recent speech at the Arab-Islami summit for a vision of peace, security, and prosperity, and unity in conquering extremism and terrorism.

"Ambassador Hale affirmed Pakistan's role and great sacrifices in this effort," it said.

A similar statement was released by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), which said that the US ambassador acknowledged Pakistan Army's efforts in securing control of areas on Pakistan side of the border.

"Both the countries can carry forward the work done towards enduring peace and stability in the region through enhanced coordination and cooperation," the military media wing quoted Hale as saying.

The army chief also made it clear that no cross-border attack shall be tolerated by Pakistan.

Islamabad blames Kabul for hosting Jamaatul Ahrar and other militants responsible for carrying out a wave of attacks in February that killed 130 people across the country and prompted fears of a militant resurgence.

Afghanistan also routinely accuses Pakistan of providing safe haven to the Afghan Taliban.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1416269/pakistan-will-not-allow-territory-used-country-reiterates-army-chief/>

US PROPOSES CONVERTING MILITARY FINANCING FOR PAKISTAN INTO LOANS

Dawn, May 24th, 2017

Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration on Tuesday proposed converting the US foreign military financing (FMF) for Pakistan into a loan guarantee but has left it to the State Department to make a final decision.

Also on Tuesday, the State Department issued a new travel advisory for Pakistan, second in 45 days, urging citizens to postpone travels to Pakistan because of “increased terrorist violence”.

The Trump administration sent its maiden annual budget to the US Congress on Tuesday afternoon, proposing to cut federal spending by more than \$3.6 trillion over the next decade. This will impact both economic and military assistance that the United States provides to its allies, particularly those fighting terrorism.

After the Monday afternoon briefing at the White House, media reports claimed that both economic and military assistance to Pakistan had been converted into loans and that the Trump administration had stopped all grants given to that country.

But later, the White House Office of Management of Budget issued a statement, clarifying the reports attributed to its director, Mick Mulvaney.

“Director Mulvaney stated that the FMF funding for Pakistan would be provided in the form of a loan guarantee. This is one of the options that the administration had explored in its internal deliberations, but the request itself does not make that determination,” the White House budget office said.

“Whether the funding is provided through grants, or as a subsidy for a guaranteed loan, is an option the State Department can exercise to ensure our foreign assistance best supports our national interests,” it added.

The FMF enables eligible partner nations to purchase US defence articles, services, and training through either foreign military sales or through direct commercial contracts. The secretary of state determines which country qualifies for this programme.

In 2016, the United States provided \$255 million of the FMF to Pakistan, bulk of which was for enhancing the country’s counterterrorism capabilities. Pakistan also received \$25m from the International Military Education and Training (IMET) fund.

A loan guarantee assures a lender that the country borrowing the money can return it.

In 2014, Pakistan received a similar guarantee of \$125m from the International Finance Corporation for a \$500m from the market for building the Dasu dam.

Asked at the White House briefing on Monday afternoon if the proposed change would affect US assistance to countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Colombia, Pakistan, Philippines, and Ukraine, Director Mulvaney said: “Yes, I can confirm that”.

The media interpreted this as indicating that the proposed change would affect both economic and military assistance to these countries. But Mr Mulvaney later explained that this change would only affect US military assistance to these nations.

“Yes, we do change a couple of the foreign military programmes from direct grants to loans. Our argument was, instead of giving somebody \$100m, we can give them a smaller number worth of loan guarantees and they can actually buy more stuff.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335066>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 8TH TO MAY 14TH 2017

PAKISTAN, AFGHAN MILITARIES IN BID TO BUILD TRUST

Dawn, May 13th, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Operations chiefs of Pakistani and Afghan militaries held their first face-to-face meeting since last week's deadly Chaman clash, agreeing to end acrimony and make efforts at building cooperative relations.

"A Two Star Pakistan-Afghanistan Bilateral Meeting, in which both sides discussed measures for improving military-to-military coordination and cooperation," was held at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, the Inter-Services Public Relations announced on Friday without saying when the meeting was held. It is believed the meeting was held on Thursday.

At the meeting, the Pakistani side was led by Director General Military Operations (DGMO) Maj Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, whereas the Afghan delegation was led by DGMO Maj Gen Habib Hesari.

The meeting is believed to have been facilitated by US-led Nato's Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan.

Prior to bilateral talks, a trilateral meeting involving Pakistan, Afghanistan and RSM was held to set the ball rolling.

The ISPR, the military's public affairs wing, said the two sides also discussed "Chaman incident, border control / management and measures to curb cross-border fire violations".

Afghanistan has always contested the Durand Line as the international border and there have been a number of skirmishes between the two, especially whenever Pakistan attempted to undertake measures to regulate it. However, the May 5 attack on border villages during census was not only one of the bloodiest in the troubled history of the two countries, but also indicated Kabul's growing belligerence towards Pakistan.

The DGMOs earlier had their hotline contact while the exchange was going on and then agreed on ceasefire. Later, flag meetings of the local commanders as well as a geographical survey of the concerned villages was carried out to resolve the dispute.

The RSM-facilitated meeting, according to a military analyst, was meant to ease the friction between the two and help them move beyond the incident.

"Both sides agreed to enhance frequency of bilateral interactions at multiple tiers through different command and staff channels to foster an environment of mutual respect, trust, cordiality and cooperation," the ISPR said, pointing towards agreement on mending the damage caused by Chaman incident.

The positivity generated by the meeting was, however, too short-lived.

A day later and even before the media statement on the meeting had been issued, Pakistani and Afghan security forces traded fire along the border in Kurram Agency that left at least two Pakistani troops wounded.

The latest bilateral meeting was preceded by a trilateral meeting at which, in addition to Afghan and Pakistani side, RSM was also present. The RSM team was headed by its Deputy Chief of Staff (Operations) Maj Gen Christopher Haas.

“During the trilateral meeting, the senior delegates stressed upon the need to defeat Daesh (the Arabic acronym for the militant Islamic State group) through complementary efforts in respective areas of operations,” the ISPR said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332794>

BALANCING CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

The Express Tribune, May 13th, 2017.

The settlement of the news leak issue between the civilian federal government and the army top command has removed the latest irritant in civil-military relations, thereby lowering tensions in the political system, at least for the time being. This has been possible because the army top command decided to step back from its strong reservations on the news leak and the federal government's efforts to resolve this issue.

This has eased political pressure on the Nawaz Sharif government and gives it the much-needed confidence to cope with other pressures caused by the Panama Leaks case and the opposition's efforts to launch a nationwide protest against the government. When the controversial news item against the military was published in an English-language newspaper on October 6, 2016, the army top command was the first to declare it a national security breach.

At least two meetings of the corps commanders discussed the issue and expressed their concern. The retired military officers appearing in TV talk shows made no secret of their contempt for the news item and maintained that the army people were extremely unhappy about it. The army pressure led Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to appoint an inquiry commission whose report was said to be the basis of the current action by the federal government against three of its top political and bureaucratic officials.

The federal government's punitive action against three persons was an attempt to pacify the army top command while controlling the damage to the PML-N government's credibility. The ISPR tweet on April 29 rejected this action, forcing the government to review the matter in order to ward off the army pressure.

The ruling PMLN's in-house deliberation during April 30-May 9 led them to conclude that the army top command did not have much options available to them to force the federal government to change its decision. It, therefore, decided to stick to its earlier decision of punitive action against three officials. However, in order to create a space for the army top command to review its disposition, the federal government decided to reissue the notification by making it more comprehensive. For all practical purposes, the new notification did not make any change in the earlier decision.

The decision of the federal government left the army top command high and dry. The army high command could persist in its opposition but that would have created more uncertainty in the political system at a time when Pakistan was faced with a difficult internal security situation and a troubled relationship with three neighbouring countries. Such a confrontation could create a situation where present civilian leadership and the army top command would have found it difficult to co-exist.

The military could not dislodge the government in the name of “breach of national security” because the domestic and global environment was not favourable to such an action. Long before the news item controversy began, the military top command was more or less settled on the issue that the direct assumption of power was not a viable option. The army top command decided to defuse the situation by accepting the “re-issued” federal government’s notification.

The army’s retreat is expected to be unpopular among the officers. It is, therefore, important for the civilian government and the army top command to explain this decision. Further, the PML-N activists should not engage in persistent propaganda against the army senior command. This can add new tensions to civil-military relations. The assertion of civilian primacy is not a one-shot affair. It is a continuous process that requires a tactful handling because the balance can shift in one direction or another, from time to time.

The experience of Turkey, Indonesia, Brazil and other countries that experienced the expansion of the role of the military suggests that the classical notion of civilian supremacy is not fully returned. However, if the military command and the political leadership undertake some actions, a new relationship of mutual respect, restraint and constitutionalism emerges.

The following issues need attention for promoting a responsible civil-military relationship within a democratic constitutional framework: (1) A decision on the part of the top brass of the military to restrain their political ambition and stay within their professional domain. The civilian leaders must also respect internal service autonomy of the military. (2) The civilian political leaders, especially those in power, must create a credible civilian alternative to military rule by ensuring good governance and a judicious political management. (3) Strengthen the civilian institution and processes in a genuinely democratic framework rather than pursuing personalised and patrimonial governance.

The democratic institutions must ensure conflict management and these should become the pivot of power and authority. (4) The democratic institutions and processes must ensure delivery of basic services and facilities to its citizens. (5) Only the policies based on genuine political participation and socio-economic justice promote strong attachment among the people for the political system which strengthens the role of civilian institutions and processes. (6) A consensus among the key political players not to cultivate the military for pursuing their individual political agenda. (7) A minimum reliance on the military for undertaking purely civilian tasks.

The calls to the military “in aid of civil” should be as minimum as possible. (8) The military’s political clout will increase in the countries that face acute external military threats and internal security issues, including terrorism. (9) Appointment of highly professional political leaders to foreign policy, defence and internal security portfolios.

The PML-N government should take the current political space available to it due to the military’s retreat on one issue as an opportunity to create a credible civilian alternative by ensuring effective,

nonpartisan and corruption-free governance. Pakistan is facing numerous internal and external challenges that require greater cooperative interaction between the civil and the military. Pakistan's stability is linked with reliable civil-military relations. This calls for a sense of responsibility and restraint from both sides.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1408371/balancing-civil-military-relations/>

June 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 19TH TO JUNE 25TH 2017

NA PANEL TOLD: DEFENCE EXPORTS SOAR TO OVER \$98M

Nuzhat Nazar

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence Production learnt Wednesday that total defence exports have increased to over \$ 98 million during the current fiscal year.

The committee met under the chairmanship of MNA Khawaja Suhail Mansoor. The committee was briefed that defence exports have shown considerable increase during recent years.

The director general Defence Export Promotion Organization (DEPO) briefed the committee about creation, functions and the challenges of DEPO. He said that DEPO undertakes the marketing of IDEAS and Defence export of Pakistan at national level as well as global level. He added that the mission of this DEPO is to facilitate, coordinate and promote the export of defence-related quality products.

Deputy director general DEPO briefed the committee about its budgetary allocations for financial year 2016-17. He said that Rs 20.088 million were allocated during the aforesaid fiscal year. He informed the committee about the export of major products by defence industry. The committee appreciated the role of DEPO for organizing successful exhibitions in 2012, 2014 and 2016.

The committee was informed by the deputy director general DEPO regarding the subsidy (for private participants of IDEAS 2012, 2014 & 2016) problems being faced by the MoDP and DEPO from Ministry of Commerce. The committee unanimously decided that Secretary Ministry of Commerce, Chairman TDAP and Secretary Ministry of Finance would be called in the next meeting of the committee to resolve the issue.

The committee was also informed that the volume of exports during 2006-07 was over \$ 63 million, which increased to over \$ 98 million in 2017-18.

The committee hoped that defence exports will further improve after execution of export agreements of Mashahak aircraft and their spare parts with friendly countries.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/06/22/3-page/884239-news.html>

COAS DEFENDS EFFORTS IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

Dawn, June 25th, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa defended on Saturday the performance of the military and other law enforcement agencies in the fight against terrorism and also hit out at the international critics of Pakistani counterterrorism effort, saying others — not Pakistan — needed to do more against terrorism.

“COAS appreciated efforts of security forces, intelligence and other law enforcement agencies in foiling countless terrorist activities through ongoing Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad,” the Inter-Services Public Relations said after a security meeting at the GHQ that continued late into the night.

The meeting was said to be held for taking stock of the situation after a string of attacks on Friday in Quetta, Parachinar and Karachi in which over 80 people lost their lives. The Quetta attack was claimed by militant Islamic State ground, whereas IS-affiliated Lashkar-i-Jhangvi accepted responsibility for the other two strikes.

Following the attacks critics at home questioned the efficacy of the security operations with terrorists being able to carry out coordinated attacks.

Operation Raddul Fasaad was launched earlier in February after a series of terrorist attacks across the country for what was described as elimination of residual terrorist threat, consolidation of gains made during Operation Zarb-i-Azb and increasing security on the border with Afghanistan.

The security meeting linked the attacks in Quetta, Parachinar and Karachi to terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan that were being run by Afghan and Indian intelligence agencies. The ISPR said “manifest linkages” of hideouts patronised by RAW and NDS with the attacks exist.

“COAS expressed his resolve to eliminate the menace to ensure safety and security of Pakistan and its resilient people who are real strength of their brave security forces,” the statement said.

The army had soon after the attacks on Friday said the special intelligence-based operations had been launched to hunt the masterminds and planners behind the attacks and security and surveillance of the Pak-Afghan border had been enhanced.

The phrasing of the press statement on the security meeting showed that US reservations about the Pakistani efforts were also discussed and rejected.

“Unfortunately our sacrifices against terrorism are not well acknowledged and we are often subjected to demand of ‘Do More’. It was concluded that while counterterrorism efforts by Pakistan continue, it is time now for the other stakeholders particularly Afghanistan to ‘Do More’,” the ISPR said.

The statement came as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was in Islamabad in an effort to defuse tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan and urge them to cooperate for peace and stability in Afghanistan. Mr Wang is scheduled to meet Gen Bajwa on Sunday.

“COAS reiterated that we will continue our efforts to positively contribute towards regional peace and stability and shall not allow use of our territory against any other country,” the statement said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1341607>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 12TH TO JUNE 18 TH 2017
BAJWA URGES NEIGHBOURS NOT TO BLAME PAKISTAN FOR THEIR WOES
Dawn, June 17th, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa has counselled unnamed neighbours to address problems at home instead of blaming Pakistan for their woes.

“Terrorism cannot be defeated by closing eyes to one’s own responsibilities and resorting to throwing blame outside as being done by a few players in the region,” Gen Bajwa said at the National Defence University here without naming the countries he was referring to. He was addressing participants of the National Security and War Course.

Pakistan’s primary concern has been the blame game by Afghanistan and India, whose officials routinely accuse Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism on their soil. Afghan authorities blame most of terrorist acts in their country on Pakistan, while India uses the terrorism card to discredit the uprising in held Kashmir and at the same time refuse dialogue with the neighbour over bilateral disputes.

Islamabad has on a number of occasions rejected the allegations.

Kabul has repeatedly been asked to shun the blame game and start cooperating in fighting what is described as the “common enemy”.

“The threat requires a trust based coordinated response rather than a blame game or unwarranted skirmishes,” Gen Bajwa had said earlier this week while visiting Peshawar Corps. His message was directed towards Afghan authorities.

Pakistan and Afghanistan had on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Astana agreed to undertake specific actions against terror groups, which were to be identified through the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, and a mechanism for verification of those actions.

Gen Bajwa said Pakistan “indiscriminately” fought terrorism at home. He pledged to root out terrorism through the ongoing Raddul Fasaad military operation, which has been continuing for months.

The army on Friday announced elimination of two terrorists in an intelligence-based operation, carried out as part of Raddul Fasaad in Dera Ghazi Khan.

The two terrorists were planning to target a public gathering identified as “religious activity”.

Moreover, recovery of a huge cache of weapons and ammunition was made during a raid in North Waziristan’s Dattakhel tehsil.

Gen Bajwa said the full spectrum of threat demands, which covers both internal and external challenges, requires comprehensive national response.

“The Army is fully engaged in enabling that response in coordination with other institutions of the state. ... Pakistan Army is committed to defence and security of the country and shall continue to perform with support of the people of Pakistan,” he maintained.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1340045>

July 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 24TH TO JULY 31ST 2017

COAS, US COMMANDER AGREE TO WORK FOR REGIONAL STABILITY

Dawn, July 25th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa and top US commander in Afghanistan Gen John Nicholson agreed on Monday on the need for remaining engaged.

A statement issued by the military’s public affairs division after a meeting of the two commanders at the General Headquarters, which was also attended by US Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale, said: “Both agreed on need for continuous engagement and coordination for peace and stability in the region.”

Gen Nicholson, in his capacity as commander Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, is a regular visitor to GHQ for discussing coordination issues, especially those related to border management. His latest visit came ahead of the completion of the Afghan policy review by the Trump administration. It is apprehended that the new policy would wield more sticks vis-à-vis Pakistan.

Therefore, a source indicated that the two commanders deliberated on the possible contours of the new policy and Pakistan’s apprehensions.

While the new policy is being nervously awaited in Islamabad, the latest counterterrorism report by the State Department and Defence Secretary Jim Mattis’ determination that Pakistan had not taken “sufficient action” against the Haqqani network and alleged Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan have made the thinking in the White House clear.

Following the defence secretary’s determination Pentagon has decided to withhold \$50 million out of the ‘Coalition Support Fund’ reimbursement.

These issues were taken up by Gen Bajwa during the meeting, although the press statement mentioned his concerns in the context of public blame game against Pakistan.

“COAS raised concern over the blame game perpetrated by some quarters in Afghanistan and USA to undermine Pakistan’s contributions towards war on terror. He said that it is not a coincidence that this theme is being played at a time when policy review is being undertaken in USA,” the ISPR said.

Gen Bajwa told the US commander that “despite provocations, Pakistan will continue to act positively as we consider defeat of terrorism as a national interest”.

Army, which was already busy fencing the border with Afghanistan for blocking unauthorised movement, recently started Operation Khyber-IV to clear terrorist sanctuaries in Rajgal Valley and prevent cross-border movement of terrorists.

Pakistan military and government have, meanwhile, reiterated resolve for supporting an Afghan-led reconciliation process in Afghanistan.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347481>

COAS BLAMES 'REGIONAL ACTORS' FOR LAHORE CARNAGE

The Express Tribune, July 25, 2017

Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday blamed “regional actors and hostile intelligence agencies using terror as a policy tool” for being behind Monday’s suicide bombing in Lahore that claimed 26 lives.

The deadly blast was claimed by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan which, according to Pakistani officials, has found safe havens in Afghanistan’s border regions after its rout from the tribal areas as a result of a series of military operations.

The Lahore bombing took place on Tuesday – the day a Taliban suicide bomber mowed down dozens of people in an attack targeted at government employees in Kabul.

“Concurrent blasts in Kabul and Lahore are testimony of our stance that both Pakistan and Afghanistan are victims of terrorism and will continue to suffer if these actors are able to use Afghanistan’s territory with impunity,” Gen Bajwa said while chairing a security meeting at the Lahore Corps Headquarters.

Though Gen Qamar didn’t name any ‘hostile agency’, military officials have repeatedly said India’s top intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, or RAW, is using the Afghan soil to stoke terror in Pakistan.

The arrest of RAW agent Kulbhushan Jadav from Balochistan lends credence to the belief that India is trying to destabilise Pakistan. Jadav has admitted in a video confession that he had been tasked to create unrest in Pakistan – an offense for which he has been sentenced to death by a military court.

The Corps Headquarters meeting was held in the wake of the suicide attack at Kot Lakhpat Sabzi Mandi that left 26 people, including nine policemen, dead.

The army chief reiterated that Pakistan was ready to help Afghanistan to eliminate terrorist safe havens in their border areas as it has done on its side.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1466338/terror-attacks-cannot-lower-resolve-coas-says-meets-lahore-victims/>

August 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 15TH TO AUGUST 20 Th 2017

STATE ORGANS MUST WORK IN UNISON TO CURB TERROR: BAJWA

Dawn, August 14th, 2017

Saleem Shahid

CHIEF of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa speaks to a man injured in the Quetta blast.—APP
QUETTA: While Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa has announced that Independence Day will be celebrated with zeal and fervour to honour the martyrs of Saturday night's bomb attack in Quetta, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal claimed that the terrorists carrying out attacks in Pakistan belong to 'another country'.

Gen Bajwa, who arrived in the Balochistan capital on Sunday, visited the Combined Military Hospital and enquired after the health of the people, including security personnel, injured in the suicide attack at Pishin Stop, according to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The army chief said the fight against terrorism would continue till restoration of peace and urged all state institutions to cooperate with each other to defeat terrorists. "Such terrorist attacks cannot force us to bow down before terrorism," he said, adding that enemies would be defeated as the entire nation was united against terrorists.

Interior minister assures provinces of Centre's cooperation in fight against terrorism

According to the ISPR, Gen Bajwa was also briefed at the Southern Command Headquarters by senior military officials on Saturday night's suicide attack on security forces as well as the overall security situation in Balochistan.

The army chief also attended funeral prayers of the martyrs, along with Balochistan Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai, Chief Minister Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Ahsan Iqbal, Commander Southern Command Lt Gen Aamir Riaz, Home Minister Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti, senior military and civilian officials.

Meanwhile, addressing a press conference after attending a high-level security meeting at the Chief Minister House in Quetta, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal claimed that the terrorists carrying out attacks in Pakistan were coming from 'another country' and "our security agencies are chasing these elements and their facilitators across the country".

Accompanied by CM Sanaullah Zehri, Home Minister Sarfaraz Bugti and Home Secretary Dr Akbar Harifal, he said the military operations had broken the backbone of terrorist organisations and soon the remaining subversives would be eliminated with the help and cooperation of people.

Terrorists would not be allowed to continue their activities and they would be chased in every nook and corner of the country, Ahsan Iqbal said, and called upon political forces, including opposition parties, to forge unity in the fight against terrorists.

"All political forces and people should shun their differences on political, religious, sectarian and economic grounds and get united against terrorists so that they could be defeated," Mr Iqbal said, adding: "Without peace and security, there is no concept of economic development."

He urged the nation to frustrate the designs of all those elements which were creating and highlighting disputes and discord in society under the cover of issues and problems. "We have to frustrate the designs of unwanted persons out to divide the people on issues and problems," the minister said. Such elements are virtually weakening the country, he added.

Mr Iqbal said the government and its allies had taken a firm stand since 2013 against terrorism and fought terrorists back so that they could not weaken the country. “The fight is continuing with significant gains and the terrorists are suffering serious setbacks or their back has been broken significantly.”

He said the federal government would continue its unconditional cooperation with the provincial governments in defeating terrorism. “We can win the war by forging unity and fighting terrorists with a unified force. The enemy is cunning and we have to defeat terrorists by forging unity.”

The minister said the elements trying to break the grand alliance or unity at this hour were not sincere and loyal to the country and its people, adding that the government had achieved many successes over the past four years while fighting terrorism.

“At that time we were facing four major challenges in the country – targeted killings, daylight robberies, kidnapping for ransom and above all terrorism. The government won significant ground in three areas – targeted killings, robberies and kidnapping for ransom – and the fight against terrorism is continuing,” the minister said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351460/state-organs-must-work-in-unison-to-curb-terror-bajwa>

ARMED FORCES VOW TO DEFEND THE MOTHERLAND

ISLAMABAD: The country’s armed forces, including army, air force and navy, celebrated 70 years of independence from British colonial rule with traditional zeal and enthusiasm by organising an array of events across the country.

Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa celebrate Independence Day at forward positions on the Line of Control (LoC) where he lauded the ‘spirit and motivation’ of troops defending the country in the face of unabated onslaught by Indian forces.

He was apprised of the recent “abnormally frequent ceasefire Violations from the Indian side and the effective response given by our troops”, according to the military’s media wing.

Gen Qamar was informed that Pakistani troops were showing restraint because their ‘professional ethos’ barred them from responding in kind when Indian troops targeted innocent civilians along the LoC.

Lauding the motivation and spirit of the troops, the army chief said there was no better way to celebrate independence than defending the country.

“Indian army’s atrocities have not been able to deter the spirit and sacrifices of the brave Kashmiris in Occupied Kashmir. We will always stand with them in their just struggle against repression,” Gen Qamar said.

Earlier at the stroke of midnight on Sunday, the army chief raised a massive national flag on a 400 foot pole at Wagah border crossing with India.

Following the chest-thumping performance Bajwa said the country was making progress and promised to “go after each and every terrorist in Pakistan”. “We have made a few mistakes in the past, but we are on the road to development under the guidance of our constitution,” he added.

The army chief also hosted an Independence Day reception for retired officers and soldiers of the military. The event is an annual ritual where serving and retired officers and soldiers celebrate the day together.

Participants paid tributes for the recent military operations against terrorism which have brought back smiles for the nation to celebrate Independence Day in such an unprecedented manner, according to the ISPR.

The most attractive of countrywide celebrations was the air show organised by Pakistan Air Force in Islamabad and Karachi. It was described as the largest air show in the history of Pakistan.

The first air show was held at Fatima Jinnah Park, Islamabad, where President Mamnoon Hussain was the chief guest, said a statement issued by PAF’s media wing.

Defence Minister Khurram Dastagir and Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman, Chief of the Air Staff also witnessed the impressive show. Ambassadors of friendly countries, former air chiefs and high-ranking civil and military officers were also present.

PAF’s fighter and training aircraft, including Mirage, SAAB-2000, and Augusta-139 from PAF, and MI-17 and PUMA helicopters from the Army Aviation participated in the show.

Besides PAF aircraft, world renowned aerobatic teams from Turkey and Saudi Arabia also performed in the mega event.

The huge crowd gathered in the lush green F-9 Park was ecstatic to see ‘Solo Turk’ flying overhead in a thundering sound. The stunning manoeuvres of the world famous aerobatics team of Turkish Air Force left the spectators spell bound.

The next event was a spectacular aerobatics display of ‘Saudi Hawks’, 07 ship formation aerobatics team of Royal Saudi Air Force.

The blue skies of Islamabad were filled with colours as this acclaimed aerobatic team displayed eye-catching drills. Spectators thoroughly enjoyed the breath-taking manoeuvres of these aircraft and showed appreciation by clapping and chanting slogans.

After the thrilling performance of Saudi Hawks, the indigenously-built JF-17 Thunder aircraft entered the arena.

The show was rounded off with the Tri-Services free fall display in which the commandos from the Special Services Wings jumped from a C-130 aircraft flying at the height of 10,000 feet and safely landed at the designated places.

Another air show was held at Sea View Karachi in which Chief Minister Sindh Murad Ali Shah was the chief guest. F-16, P-3C Orion, Z-9, Alouette-III and Sea King helicopters presented the fly past at the venue.

Afterwards JF-17 Thunder and PAF aerobatics team Sherdil presented a mesmerizing aerial display.

Like the army and PAF, Pakistan Navy also celebrated Independence Day with traditional zeal.

A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Naval Academy cadets, clad in ceremonial dresses, assumed ceremonial guard duties at the Mazar-e-Quaid with traditional spirit, customary enthusiasm and military manners to mark the Independence Day celebrations.

Commandant Pakistan Naval Academy, Commodore Adnan Ahmad was the chief guest on the occasion and reviewed the guard.

Numerous Independence Day ceremonies were also held by PN units at Ormara, Pasni, Gwadar, Jiwani, and Turbat and other coastal areas. These ceremonies and activities were attended by a large number of local notables, civil and military dignitaries.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1481268/no-better-way-celebrate-independence-defending-country-coas/>

PROTEST AGAINST SUSPENSION OF POWER SUPPLY

Dawn, August 16th, 2017

MIRPURKHAS: Scores of villagers from Yaqoobpur protested outside the Kot Ghulam Mohammad Press Club on Tuesday against suspension of power supply to their village.

Led by Haji Ramzan, Haji Younus, Mukhtiar and Shahid, the protesters were carrying banners and placards, and raising slogans against Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) SDO and other staff concerned.

The villagers also blocked the main road which suspended traffic.

Talking to the media, they alleged that Hesco disconnected power supply to their village about 40 days ago. They added that their village consisted of 60 houses and 50 of them always paid their bills on time.

“It is sheer injustice to cut power supply to the entire village if 10 of the houses do not pay the bills,” they said.

The villagers demanded of the Hesco chief and Mirpurkhas’ superintendent engineer to resolve their issues at the earliest.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351720>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 7TH TO AUGUST 14 Th 2017

ARMY CHIEF LAYS STRESS ON UPHOLDING OF RULE OF LAW

Dawn, August 8th, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa on Monday again emphasised upholding the rule of law and supremacy of the Constitution and underscored that the army was committed to its job of national defence and security.

Gen Bajwa, who had made a similar assertion while visiting the Rajgal Valley on Saturday, repeated it while chairing a meeting of corps commanders at the General Headquarters (GHQ).

“COAS directed that efforts must continue, in concert with other elements of national power to defeat terrorism/militancy in order to establish rule of Law and uphold supremacy of Constitution,” the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said after the corps commanders meeting.

The army chief had earlier in Rajgal said that with “the full backing of the nation we are heading towards a normalised Pakistan where writ of state and supremacy of law would be second to none”. Gen Bajwa in a sort of rejection of the allegations of military’s involvement in the political developments said that he was fully satisfied with “Army’s commitment to national defence and security”.

The meeting, the ISPR said, undertook a comprehensive review of internal and external security environment.

Gen Bajwa praised “high standards of professionalism” for the successful conduct of Operation Khyber-IV in inhospitable Rajgal Valley. He specifically noted that the operation has so far had minimal casualties.

The army chief while visiting the Rajgal Valley over the weekend had said that the professionalism of troops and effective aerial support from the Pakistan Air Force that targeted terrorists’ strongholds minimised military casualties.

Two soldiers were martyred in the operation that was started on July 16 to ‘forestall entry’ of members of militant Islamic State (IS) group from across the border.

The army says it had cleared 90 per cent area of the valley. It is said that the completion of the operation would pave the way for the return of displaced people and development in the region. The corps commanders, the ISPR said, “acknowledged positive long term effects being achieved through Operation Radd-ul- Fasaad”.

On Afghanistan, the COAS said: “We look forward to a trust based mutual cooperation in this regard which can achieve the policy ends of enduring regional peace”.

Engagement between the two countries has recently resumed.

An Afghan military delegation visited Peshawar last Friday.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350246>

US AIR STRIKE KILLS SEVERAL CIVILIANS IN AFGHANISTAN

Dawn, August 12th, 2017

JALALABAD: Several civilians have been killed in an US air strike in eastern Afghanistan, local officials said on Friday, the latest setback in efforts to bring peace to the war-torn country.

Saaz Wali Shinwari, the district governor of Haska Mina in Nangarhar province, said the raid was carried out by US troops although there was no official confirmation from Nato.

“On Thursday afternoon, the American forces bombarded a civilian private vehicle... when they were travelling inside the district,” he said.

“Unfortunately, in the air strike we have casualties. Eleven people were killed and one wounded. All the victims, which included women and children, were civilians and they were from one family. “The victims were beyond recognition, and they were placed inside the sacks and were buried late last night,” he added.

Of the roughly 13,000 foreign forces in Afghanistan only the United States carries out air strikes. They have been regularly targeting insurgents of the militant Islamic State group who control several districts in restive Nangarhar.

Dawlat Waziri, a spokesman for Afghanistan’s defence ministry, said the strike was carried out by foreign forces in coordination with Afghan officials.

“In the strike, five insurgents were killed and two others were wounded.

“We do not have any news about civilian casualties. But, we have appointed a delegation to investigate if civilians are killed,” he said.

Nato said they were unable to provide any information when contacted.

Attaullah Khogyani, a spokesman for the Nangarhar provincial governor, said an unknown number of civilians had died but was unable to say who carried out the strike.

“I can confirm an air strike in Haska Mina district of Nangarhar province and it led to civilian casualties. For the time being, we do not have a precise figure about the casualties,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1351086>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 6TH 2017

‘WE’RE HEADING TOWARDS A NORMALIZED PAKISTAN,’ SAYS COAS

Business Recorder, 6 August 2017

Nuzhat Nazar

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa Saturday said Pakistan is heading towards a normalized country where the writ of the state and supremacy of law would be second to none.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army’s media wing, armed forces have cleared over 90 percent of the area of Khyber Agency.

The Army Chief visited the Rajgal Valley of Khyber Agency where he was given a detailed briefing on progress of Operation Khyber-IV.

Gen Bajwa appreciated the professionalism of the troops as well as Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in skillfully targeting terrorist hideouts.

After completion of the operation, Khyber Agency would be free from terrorists' influence thereby providing peaceful environment for development. He promised that the return of temporarily displaced persons will soon become possible.

Talking to officers and troops on the occasion, the Army Chief thanked Almighty Allah for helping the army come up to the expectations of the nation in uprooting terrorism and militancy in the country.

"With full backing of the nation we are heading towards a normalized Pakistan where writ of state and supremacy of law would be second to none and where every Pakistani in urban, tribal and far-flung areas will be able to play his/her positive and rightful part in Pakistan's progress," he said.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/08/06/1-page/896599-news.html>

September 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 25 TH TO SEPTEMBER 30 Th 2017

ARMY CHIEF VOWS TO RESTORE RULE OF LAW, PEACE

Dawn, September 26, 2017

Islamabad: Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Monday vowed to restore peace and the rule of law in the country, whatever sacrifices it might cost.

He said some people and hostile agencies from abroad were trying to destabilise Pakistan and its army. "They fear army being a hurdle to achieve their nefarious designs."

Gen Bajwa said the army would continue to perform in the best interest of the country and stand by the nation against all challenges. "Pakistan's enemy is our enemy. Use of force is the prerogative of state alone."

The army chief made the remarks during his meeting with the parents of Lieutenant Arslan Alam in their village near Murree.

Lt Alam was martyred in an attack carried out from across the Afghan border into the Rajgal Valley in Khyber Agency on Saturday.

Gen Bajwa offered Fateha at the grave of Lt Alam and interacted with the family. He paid tribute to Lt Alam and said the army and the nation were proud of their martyrs who had rendered supreme sacrifices in the line of duty. Lt Alam, being the only son of the family with three sisters, preferred his country over himself and his family.

“No power can harm us till such time we have such valiant sons of soil and their brave parents in Pakistan,” the army chief said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1360013/army-chief-vows-to-restore-rule-of-law-peace>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11 TH TO SEPTEMBER 17 Th 2017

October 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 23rd TO OCTOBER 29th 2017

RS102M PAID TO RANGERS FOR GUARDING PIPELINES, SAYS TOP AUDITOR

Dawn, October 26, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The office of the auditor general pointed out Rs102 million worth of ‘irregular’ payments made by the ministry of petroleum and natural resources to Pakistan Rangers for security of pipelines of gas distributors in remote areas.

During the scrutiny of the accounts of petroleum ministry, the director general audit identified that the ministry had paid Rs102m to Punjab and Sindh Rangers “for the security duty for protection of sites of Sui Southern Gas Company Limited and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited respectively.”

The audit, however, objected that the payments were made on the basis of an agreement between Pakistan Rangers and the ministry of petroleum but neither a copy of the contract nor concurrence to it by the ministry of finance was provided.

It further raised objection to the payment to contractors — Mehmood & Brothers and Barki Traders — since there was no document for the award of contract for the procurement of services from these private companies.

According to the audit report, “evidence regarding deduction of income tax on hiring of vehicles and other charges was not available in the record”.

Subsequently, the audit was of the view that in the absence of record the authenticity of the expenditure could not be ascertained.

It recommended “immediate production of relevant record besides fixing of responsibility for irregular payment”.

Public Accounts Committee chairman Syed Khursheed Shah wanted to settle the audit objection at the very outset and soon after the auditor presented this audit para, he said, “subject to verification”.

However, a number of PAC members, including Chaudhry Tanvir Khan, Mehmood Khan Achakzai, Ashiq Gopang and even Sherry Rehman, spoke otherwise.

Mr Gopang asked as to how the ministry had paid private contractors for security-related services whereas it was the job of Rangers.

Sherry Rehman asked whether a written agreement existed between the ministry and Rangers.

An additional secretary of the petroleum ministry said that the agreement was there and it had been shared with the auditors.

The auditors on the other hand denied receipt of any copy of such an agreement and alleged that the state of affairs in the petroleum ministry was so pathetic that it was very difficult to get the record from the possession of officials concerned.

The deputy financial adviser of the ministry informed the committee that it was in 2003 when the then prime minister issued direction to the petroleum ministry for hiring Rangers for the protection of the pipelines network in remote areas of Punjab and Sindh.

He said the cost of Rangers deployment was being shared by the federal government, distribution companies and the province concerned till 2015. Then Punjab refused to contribute for Rangers and the matter was then referred to the Council of Common Interests.

The ministry, however, failed to satisfy the lawmakers about the payment to sub-contractors.

Petroleum secretary Jalal Sikandar Sultan then requested the committee to allow the ministry to settle this issue at the meeting of the departmental accounts committee (DAC). He assured the lawmakers that the required documents would be shared with the audit officials in the DAC's meeting.

Subsequently, PAC chairman Shah asked the audit officials to verify the details in the DAC meeting.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366295/rs102m-paid-to-rangers-for-guarding-pipelines-says-top-auditor>

MILITARY VS CIVILIAN ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The Express Tribune, October 28th, 2017

Yet another interesting debate on the jurisdiction and competency of Pindi vs Isloo boys has been initiated. This time the spat began with Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal questioning the military's jurisdiction and competency in commenting on the economic state of Pakistan. A comment by the director general of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) and the minister's outburst was being analysed against the backdrop of unfounded rumours of impending martial law and/or formation of a technocrat government — which were flatly denied by the DG ISPR. The government did not appreciate the military's comments though the minister was careful not to mention either the chief of army staff or the army or military; he chose to focus his ire on the DG ISPR personally.

The government may have taken it as criticism which inter alia diminishes the credibility of Ishaq Dar's self-claimed divine-gifted economic prowess. Since then, both sides have luckily lowered their ante and expressed the need for a unified national agenda. However, the question raised regarding the military's jurisdiction and competency to comment on economic issues was not addressed nor agreed upon by either side — though Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi wisely acknowledged the military's right to comment on the economy.

It is perhaps for this reason that the jury is out in the social media ranging from one group claiming that there are economic problems in many countries but their military never commented on the state of economy to the group which claimed Dar borrowed tons of foreign loans without even informing his ministerial colleagues, let alone the people or parliament of Pakistan. It is of course implied by them that most of these amounts have been usurped and corruptly siphoned off.

Thus, there are advocates of not only the military's right to comment but to intervene and those who see the military's interference in civilian matters as the mother of all evils. Regardless of what the right answer may be in the generic global sense, this question assumes special dynamics in the context of Pakistan where military takeovers are hardly unusual.

The civilian leadership may fear the military using the excuse of weak economic performance to replace them with a government of their liking particularly when their leader, Nawaz Sharif, has been ousted and he and his family are facing indictment and arrest over corruption cases. Thus, in Pakistan, the Pindi-Islamabad relations have been quite unique and is a major determinant on who forms and runs the government.

A foreign journalist once asked about Islamabad quipped that it is around 25 kilometres from Pakistan. Others had similarly calculated the distance between Islamabad and Pindi in terms of a time gap. This debate seems to measure the distance in terms of a wisdom gap as well.

The military's competency to comment on the economy can be justified at least in the Pakistani context as (i) the economy is an important, if not crucial, instrument of statecraft and one of the main determinants of national power which the army handled in Pakistan for 32 years. (ii) there is a link between economic development and security aptly described by a whizz-kid who had the unique experience of being both the US defence secretary and World Bank president, Robert McNamara, who noted: "Security is not military hardware, though it may include it, security is not military force, though it may involve it, security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it.

Security is development and without development there can be no security." (iii) the military's budget depends on the state of the economy. This right is often justified on the ground that the track record of military rulers' economic performance is better than their civilian brothers. Is this really a fact? And if it is, does it automatically grant the right to the military to comment on the economy even if the competency is established? This article attempts to analyse whether the economy performed better under the khakis to justify their competency to comment on it.

Economic performance of course depends on many exogenous and endogenous factors and pressures and there are many different ways of measuring performance. However, for this article only four indicators will be used for comparing the performance of each military and civilian regime. These are GDP growth, rupee-dollar rate, public debt and fiscal discipline though there are many more important indicators like structural reforms, infrastructure development, water, power and energy, CPEC, investments, FDI, trade, etc.

These four indicators have been selected as these are generally debated by Pakistanis when it comes to evaluating civil-military performance in economic terms. An obvious exclusion of an important indicator, ie, taxation/revenue can be easily explained by the fact that this has been a disappointing

action by both military and civilian regimes as taxation to GDP has always been lower than 12-13% of GDP and at most times being at single digit only.

Similarly a possible looming crisis due to current account deficit is not considered here as it has a cumulative result of both civilian and military rulers' policies, for example, the large current account deficit is a result of the large trade deficit as a consequence of PM Shaukat Aziz under military rule's policy of import liberalisation at the cost of manufacturing and his anti-export bias and the current PML-N policies of anti-manufacturing bias.

It may however be noted at the outset that regardless of who performed relatively better, unfortunately Pakistan's economic performance overall has been a disappointment compared to its potential. It started off pretty good despite all the odds and by early '60s, it was considered a showcase model for developing countries, it being the second largest trading partner of Japan (with Jetro's second office being in Karachi after New York), Habib Bank Plaza being the tallest building in Asia except for Tokyo and Osaka and PIA being the second-best inflight entertaining flight after PanAm.

Pakistan's GDP growth rate in the 60s was much higher than India and China and its economy was larger than South Korea and Malaysia. Pakistan's steam started slowing down from the '70s while the other countries performed better. While China took the lead from Pakistan in 1970, it would take India at least another 15 years before surpassing Pakistan's growth rates.

But by the '90s India was blessed by Manmohan Singh's economic miracle while Pakistan experienced a corrupt, bitter and confused civilian leadership bent on reversing the previous government's policies and/or follies after a decade of disastrous military dictatorship with long-term adverse security and social consequences. At one time the expertise of Pakistani bankers, engineers, planners, managers and doctors was acknowledged globally.

Pakistan's nominal GDP was larger than South Korea and Malaysia in the '60s and '70s but by the '80s it was left behind by both countries. Since then, however, South Korea has jumped into another league.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1543101/6-military-vs-civilian-economic-performance>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 9TH TO OCTOBER 15 Th 2017
SINDH RANGERS' POLICING POWERS EXTENDED FOR ANOTHER 90 DAYS
The Express Tribune, October 11, 2017

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has extended Pakistan Rangers special policing powers for another 90 days in the province.

According to spokesperson for CM House, the period of special powers granted to Rangers was set to expire on October 12. However, on Wednesday, CM Shah signed the summary regarding a 90-day extension in policing powers, Express News reported.

As per the special powers granted to Rangers under the Anti-Terrorism Act, the paramilitary force, which has had a presence in Karachi for several years, can take independent action against criminals and suspected terrorists.

Earlier in July, the Rangers' power had been extended for three months until October.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1528644/sindh-rangers-get-another-90-day-extension-special-policing-power/>

MILITARY SAYS SECURITY LINKED TO ECONOMY

Dawn, October 15, 2017

Anwar Iqbal | Iftikhar A. Khan

ISPR chief Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor says he was 'disappointed — both as a soldier and a citizen of Pakistan' — by the interior minister's remarks.

ISLAMABAD/WASHINGTON: Deflecting criticism from the government for commenting on the state of the economy, the military's chief spokesperson on Saturday stressed that the economy was inextricably linked to security matters, adding that a weak economy could adversely affect the country's safety and security.

A day after Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal's rebuke, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor said that he was "disappointed — both as a soldier and a citizen of Pakistan" — by the minister's remarks.

The ISPR chief had, on Thursday night, said on a TV programme that while the national economy was not in bad shape, it was not in very good shape either.

ISPR chief insists no threat to democracy from Army • Rules out possibility of joint operation with US on Pakistani soil • Interior minister says civilians can do better job of economic analysis
At his presser, he clarified that he had not described the economy as "unstable", adding that he had stressed the need for concerted efforts to set things right. As an institution of the state, the army continued to give its proposals on matters of national importance, he said.

Reacting to the statement, the interior minister had warned the military's spokesperson to refrain from "such irresponsible statements [that] can dent Pakistan's global image".

Giving the context of his remarks, Maj Gen Ghafoor said that his comments on the economy were based on his takeaways from a seminar on the interplay of economy and security, arranged by the chamber of commerce.

The keynote address at the seminar, which he said was attended by three former finance ministers and a former governor of the State Bank, was delivered by Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa.

"I stand by my words. All this was within the framework of the Constitution," he asserted, adding that this was something that should be taken positively. "There should be no reservations, fears or apprehensions," he said.

Maj Gen Ghafoor said the army would continue to perform its duties within the parameters of the law and Constitution, adding that while a lot was being done to strengthen the economy, a lot more needed to be done.

Dwelling on tax numbers, he recalled that recovery was around 39pc, which included a 95pc reliance on indirect taxes. Out of the total revenue recovered, 60pc came from government employees, he said, adding that the private sector's 40pc contribution was too meagre.

He said that the army chief, in his interaction with businessmen, had asked them to pay taxes, and stressed the need to broaden the tax base.

He said there was no threat to democracy from the Pakistan Army. "If there was to be a threat to democracy, it would be from not fulfilling the requirements of democracy or the aspirations of the people," he remarked, cryptically.

He recalled that the army chief was on the record as saying that there was no threat to democracy and that no extra-constitutional measures would be taken.

He also rejected rumours about plans to install a government of technocrats, or to impose a de facto martial law. "If the country is to make progress, stability is a must," he remarked.

When asked to explain in unambiguous terms whether the army accepted the supremacy of civilian authority, he asked: "Who appoints the chief of army staff and other services chiefs?"

Rangers personnel in Sindh and Punjab were only deployed after the sanction and approval of the respective governments, he said.

He also referred to military operations such as Zarb-i-Azb, Rah-i-Raast and the ongoing Raddul Fassad, saying that these were also launched following the approval of the civilian government.

"Everything is under civilian supremacy and the army does not take decisions on its own. Institutions do not operate in isolation," he stressed.

Responding to a question regarding Khawaja Asif's statement on a possible US-Pakistan joint operation against the Haqqani Network, he said that in military terminology, a joint operation means one where a country's troops act together with the troops of another country.

"There is no concept of a joint operation on Pakistan's soil. There has never been and will never be a joint operation by Pakistani forces with any other force of the world", he declared.

Reacting to the army spokesperson's presser, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that there were civilian institutions in the country — both inside and outside the government — that could do a better analysis of the national economy than the ISPR.

Speaking to reporters at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington on Friday night, Mr Iqbal said he had criticised the ISPR DG's statement because it was not his domain.

The minister clarified that he had not offered comments on the statement that the army chief read at a seminar held in Karachi earlier this week, pointing out weaknesses in the economy.

However, he said that every institution should remain within its domain. “Such irresponsible statements are not good, as it is the country that has to face the consequences,” he said.

Mr Iqbal pointed out that Pakistan had a very vocal media and a strong opposition, which often analysed the national economy as well.

“Everyone acknowledges that the economy is doing much better now than it was. Our performance has encouraged international financial institutions to upgrade Pakistan’s ratings,” the minister said.

Talking to Dawn after the ISPR chief news conference, the interior minister said all national institutions should highlight the “positive aspects of the country” with “one voice”.

The civilian and military leadership should join hands to provide some hope to the nation, instead of offering negative comments, he said, adding that his government had brought the national economy back on track.

The government, he said, had unified the nation, and now “we need to restore the world’s trust.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1363937>

TWO CHILDREN KILLED, THREE INJURED IN INDIAN SHELLING

Dawn, October 15th, 2017

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Two children were killed and another three injured in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) in unprovoked firing by Indian forces from across the Line of Control (LoC) on Saturday, officials said.

“Indian troops resorted to intense unprovoked firing in different sectors along the LoC targeting civilian populations,” said the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a handout.

Aiqa Ramzan, 6, was injured in Balakot village of Nakyal sector before noon, Nakyal Assistant Commissioner Waleed Anwar told Dawn.

Later in the afternoon, Indian troops resumed shelling which continued, intermittently, till late in the evening, he said.

In Khara Dheri village, Saad Khalil Chaudhry, 9, was killed after a bullet hit him in the head, Mr Anwar said.

Around half an hour later, he added, a mortar shell landed on the house of Kabir Hussain in Dharoti village, injuring his three children, Quratul Ain, 14, Moeen Islam aka Hamayun, 12, and Samiur Rehman, 10.

Hamayun died on the way to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital, Kotli.

On Friday, a 45-year old man Sikandar Hayat was injured in Lanjot village of Nakyal sector.

The ISPR said that Indian army also targeted Tetrinote-Chakan da Bagh crossing point, hitting its visitors' stand.

It said that Pakistan army "aggressively and effectively responded to hostile fire, silenced their [Indian] guns and caused considerable damage to the posts carrying out fire."

Foreign Office spokesperson Nafees Zakaria said in a tweet that targeting civilian population was a highly condemnable act, in contravention of international humanitarian and human rights laws.

"Such belligerent acts by India pose grave threat to regional peace and security," he tweeted.

On Thursday, the Heads of Missions of the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council in Islamabad (China, France, Russian Federation, UK and USA) were briefed by the Foreign Secretary and the Director General Military Operations (DGMO) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on the escalation in ceasefire violations by Indian troops along the LoC and Working Boundary, particularly in the past two months.

According to a Foreign Office handout, the foreign secretary had expressed grave concern over the increased frequency and duration of indiscriminate firing/shelling from the Indian side, deliberately targeting villages and civilian populated areas in complete disregard of the 2003 Ceasefire Understanding and of International Law.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1363936>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1ST TO OCTOBER 8 Th 2017
RANGERS MYSTERIOUSLY SEAL OFF COURT TRYING EX-PM
Malik Asad

Dawn, October 3rd, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Dramatic scenes were witnessed outside the accountability court trying former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in three references after Rangers personnel mysteriously descended upon the Federal Judicial Complex (FJC) and barred everyone — even their minister in charge — from entering the premises.

The court also issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Mr Sharif's two sons and son-in-law on Monday.

After the ex-PM's security detail, senior ministers and politicians were barred from entering the court premises, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal made a dramatic entry and walked up to the pedestrian gate of the complex, where he was informed that the door had been padlocked from inside.

He then asked to speak to the Rangers' commanding officer, but no one came out to meet the minister at the main gate. This led him to deliver a fiery speech outside the court premises, where he openly expressed his displeasure.

He said courts were "open spaces" that supporters of and lawyers for the defendant could freely enter, adding that closed trials were only conducted under martial law.

He recalled that the Islamabad chief commissioner had chalked out a plan to make sure certain journalists, lawyers and others could witness court proceedings, but said he was informed on Monday morning that "Rangers suddenly appeared and took over security of the building of their own accord".

He maintained that the paramilitary force could only be deployed if requisitioned by the chief commissioner, adding that when the commissioner told Rangers officials that a security plan for the court was already in place, their commanding officer refused to accept the instructions. Instead, they insisted they would follow the orders they had been given and "would not allow anyone but Nawaz Sharif to enter".

Mr Iqbal told mediapersons he was forced to take notice of the situation because "Rangers is a civil armed force subordinate to the Ministry of Interior. When they are deployed, they are supposed to work under the command of the civil administration".

The interior minister vowed to hold an inquiry to ascertain whether Rangers had violated the civil administration's orders and "challenged the writ of the government".

He claimed that the Rangers' commanding officer "disappeared" for 15 minutes when he (the minister) had asked to meet him to discuss the situation at the entrance to the court.

He also questioned whose orders was the paramilitary force following when the chief commissioner did not requisition their presence.

"Whoever did this would either face strict disciplinary action, or else I will resign as interior minister, because I cannot work as a puppet," he declared, adding that no one would be allowed to challenge the writ of the civilian government.

"There cannot be a state within state," he concluded.

Apart from Mr Iqbal and his state minister Talal Chaudhry, paramilitary officials also stopped senior politicians such as Raja Zafarul Haq, Pervaiz Rashid, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, Daniyal Aziz, Irfan Siddiqui, MNAs Malik Abrar, Mian Javed Lateef, Maiza Hameed, Islamabad Mayor Sheikh Ansar Aziz and former MNA Anjum Aqeel, as well as several law officers of the federal government.

But it was firebrand Mr Rafique who, on this occasion, tried to calm frayed nerves among the PML-N supporters.

"We have to sort this out at any cost, even if it means lowering our self-esteem. This country cannot afford a third martial law and we must prevent it," he said.

Mr Rafique went even further, saying that things were being laid bare and the people of Pakistan could understand what sort of trial was being conducted. “It is an open court where everyone should be allowed to witness proceedings, but they have started an in-camera trial,” he said.

After the furore died down and the court concluded proceedings for the day, Rangers Brig Asif emerged from the FJC building and offered Daniyal Aziz, who was still lingering at the spot, access to the court. However, Mr Aziz refused the offer, saying there was no point.

Inside the courtroom, Accountability Judge Mohammad Bashir issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Hussain and Hassan Nawaz, and retired Captain Mohammad Safdar, and repeated bailable warrants for Maryam Nawaz.

Further proceedings were adjourned until Oct 9, when the court will decide whether to proceed against Mr Sharif separately or to conduct a joint trial of all the accused available.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361347/rangers-mysteriously-seal-off-court-trying-ex-pm>

PUNJAB RANGERS CHIEF TOLD TO EXPLAIN COURT TAKEOVER: AHSAN IQBAL
Dawn, October 4th, 2017

KARACHI: Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal said on Tuesday that the government would seek an explanation from the director general of Punjab Rangers as to how and under whose directives the paramilitary troops had taken over the accountability court a day before.

The minister told a private news channel that an administrative inquiry into Monday’s incident — the mysterious deployment of Rangers at the Federal Judicial Complex (FJC) in Islamabad ahead of ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif’s hearing by the accountability court — had been completed.

In an interview with Hamid Mir of Geo News, the minister said that after completing the administrative inquiry the government was certain that “civil administration was not responsible for any communication that led to this misunderstanding”.

When the anchor asked him what would happen next, Mr Iqbal replied: “We are seeking an explanation from Rangers... the DG Rangers now should explain under whose authority and whose directives they were deployed there and the conduct of local officer who was evasive and did not respond to the calls of his minister...; this should also be investigated.”

The issue was also raised at a meeting of the federal cabinet in Islamabad by minister of state for power Abid Sher Ali. “Such incidents are not acceptable,” a source quoted Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as having stated during the meeting.

Sources said the PM told his cabinet colleagues that he had taken up the issue with the quarters concerned.

In the interview, the interior minister categorically said the government would also raise the issue with the army high command. “The [inquiry] findings would be shared with the army leadership.”

He said the inquiry was not against the Rangers or the army. “We do not want any confrontation between institutions. Civil-military relation in Pakistan is at most critical fault line. Our enemy wants instability.”

Narrating the Monday incident, he clarified that he had not gone to the accountability court because of the hearing of Mr Sharif. “Being the interior minister it was necessary for me to go there since I was informed about a confrontation between civil administration and a force which is under my command.”

He said that the local commander of Rangers refused to listen to the directives of the chief commissioner and he reached there and “called the commander but nobody came for a good 20 minutes. Everybody had walkie-talkies in their hand and I mean if their DG, who is a major general, would have gone there and called his local commander he would have appeared [before him] in one minute”.

“I am the minister in charge but nobody came. Frankly, I took that as very offensive. If we want to run this country we must run as a normal country... there should be one law [for everyone],” he added.

Mr Iqbal said that he tried to avert the situation on Monday. “I contacted a security agency and the Rangers DG. Initially, no contact was made but after the incident and press conference he [the Rangers chief] was available on phone and I talked to him.”

When asked what the Rangers chief’s response was, he said: “Frankly, he did not have a clear answer... He said it was [because of] security threat.

“I think it is very important for the military leadership to take notice of this [incident].”

He said that Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa had a very clear vision and he wanted Pakistan to be on the path of constitutional governance with stability. “The elements involved in such episodes to undermine civil-military relations are not doing any good to their organisation and the country.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361590>

RANGERS WITHDRAW PERSONNEL FROM PARLIAMENT

Munawer Azeem

Dawn, October 05, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Following the controversy surrounding Rangers deployment outside the court hearing corruption references against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the paramilitary force on Wednesday withdrew its personnel from Parliament House.

Rangers and Quick Response Force (QRF) personnel are posted around Parliament House during proceedings of the National Assembly and Senate, police officers stated, adding that around 50 paramilitary personnel remained deployed around the parliament building during house proceedings. On Wednesday, Rangers withdrew the security provided to Parliament House, adding that they had asked for written instructions in this regard.

Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal has sought an explanation from the Punjab Rangers director general over the unilateral withdrawal of security from Parliament House, as well as the deployment at the Federal Judicial Complex during the hearing of references against Nawaz Sharif without being requested.

Sources told Dawn that the minister had given the Rangers DG 72 hours to provide an explanation.

In a related development, Mr Iqbal ordered the Frontier Constabulary to take charge of the parliament's security following the unilateral withdrawal of Rangers personnel.

Police and capital administration officers, when contacted, said that Rangers were deployed in the capital at the request of police, adding that the Islamabad SSP had approached the deputy commissioner (DC) and sought Rangers assistance in securing sensitive installations, including Parliament House.

In response, the DC had issued an order asking for Rangers deployment, the sources said, adding that paramilitary personnel usually did not move without written orders, except in the case of counterterrorism operations.

Officials said there was "a disturbed situation" among the civil administration, police and Rangers, adding that things worsened on Monday when Rangers took over the security of the courts in G-11 without any authority.

Once in control, the paramilitary personnel did not allow anyone, including ministers, lawyers and journalists, to enter the building.

When asked to comment, an official from the National Assembly Secretariat told Dawn the issue had nothing to do with the speaker's office or the secretariat.

He said that sergeants-at-arms were responsible for the internal security of Parliament House, whereas police and the local administration provided security from the outside.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361815/rangers-withdraw-personnel-from-parliament>

INSTITUTIONS ARE SUPREME, SAYS ARMY

Dawn, October 6th, 2017

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The military spokesperson on Thursday stressed the need for all civilian and military institutions to work together to defeat "enemy designs" aimed at dividing the country.

But surprisingly, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor also waded into areas that do not fall into the military's domain when he addressed subjects ranging from economic instability in the country to the registration of the Milli Muslim League (MML) as a political party.

Addressing a press briefing in Rawalpindi, the ISPR chief said that no individual was more important than an institution, adding that even the army chief was not above the institution he headed. "We should work closely with each other," he said.

Answering a question about former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's comparison of his ouster with the fall of Dhaka, Maj Gen Ghafoor said one should look forward instead of referring to the past.

Answering a question about Panamagate, he said the army was bound to obey the orders it was given, and added that the role of the intelligence agencies in the Joint Investigation Team's (JIT) probe was "constitutional".

He brushed aside the impression that the army was behind a move to impose martial law. "These are things that should not even be spoken of," he said, scuttling discussion on the subject.

He said that the country's economic indicators were not satisfactory, adding that the army would continue to give suggestions for improvement.

"Instability, be it political or economic, is not in the country's interests and should be jointly corrected by all institutions," he said.

Referring to the removal of the Khatm-i-Nabuwat declaration from a new draft of the Elections Act, he said that the issue was "linked with the [finality of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him)]", adding that the army could not have compromised in the matter.

"The issue stands settled now and the amendment has been reverted," he said, leading many to wonder whether the armed forces had a behind-the-scenes role in reversing the development.

In response to another question about the registration of the MML — which is considered by many to be a front for the outlawed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeJ) — as a political party, the ISPR chief said it was everyone's right to take part in the political process. He said that although he was not a spokesperson for the government, he was aware that proposals to secure their "constructive contribution" from such organisations were being considered by the government.

Maj Gen Ghafoor also set tongues wagging when, asked why no official statement was issued after a recent special meeting of corps commanders, he said: "Silence is also an expression, right?"

He revealed that a terror alert had been shared with the Foreign Office, which indicated that four hostile agencies were planning a massive terrorist attack in Pakistan.

The ISPR chief said that the deployment of army troops on the western border was not meant to target Afghanistan or Iran, but non-state actors.

He explained that some of the troops deployed on the western border, had been sent back to the cantonments after the situation improved significantly on the Pakistani side of the border.

However, he pointed out that threats emanating from India were perpetual in nature, and that the eastern border was unsafe because of India's hegemonic designs.

Talking about the army chief's recent visit to Afghanistan, he said the meeting the Afghan president and Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa was held in a pleasant environment. "You can see that no negative statement [was expressed from the Afghan side] after the meeting," he said, adding that the army chief would shortly visit Iran.

However, he said that Pakistan had to keep troops on its western borders due to strategic reasons, since there was still a threat from non-state actors such as the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Maintaining that Pakistan did not want war, “if war is imposed, our armed forces have the capability and right to give a telling response.”

“If they fire one bullet, our troops will respond with five,” Maj Ghafoor said, referring to the continuous ceasefire violations committed by India along the Line of Control (LoC) and the Working Boundary.

He admitted that Pakistan faced several threats and pressures due to its geographical importance in the region and beyond, due to the economic interests of certain powers.

He pointed out that the army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) were being targeted by an enemy narrative. “There are no other countries like Pakistan, since all other countries that have faced such problems have either collapsed or have ceded control to foreign armies. This is why you will hear the narrative that the Pakistan Army and ISI are not under anyone’s control.”

He claimed that anti-Pakistani forces would obviously target the powers (army and ISI) that were frustrating their designs. “If you understand this enemy narrative, then you will understand how important the armed forces are for the security and independence of a country.”

Maj Gen Ghafoor also expressed his satisfaction with the way Muharram security was handled.

“There was a huge security risk during Muharram, but after many years, the month passed peacefully,” he said. Elaborating further, he said that two suicide bombers and their handler had been arrested from Karachi, while a car bomb was foiled in Quetta.

He also spoke of two events that signalled a return of normalcy to the country: the massive Bohra gathering in Karachi that was attended by over 20,000 foreigners, including 12,000 Indian citizens; and the World XI and Miramshah cricket matches.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362007>

ISPR CHIEF JUSTIFIES RANGERS’ DEPLOYMENT AT COURTS

Dawn, October 6th, 2017

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The military’s chief spokesperson on Thursday justified the deployment of Rangers personnel outside a court hearing corruption reference against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, saying that written orders were not issued on all occasions.

In a detailed press conference where he touched upon several issues of national importance, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor said that Rangers operated under the Ministry of Interior.

He recalled that three wings of the paramilitary force, consisting of around 2,000 personnel had been deployed in Islamabad in 2014 under Article 147 of the Constitution.

The article in question deals with ‘Power of the provinces to entrust functions to the federation’, and says: “Notwithstanding anything contained in the constitution, the government of a province may, with the consent of the federal government, entrust, either conditionally or unconditionally, to the federal government, or to its officers, functions in relation to any matter to which the executive authority of the province extends.”

Once this was done, Maj Gen Ghafoor said, there continued to be coordination among the district administration, police and Rangers. He stressed that written orders were not received in every case, adding that the term of the Rangers’ deployment was extended by the government after every three months.

He said that on that day, there was a security threat in the city, which was why the paramilitary force had been deployed. He said that representatives of all the three departments – district administration, police and Rangers – were present at the Federal Judicial Complex at 7am and saw the paramilitary personnel deployed there.

When asked to comment on the hard-hitting statements issued by Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal after he was refused entry to the judicial complex, he observed that the personnel performing their duties should be appreciated.

“A soldier who is deployed [somewhere] is doing his duty, and if he is told not to allow irrelevant people... it is possible [to consider] someone who does not have [credentials] as an irrelevant person”.

To explain his point, he claimed that there were events where even the army chief would not be allowed in by the person on duty if he was not carrying his identification card with him.

During the press conference, Maj Gen Ghafoor repeatedly referred to “enemy agencies” and “a hostile narrative”. To a question, he said that minor, localised event should not be viewed from the “enemy’s perspective”.

“I have just talked about the narrative of the enemy, and every institution needs to act in a responsible manner whenever something happens,” he said, insisting that an unnecessary hype had been created. Recalling remarks about an ongoing investigation into the Muharram riots in Rawalpindi back in 2013, which he made at an earlier press conference, the ISPR chief said that the enemy tried to exploit the sectarian divides in society, adding that all the actors involved in that unfortunate incident were outsiders.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362041/ispr-chief-justifies-rangers-deployment-at-courts>

November 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 27th TO DECEMBER FAIZABAD HANDED OVER TO RANGERS

Dawn, November 27th, 2017

Amir Wasim | Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Top civil and military leaders on Sunday went into a huddle to review and assess the law and order situation developing in the country in the aftermath of Saturday's botched operation against protesters at Faizabad interchange, and decided to re-initiate the process of negotiations with the leadership of the protesting religious groups after the army showed a reluctance to directly take on the protesters.

Soon after the meeting, presided over by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and attended by Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Naveed Mukhtar, Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal, the government issued a notification, putting the Islamabad police and the Punjab police under the command of the Rangers for one week.

"Maj Gen Azhar Naveed Hayat Khan, Director General Rangers (Punjab), is hereby appointed as overall in-charge of the operation to handle and clear the sit-in organised by activists of Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah at Faizabad interchange and at other places in Islamabad and Rawalpindi with effect from Nov 26 till Dec 3, 2017," said the notification issued by the Ministry of Interior, indicating the possibility that there would be no further action against protesters until Eid Miladun Nabi, on Dec 1.

Sources in the military said that during the meeting, the army chief had opposed the use of army against the sit-in participants, saying that force could not be applied against its own people "as the people of Pakistan love and have trust in [the] army, which can't be compromised for little gains".

"Anarchy doesn't suit our image in [the] world community. We have to stay cohesive and united," the army chief is said to have told the prime minister. Sources claimed that Gen Bajwa asked the government to "identify and punish" those responsible for the chaotic situation prevailing in the country.

The military leadership told the government that the army, as an instrument of the state, would perform any task. But since the use of the military represents the application of force, it should therefore be employed as a last resort, when all other options have been exhausted and if there is a threat to the state.

Sources said that no additional troops were being moved as the few already stationed in Islamabad could take over the security of government buildings from police and Rangers personnel. The army chief also called for lifting of ban on private TV channels' transmissions.

Talking to Dawn, Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal defended his decision to stop the operation midway and blamed the media for the chaotic situation faced in the aftermath of the police action on Saturday. He said the operation was going smoothly, but the media's live coverage incited armed people from nearby areas and madressahs to head towards Faizabad and attack police. Since the police was "de-weaponised", they had no option but to retreat, he said.

The minister said that Saturday's incidents proved that what he told the court, i.e. that the protesters were armed and wanted bloodshed, had proven true. He said the protesters used modern tear-gas shells, which were not even available to the country's law enforcement agencies.

However, Mr Iqbal claimed that there were no casualties during the operation, adding that the deaths were reported in incidents that took place after the operation was called off, when the mob started attacking private properties, including the residence of former interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan.

When asked if the army had refused to directly take part in the operation, Mr Iqbal simply said that the army was always used as a last resort. He said the government still had the option of using police and Rangers to improve the situation and disperse protesters.

The minister said they had been successfully engaging the protesters in dialogue over the past two weeks and were close to a resolution, but the administration had to launch the operation on the directives of the high court. He said the court had already declared that the minister had no role and that the administration should implement its orders.

Earlier in the day, the military leadership responded to the federal government's directive seeking deployment of troops to control the situation in Rawalpindi and Islamabad and raised some legal and technical objections, stating that "employment of army implies application of a force which is traditionally not just used for dispersal of crowd/protesters but to quell commotion".

There was no official confirmation from the federal government or the military about the authenticity of the letter, apparently written by the Military Operations Directorate of the General Headquarters (GHQ) and available with most sections of the media. Military sources, however, claimed that the letter was genuine.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373099>

ARMY SECURES SENSITIVE INSTALLATIONS IN CAPITAL

Aamir Yasin | Munawer Azeem

Dawn, November 27, 2017

ISLAMABAD/RAWALPINDI: The army was called in to protect important installations in the capital, as Rangers personnel took up positions around the site of the sit-in on Sunday.

The army was summoned by the interior ministry in response to a request made by the capital administration on Saturday. Officials told Dawn their help was required as most of the local manpower was busy managing the protesters.

The death toll from the previous day's police action rose to seven on Sunday after a 60-year-old protester died at Benazir Bhutto Hospital. Eight injured persons are still hospitalised in Rawalpindi.

The Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah announced plans to observe a countrywide strike on Monday (today) to mourn the deaths of those killed in Saturday's operation at Faizabad, even as protesters continued to clash with law enforcement personnel in various areas.

Religious groups continued to block roads and also delayed railway operations over the weekend, while most motorways and highways were closed as protesters blocked major routes.

Protesters also stormed the residences of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders Bilal Yasin, Manshaullah Butt and Rana Sanaullah.

In Islamabad, protesters attacked a group of policemen early on Sunday morning and set motorbikes and other vehicles on fire in Sector I-8, near Faizabad.

The participants of the sit-in also held funeral prayers for their fellow protesters at the site of the sit-in, vowing to extract justice from the rulers.

Although funeral prayers for those killed in Saturday's action were held in various places, the last rites of one of the victims — who could not be identified — was held at Faizabad, and was attended by Sarwat Qadri of the Sunni Tehreek, Khadim Hussain Rizvi, and other leaders of the parties holding the sit-in.

Qadri demanded that the Supreme Court ascertain who opened fire on “unarmed protesters”, and said that if the rulers did not mend their ways, all Eid Miladun Nabi processions from around the country would converge on Islamabad.

The capital's police also registered three more cases against the leaders and activists of the religious group, but senior officials said there were no plans to take any further action against the protesters yet.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373098>

IHC ENRAGED BY MILITARY ROLE IN AGREEMENT TO END PROTEST
Dawn, November 28th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The government and the military received a thorough dressing-down from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday as Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui questioned how the army could act as a mediator between the government and a group that had committed an act of terrorism.

“You have put a question mark over civilian supremacy. What have you done?” the judge asked Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal during proceedings regarding the sit-in by religious parties that had paralysed the twin cities for two and a half weeks.

In a fiery hearing on Monday, Justice Siddiqui said the deal confirmed widely-held impressions about who was behind the sit-in and ordered the district administration, the Intelligence Bureau and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Barrister Zafarullah Khan to submit separate reports on various aspects of the Khatm-i-Nubuwaat issue that led up to the sit-in, as well as the identities of those backing the protest.

In its written order, the IHC bench also directed the attorney general to help the court determine how the armed forces could act as an arbitrator.

At the outset, when the Islamabad chief commissioner read out the text of the agreement between the government and the protesting Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah, the judge took issue with the military playing the role of mediator.

“Most alarming is that Maj Gen Faiz Hameed put signature as one through whom agreement arrived at. It is also very strange that efforts of Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa have been acknowledged in the following words: ‘This agreement materialised through the special efforts of chief of army staff and his team’,” the judge noted in his order.

“Prima facie, [the] role assumed by the top leadership of army is besides the Constitution and law of land. Armed forces, being part of the executive, cannot travel beyond its mandate bestowed upon it by the organic law of the country i.e. the Constitution.”

“Where is Raddul Fasaad and all those operations against the terrorists?” the bench remarked, adding that a clash between state institutions was harmful to the country.

During the hearing, the bench expressed its displeasure over the army’s alleged role in the settlement made with the protesters, remarking: “Army officers eager to participate in politics should first return their guns to the state, take retirement and then join politics”.

He also observed that it would have been impossible to stage such a sit-in near General Headquarters. Addressing the interior minister, the judge remarked that through this agreement, the federal government had laid bare the army’s role in this sit-in.

The order noted that “most abusive and filthy language was used against honourable judges of the Supreme Court, but the federal government and arbitrator did not bother to persuade the leadership of [Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah] to even tender an apology in this regard.”

During proceedings, the judge asked the minister why a major general was engaged to hold dialogue with those who had violated the law and committed an act of terrorism by blocking public roads.

This gave the impression that the civil administration was not capable of performing its lawful job and the army was the only institution which could handle such matters, he observed, and asked why the military had not been deployed under Article 245 of the Constitution to disperse the mob.

“We requisitioned the army, but they sought clarification on certain points, which have been addressed,” the minister replied, referring to a letter expressing certain apprehensions over the proposed operation against protesters, which was leaked to the media a couple of days ago.

He directed the Islamabad chief commissioner and IB to furnish reports on the failure of the Faizabad clearance operation and the identities of those who provided support, such as lethal weapons, tear gas and gas masks, to the protesters.

Justice Siddiqui raised many eyebrows when he remarked that he could be assassinated, or may end up joining the ranks of the missing persons, but it was his duty to speak the truth. “Everyone should know that there are no followers of Justice Munir in the courts anymore,” he said, referring to the former chief justice who gave legal cover to the dissolution of Pakistan’s first constituent assembly.

During the hearing, he also observed that the government was trying to save Minister of State for Information Technology Anusha Rehman by scapegoating Zahid Hamid. However, the minister insisted that it was not yet clear whether she had any role in the matter.

When the judge asked who had prepared the draft of the election law and the amended declaration, Mr Iqbal said it was a whole committee.

He also took issue with one of the clauses of the agreement between the government and protesters, which stated that the federal and provincial governments would compensate the losses incurred by protesters, asking why the state should do so.

“Had I not ordered the clearing of Faizabad Interchange, who would have been responsible for removing the protesters?” the judge inquired.

In response, Mr Iqbal said that while this was the responsibility of the civil administration, this particular protest was very complicated as it was based on a religious issue. “Had it been a political dispute, the situation would have been entirely different,” he said.

This prompted Justice Siddiqui to observe that the court had already saved the government last year, when the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf announced its intention to lock down the capital.

Addressing Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Sector Commander Arfan Shaheed Ramay, Justice Siddiqui said that the army should have sided with the government at any cost, and asked how they became arbitrators. Inamur Rahim, the counsel for one of the petitioners, also pointed out that Pakistan Army Act (PAA) did not allow militarymen to become arbitrators.

The hearing was adjourned until Nov 30, but the judge gave IB and the district administration until Dec 4 to submit their reports.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373272>

LHC JUDGE LAUDS ARMY’S ROLE AS ‘MEDIATOR’

Dawn, November 29th, 2017

Wajih Ahmad Sheikh

LAHORE: A day after a judge of the Islamabad High Court strongly criticised the army’s role as a ‘mediator’ between the government and the Faizabad sit-in leadership, a Lahore High Court judge on Tuesday highly admired the same role of the military.

Justice Qazi Mohammad Amin Ahmad, while hearing a habeas corpus petition for the recovery of Majlis-i-Wahdatul Muslimeen (MWM) leader Nasir Abbas Sherazi from alleged detention of law enforcement agencies, observed that had the military not ensured an agreement between the government and the protesters there would have been massive killings due to police operation.

Everyone knew that it was the army which saved the country from disaster, Justice Ahmad said. He also lauded the sacrifices being rendered by the army in the war against terrorism.

Justice Ahmad referred to the martyrdom of Major Ishaq in a recent terrorist attack in Dera Ismail Khan and shared with grief that he had many sleepless nights after seeing the picture, widely circulated on social media, of the wife of the young officer sitting beside her husband’s coffin.

During the proceedings regarding the sit-in by religious parties that had paralysed the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad for two-and-a-half weeks, Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui of the IHC had questioned how the army could act as a mediator between the government and a group that had committed an act of terrorism.

Addressing an additional advocate general, Justice Ahmad expressed his disappointment over the derogatory language used by politicians against the judiciary and, without naming any political party, said: “Ask your ministers to start respecting the courts.”

Coming back to the subject matter, the judge regretted that tracing the whereabouts of a missing person had become impossible for the government and its agencies.

Colonel Ahmad of the Military Intelligence told the court that his agency had no information about the missing MWM leader.

Justice Ahmad expressed his dismay over non-appearance of officials of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) despite issuance of summons.

He said the court could only ask Pakistani agencies, and not Indian agencies, about the whereabouts of a missing citizen.

The judge adjourned the hearing to Dec 4, with a directive to the Punjab police and the intelligence agencies to ensure recovery of the MWM leader.

Petitioner Ali Abbas alleged that his brother Sherazi had been abducted by police from Wapda Town at the behest of Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Law Minister Rana Sanaullah.

He said his brother had filed in the high court a petition seeking disqualification of the law minister for uttering ‘derogatory’ remarks regarding a judge who had conducted an inquiry into the 2014 Model Town killings. He claimed that his brother had been kidnapped because he had filed the case against the law minister.

The petitioner requested the judge to order police to produce his detained brother before the court.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373509>

IHC ON MILITARY’S ROLE

Business Recorder, 30 November, 2017

After the controversial agreement arrived at between the government and the Tehreek Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYRA) to bring an end to the sit-in in Islamabad and the rest of the country, Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) summoned Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal to appear within 15 minutes. The quick summons was a portent of things to come. Justice Siddiqui took umbrage at the agreement, particularly the role of the military in acting as a ‘mediator’ to seal the deal.

He was also furious at the minister for ceding civilian supremacy. Both the government and the military were on the receiving end of a thorough dressing down from the bench. Justice Siddiqui’s ire

was directed not only at the terms of the agreement, which had rubbed out the difference between the lawbreakers and law enforcers, he asked how the army could act as a ‘mediator’ between the government and an organisation responsible for terrorist acts. He went on to say that the deal confirmed the widely-held impression of who was behind the sit-in. He then ordered the district administration, the Intelligence Bureau and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Barrister Zafarullah Khan to submit separate reports on the whole episode from beginning to end by November 30 and deferred the hearing to December 4. Justice Siddiqui had also directed the Attorney General to help the court on the issue of how the armed forces could act as an arbitrator in the matter.

He found it most alarming that Major General Faiz Hameed of the ISI had signed the agreement as one through whom the deal was arrived at. He described as very strange the acknowledgment of the special efforts of COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa and his team in brokering the agreement. Justice Siddiqui clearly enunciated this role of the military as contrary to the constitution and law. He ‘advised’ military officers interested in politics to first shed their uniform and only then indulge in politics. He showed his annoyance at the fact that despite highly abusive and filthy language used against the honourable judges of the Supreme Court, no apology had been sought from TLRYA. Having delivered his remarks reflecting outrage and delivering a written order on the lines described above, Justice Siddiqui declared that he may be assassinated or join the ranks of missing persons, but could not shrink from stating the truth. He argued that there were no longer any followers of Justice Munir in today’s courts (a reference to the authorship of the doctrine of necessity in our early history). Justice Siddiqui expressed his astonishment at the clause in the agreement that the federal and Punjab governments would compensate the damage to state and private property inflicted by the TLRYA.

Even for Justice Siddiqui, whose plain speaking in court is by now well established, the outburst was extraordinary. It targeted the government for its incompetence in handling the sit-in but even more the military for its perceived extra-constitutional role in the affair. It should be borne in mind that Justice Siddiqui, soon after the sit-in started, had ordered the Faizabad Interchange cleared of the protestors and on the failure of the government to comply with since it was still bending its back to arrive at a negotiated settlement of the problem through the good offices of religious leaders and scholars, issued contempt notices to the Islamabad administration and police.

The good Justice was dismissive of the authorities’ attempted explanation that the matter was complicated and had religious connotations, always of course a potentially inflammatory factor. While all that Justice Siddiqui declared and wrote then and now is correct according to the letter and spirit of the constitution and law, it was the intemperate manner in which the message was delivered that raised eyebrows. Perhaps this was a reflection of the bench’s frustration at the manner in which the issue had been handled and its eventual outcome. However, this does not justify the rush of blood that seems to have informed Justice Siddiqui’s views and the manner in which they were delivered. While appreciating Justice Siddiqui’s candour and courage, we need to remind ourselves of the need for judges, particularly of the higher judiciary, to examine even the most fraught matters coolly and in a considered manner, no matter how severe the provocation.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/11/30/22-page/685203-news.html>

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION: SENATE BODY PROPOSES DIRECT ACCESS TO
BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS

Business Recorder, 1 December 2017

Nuzhat Nazar

ISLAMABAD: Senate Standing Committee on Defense Production Thursday proposed that the allocation of budget to defense production industries should come directly to Ministry of Defense Production from the Finance Division instead of routing through the Ministry of Defense.

The committee also appreciated the achievements and projects of Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) and recommended that the budget disbursement process to HIT may be made smoother and quicker to achieve more viability and fast pace of work.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Senator Lt-Gen Abdul Qayyum (retd). The committee was given a detailed and comprehensive briefing by Brig Nauman about the ongoing and completed projects by HIT, the budget allocation to HIT, capacity enhancement for commercial inland sales and exports and future vision of the Heavy Industries Taxila.

The chairman committee while terming Al-Khalid Tank the pride of nation praised the proposal of bringing an upgraded and progressive model 'Al-Khalid-2' to compete with developed weaponry. The committee was told that HIT has a capacity to produce 50 tanks per year but they are making 18 tanks on average due to budgetary constraints.

The committee strongly recommended that the allocation of budget to defense production industries should come directly to Ministry of Defense Production from the Finance Division instead of routing through the Ministry of Defense, and bureaucratic delays should be removed. The chairman committee observed that the committee will push for this proposal on its own and HIT also needs to take the matter up regularly.

The committee was told that HIT is not entitled to commercial activities on its own. It can only carry out commercial activities from the surplus capacity after fulfilling all kinds of defense needs of armed forces. Brig Nauman further proposed an amendment in the ordinance for exempting HIT from government audit and PPRA rules and allowing it to take up commercial activities to make the industry financially profitable. The committee agreed to the proposals of HIT and recommended that they can adopt a proposal on the same lines as of Pakistan Ordnance Factories.

The committee lauded the efforts of HIT and observed that defense production establishments in Pakistan have made tremendous contributions not only by equipping the armed forces but also by undertaking commercial sales. "Equipping our armed forces with tanks, and state-of-the-art ammunition not only means colossal savings but also promotes self-reliance," observed Abdul Qayyum.

The committee advised the HIT leadership to do capacity building of their vendors, ensure coordination with defense production institutions and create a reserved pool of skilled work force to meet sporadic demands.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/01/22-page/685422-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 13Th TO NOVEMBER 19Th 2017

INDIA IS PLAYING WITH FIRE, SAYS GEN HAYAT

Baqir Sajjad Syed

Dawn, November 15, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The country's top military official on Tuesday said Pakistan could augment its nuclear capabilities to keep deterrence intact in view of threats to the region's strategic stability from India's hostile posture.

"Pakistan's credible minimum deterrence will remain dynamic to match the current level of overall strategic threat. Pakistan will do all it can to maintain strategic balance," Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gen Zubair Hayat said while speaking at a seminar on "Regional Dynamics and Strategic Concerns in South Asia" organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI).

Gen Hayat's speech in which he touched upon the nature and extent of threat from India could be best described as a reiteration of policy position. However, his statement assumed special significance in view of growing tensions with India.

"India is playing with fire," Gen Hayat asserted.

Importantly, Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa, while speaking to troops at Mangla corps on Tuesday, also talked about "perpetual conventional threat".

Strategic stability, he said, was being threatened by Indian Cold Start and Pro-Active Doctrines, development of anti-ballistic missile systems, and nuclearisation of Indian Ocean. West's discriminatory nuclear politics, he underscored, was also undermining strategic stability.

Speaking about India's sponsorship of terrorist activities in Pakistan, Gen Hayat said it was "wishful thinking" on part of Indians to "find space for application of force in the realm of sub-conventional war". He warned that Indian actions could trigger a "larger conflict".

Nukes are often cited as deterrent to all-out war and the Pakistani military calls its arsenal as weapons of peace. But it is feared that India's hostile actions could push the region towards a nuclear standoff.

Gen Hayat was re-emphasising those dangers. India, he pointed out, was sponsoring Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, Baloch insurgents and sub-nationalists and other terrorist outfits for subversive activities in Pakistan. Special cells had also been set up in Indian intelligence agency RAW for Balochistan and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with huge financial allocations, he said, adding that All India Radio and Indian websites had launched services in local language to target people living in Balochistan.

Gen Hayat also outlined the reasons for extremism and terrorism in South Asia, saying those were because of the unresolved Kashmir issue and conflict in Afghanistan. "Road to peace on South Asia goes through Kashmir. There is no bypass," the general said, while underscoring the need for resolving the longstanding dispute for sustainable peace in the region.

Speaking at the seminar, Senate Defence Committee chairman Mushahid Hussain said India had failed in its design to isolate Pakistan. “Pakistan is now the hub of new wave of regionalism of which CPEC is the centerpiece,” he said.

IPRI president Amb Abdul Basit said Pakistan understood the importance of good relations with all its neighbours for realising its economic potential and succeeding in its development agenda. “We are trying our best to help achieve reconciliation in Afghanistan, and are also open to a sustained and meaningful dialogue with India with a view of resolving all the bilateral issues, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370595>

READY TO RESPOND TO THREATS ON EASTERN BORDER: COAS

The Express Tribune, 18 November 2017

Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa has said that Pakistan Army is always ready to respond to any threats across the country’s eastern border with India, including the Line of Control (LoC).

“There cannot be any let up for our preparedness for response against perpetual threat on our eastern border including LoC and Line of Actual Contact (LAC),” the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) quoted the army as saying in a statement on Friday.

The COAS made these remarks on his visit to Headquarters Rawalpindi Corps, where he was given a comprehensive briefing on the prevalent situation along the LoC and operational preparedness of the formations.

The statement came in the wake of increasing ceasefire violations from the Indian side.

Indian occupation forces violated the ceasefire in Chirikot and Nezapir sectors earlier in the day, martyring two civilians, and injuring five others, including two women.

In this year alone, over 1,300 ceasefire violations have taken place along the LoC and the Working Boundary, according to a Pakistan Foreign Office tally. This has led to at least 52 civilians being killed and over 170 others injured.

Last week, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi had approved funds to develop community protection bunkers for the safety of civilian population along the LoC.

The Director General (SA & SAARC) Dr Mohammad Faisal summoned the Indian deputy high commissioner JP Singh and condemned the unprovoked ceasefire violations.

“The deliberate targeting of civilians is indeed deplorable and contrary to human dignity and international human rights and humanitarian laws,” the Foreign Office said in a statement. “The ceasefire violations by India are a threat to regional peace and security and may lead to a strategic miscalculation.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1561214/1-always-ready-respond-threats-loc-eastern-border-coas/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 6 Th TO NOVEMBER 12 Th 2017

KP POLICE OFFER ARMY TO WITHDRAW MOST TROOPS FROM MALAKAND

Dawn, November 8th, 2017

PESHAWAR: Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Salahuddin Khan Mehsud has said the police department has offered the Pakistan Army to withdraw around two-thirds of its troops from Malakand division in the wake of the expansion of the force's role in the previously troubled region.

"The police department can confidently meet security responsibilities in Malakand division in case of the army's withdrawal (from the division), he told Dawn.

Mr Mehsud said the police were in a position to maintain law and order in urban centres of the province as the Pakistan Army's troops would remain on guard in peripheries.

"We are gradually expanding our role," he said.

The police chief said if told, his force would confidently go into Fata as it was already working very closely with the Pakistan Army in KP.

He said the process to set up public safety bodies in the province under the KP Police Act, 2017, was in its final stages and that those bodies would become functional soon.

Mr Mehsud said the rules for the Provincial Public Safety and Police Complaints Commission and regional police complaint authorities to set up under the act had been forwarded to the Peshawar High Court for approval.

He said the police department would begin a campaign to create public awareness of those safety bodies, especially their role to keep watch on the police, after their formation.

"I will personally go to the people to let them know about the safety nets they [people] have against the police's excesses," he said, adding that the people needed to be taught about that.

The police chief said the new legislation had provided multiple bodies, which had powers to take action on the people's complaints, while an inquiry under those bodies would be considered to be under the service rules.

He said after the establishment of public safety bodies, the police would not be able to hide their mistakes as those independent bodies had been tasked with supervising their activities.

"Once this system starts working, the number of complaints against the police will drop significantly," he said.

Mr Mehsud said the police had also set up an internal accountability branch, which had so far punished 7,811 cops.

"A total of 987 police officials, including 13 officers, have been given the major punishment of discharge from service," he said, adding that the police have also established a human rights vigilance cell headed by an additional inspector general level officer to monitor violation of human rights.

The police official denied that most of his force's officials sacked on people's complaints got their jobs back within months, insisting that all such officials were reinstated by the service tribunal.

He also said there were instances of the police department even approaching the apex court against the service tribunal's decision.

Mr Mehsud also said the officials from junior ranks to DSP's mostly dealt with the people and therefore, more junior officials were punished compared to senior ranks.

"The higher number of complaints against junior officials is proportional to their higher numbers vis-à-vis officers," he said.

About the complaints of the police's highhandedness during search and strike operations, Mr Mehsud said such operations were meant to deny bases to terrorists and therefore, they could not afford laxity in that respect.

"It is very difficult to balance public inconvenience and security measures against terrorism," he said.

The police chief also rejected the impression that conviction in terrorism and other cases was very low, claiming the rate of conviction has instead gone up.

He said the police had arrested more than 1,200 terrorists and militants, while around 90 percent of them were still behind bars.

Mr Mehsud said historically, the conviction rate in cases of terrorism had gone up to 50 percent in KP as suggested by independent reports.

He said the police department was conducting workshops to improve investigations by its personnel, while a media campaign would be launched to increase the people's awareness on the matters related to the police, especially on the registration of FIR.

The police chief also opposed the amendments to the KP Police Act saying such a move would do more harm than good.

He said the police were returning to their traditional role of 'watch and ward' while paying due attention to counterterrorism.

"We also want the people feel normal," he said.

Mr Mehsud said there was no bases of Daesh terrorist group in KP and Fata and that the police had the capability to fight any terrorist network wanting to enter the province.

He said lawlessness in the neighbourhood definitely had its impact on KP and therefore, his department was alert to it and made plans accordingly.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369117>

RANGERS' COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES DRAW PAC IRE
The Express Tribune, 9 November, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Wednesday took an exception to Pakistan Rangers' decades-old practice of 'illegally' collecting contributions from its employees by applying 'coercive' means and undertaking commercial activities without having any legal mandate.

The committee grilled the Pakistan Rangers Sindh officers "for indulging into practices that are deemed illegal".

PAC Chairman Syed Khursheed Shah also snubbed Colonel Sohail for his 'rude' behaviour in the committee for which the colonel had to tender an apology.

The PAC directed Interior Secretary Arshad Mirza to submit details on the contributions mechanism adopted by Sindh Rangers and commercial activities that it was undertaking without having a mandate.

The director general (federal audit) informed the PAC that the Rangers were collecting contributions from its low-ranked employees for welfare purposes without any legal mandate. During FY2015-16 alone, the Rangers had collected Rs146 million from the employees, he informed the committee.

The audit objection showed that the Rangers were taking Rs454 per month from a maid, Rs465 from sepoy and lance naik-level officials and Rs569 from other non-commissioned officers. The brief did not provide details of the contributions made by officers holding ranks of captain, major and colonel.

"Low-ranked officials are being coerced into making those contributions," said Dr Azra Fazal of the PPP, adding, "When asked by a senior, no employee would deny making a contribution just to avoid any untoward situation."

Colonel Sohail angrily rejected Dr Azra's remarks, inviting the wrath of the PAC chairman who asked him to behave and not to show anger. He said that high-rank officers were also making contributions, but he did not disclose their contributions.

The PAC asked him to find a way to finance the welfare schemes to avoid putting burden on the low-ranked low-paid employees.

The Rangers were also indulged in nine types of commercial activities like running shooting clubs, petrol filling stations, printing press, canteens and public model schools, according to the director general.

He said the issue had also been discussed by the PAC in 2002 but no improvement was made despite a lapse of more than 15 years.

PAC member Ashiq Gopang questioned how the Rangers could indulge in commercial activities without having any legal mandate to which the Rangers officer had no answer. The audit was seeking details of the revenues generated by undertaking such activities.

The PAC members observed that Pakistan Rangers were running commercial projects in almost every district of Sindh, which was beyond their mandate.

The PAC regularised Rs695.6 million expenditures incurred on the provision of food and other facilities to about 2,200 police personnel that had been engaged during the 2014 sit-in staged by the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf.

The finance ministry had paid the amount in cash to Islamabad Police. The police administration also procured food without calling tenders to get better price, which was also in violation of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority's rules of 2004.

The Inspector General of Islamabad Police said that the food had been procured in an emergent situation and there was no sufficient time to meet the procedural requirements

Out of Rs695.5 million, the expenses on food amounted to Rs326.8 million. The procurements were also made from relatively expensive restaurants. But the food was not supplied to the police force that had been deployed to ensure protection of vital installations.

The PAC set aside all the audit objections and regularised the Rs695.5 million expenditures.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1553594/1-rangers-commercial-activities-draw-pac-ire/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 30TH TO NOVEMBER 5 Th 2017

COAS CONCERNED AS CASES DRY UP AT MILITARY COURTS
The Express Tribune, November 3, 2017

Sohail Chaudhry

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa has drawn the attention of Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to the lack of terrorism-related cases being transferred to military courts.

He has informed the PM that the government has not forwarded any cases to military courts since January this year.

A source privy to the development told Express News that Gen Qamar has written a demi-official (DO) letter to explain the issue prior to it being referred officially.

"I have no doubt that the government is serious about implementing the National Action Plan. However, no case has been forwarded to military courts for last many months," the COAS wrote in the letter.

The source said that after receiving the Army chief's letter, PM Abbasi requested that the interior ministry brief him on the status of the cases.

He said Abbasi has also directed the ministry to expedite the process of transferring cases.

In response to the PM's notice, the interior ministry informed the PM office that it has prepared recommendations for more than 90 cases to be transferred to military courts, the source said.

He said the ministry has also informed the PM office that it will request formal approval to transfer the cases during the next meeting of the federal cabinet.

He said the ministry was bound to submit the cases to the federal cabinet as the Supreme Court has defined the federal cabinet as the federal government for the purpose of case referrals.

He said that before January this year, the prime minister, on behalf of the federal government, could unilaterally approval such transfers.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1548394/1-coas-concerned-cases-dry-military-courts/>

December 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 25th TO DECEMBER 31st 2017

ARMY WARNS US AGAINST 'UNILATERAL ACTION' IN PAKISTAN

Dawn, December 29, 2017

Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: The military on Thursday warned the US against 'unilateral action', saying that despite its desire for cooperation on Afghanistan, there could be no compromise on national respect and sovereignty.

"The armed forces are working with friends and want to continue doing so, but there can be no compromise on our national honour. We do not want a conflict with our friends, but will ensure the security of Pakistan," Military spokesperson Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor told a media briefing, recalling that the country was being threatened with "unilateral action" by the US.

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) chief spoke in both English and Urdu, in what appeared to be an effort to convey the institutional sentiment to an international audience.

This is perhaps the strongest-ever reaction from Islamabad since US functionaries and statements recently began alluding to the possibility of unilateral action, amidst an ongoing row over alleged terrorist sanctuaries.

Earlier this month, CIA Director Mike Pompeo warned the US would do everything it could to ensure the elimination of "terrorist safe havens" in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, a Pentagon report on Afghanistan, released alongside Mr Pompeo's statement, said the US could take "unilateral steps in areas of divergence". The warnings were accentuated further when, during his trip to Afghanistan last week, Vice President Mike Pence said President Trump had put Pakistan on notice.

The military spokesman maintained that the nation would have to stand united in the face of possible unilateral action, saying such challenges could only be tackled through unity.

"Let it be known to all misadventure seekers and probably naïve thinkers that notwithstanding any temporary domestic differences, when it comes to security of our beloved Pakistan, we are all one," he maintained. But he would not say how serious the threat was, even when asked directly.

Maj Gen Ghafoor said the “unfounded” US and Afghan narrative had lately acquired a “threatening” tone.

The spokesperson said the US claims were no longer valid after operations Zarb-i-Azb and Raddul Fasaad indiscriminately targeted terrorist of all shades. “We are confident that no terrorist organisation has an organized sanctuary in Pakistan”.

Rejecting the ‘do-more’ mantra, he said that after having fought “imposed and imported war(s) inside Pakistan” and having paid the price, there was a conviction that “we have done enough and we can’t do it any more for anyone”.

Nevertheless, he emphasised, Islamabad remained committed to assisting efforts for peace in Afghanistan due to its interest in seeing stability return to its war-ravaged neighbour.

He went on to list Pakistan’s expectations from the US: ending coercion, engagement based on trust and cooperation, repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, checking the Indian role in Afghanistan, and getting New Delhi to stop ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC).

This year alone, India has committed 1,813 ceasefire violations, the most since the 2003 truce. These resulted in 52 civilian casualties, as per the statistics shared at the briefing.

Referring to recent Indian claims of cross-LoC actions, which have already been denied by ISPR, he said Pakistan is a “responsible state” with a “professional army” and would not be led into an escalation trap.

“You cannot lure us into unprofessional undertakings to reinforce your beaten narrative of our physical interference in [India-held] Kashmir. Brave young Kashmiris are good enough for you,” he underscored.

Saying that threats had not yet subsided, Maj Gen Ghafoor noted that the current situation was the “new normal” as far as peace and security in the country was concerned.

Responding to a query about former army chief and president retired Gen Pervez Musharraf’s claim that “rogue elements within the establishment” could be involved in Benazir Bhutto’s murder, the spokesperson said there was no rogue element in the Pakistan Army.

“Journalists should ask Gen Musharraf to clarify his comments,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1379499>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 18th TO DECEMBER 24th 2017
ARMY CHIEF TO BRIEF SENATORS ON ‘NATIONAL SECURITY’ TOMORROW
Dawn, December 18th, 2017

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO), Maj Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, will brief the Senate Committee of

the Whole House on the national security situation in the country during an in-camera session on Tuesday (tomorrow).

Through a notice, the Senate Secretariat on Sunday informed all the senators about the extraordinary meeting, to be presided over by Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani.

It will be after six years that the military leadership will be coming to the Parliament House for a presentation to the elected representatives on the security situation.

Last time it was in May 2011 when then army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) director general Lt Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha had briefed a joint session of parliament about the Abbottabad operation in which Al Qaeda head Osama bin Laden had been killed by the US forces.

In May 2009, then DGMO Maj Gen Javed Iqbal had briefed a joint sitting of parliament about the security situation and the military operations against terrorists in Mingora and Swat.

According to the one-point agenda issued for Tuesday's meeting of the Committee of the Whole House formed by the chairman "to prepare policy guidelines in the light of the emerging regional realities and the role of the United States", the army chief and the DGMO will give a "briefing on the emerging national security paradigm for Pakistan with respect to recent visits / developments".

Sources told Dawn that the decision to give the briefing to the senators had been taken voluntarily by the military leadership after seeing media reports about criticism in the Senate on the federal government and the military leadership for not taking the parliament into confidence over the recent developments, including the change in Washington's policy towards Islamabad following the controversial remarks of US President Donald Trump about the role of Pakistan in the war on terror, border clashes with Afghan forces and Pakistan's decision to become a part of a military alliance under Saudi Arabia.

During a visit of the members of the defence committee of the Senate and the National Assembly to the army's General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi in September, Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa had said that he wanted "enhanced interaction" with the parliament.

Gen Bajwa had reportedly told the parliamentarians that he was an ardent supporter of democracy and believed in the supremacy of parliament. The army chief said he was ready to appear before the defence committee or any 'committee of the whole house' and answer any queries that the parliamentarians might have.

The parliamentarians had raised many of the oft-discussed issues, including security operations, military courts, defence budget, engagement with the US, tensions with India, problems in relations with Afghanistan, and civil-military relations. The interactive session, which was originally planned for 30 minutes, had gone on for nearly three hours.

Last week, during a discussion on an adjournment motion about the "key commitments made by the federal government to the Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition without taking the parliament into confidence" in the Senate, the senators had expressed concerns over the government's decision to

become part of the Saudi-led military coalition and asked it to disclose the terms of reference of the force and warned against entering into any proxy war.

They had urged the government to explain the military component of the arrangement, particularly the position to be taken by Pakistan in case the force was sent to a Muslim country. Some of them had expressed fears that the alliance had in fact been put together to act against Iran.

They had cited the parliamentary decision given in the form of a resolution at the beginning of the ongoing crisis in Yemen, which held that Pakistan should not join any military alliance, and said the government should have consulted parliament in the same manner in this case as well.

Farhatullah Babar of the Pakistan Peoples Party had stated that it was frightening that both the Foreign Office and parliament were in the dark about the terms of reference of the alliance even after its formal launch in Riyadh.

Mr Babar had mentioned in his speech that the army chief had undertaken a visit to Iran, but parliament was still unaware as to what transpired during that trip. He had asked the chair to give a ruling on the matter.

Chairman Raza Rabbani remarked in a lighter vein that he too would become a “victim of enforced disappearances” if he did so.

Nasreen Jalil of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, without naming former army chief Gen Raheel Sharif, had regretted that a “great soldier of Pakistan” had been sent to lead the coalition “without knowing its aims and objectives”.

Senators from other parties had also criticised the government for concealing important information from parliament.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377311>

YOU MAKE POLICY, WE FOLLOW IT, GEN QAMAR TELLS PARLIAMENT

The Express Tribune, 20 Decmeber, 2017

In his first appearance before a parliamentary forum, Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday urged parliament to take lead role in policy making and not leave a vacuum.

On invitation of the Senate chairman, Gen Bajwa came to the ‘committee of the whole house’ for an in-camera briefing along with the director general of Military Operations (DGMO), the Inter-Services Intelligence chief, and the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) DG. The briefing was followed by a question-and-answer session.

“You are the policymakers. You should come up with policy guidelines. We will follow you,” Gen Bajwa was quoted as telling the senators.

Sources privy to the marathon huddle told The Express Tribune that army chief was of the view that the country suffered on the foreign policy front when it did not have a full-time foreign minister for more than four years under the incumbent government.

When he was asked about Pakistan joining a Saudi-led military alliance of Muslim countries and his predecessor's role in it, he said former army chief Gen (retd) Raheel Sharif was leading the coalition in his personal capacity. "Our policy is what has been delineated in the April 10, 2015 resolution of parliament," he said. The resolution was passed by joint session of parliament a few months after Saudi Arabia announced the formation of the military coalition.

Through it, parliament had warned the government to act with caution while joining the alliance, taking into consideration delicacies of the relations with Iran.

Gen Bajwa strongly denied any role of the army in recent issues that fomented political turmoil, including the Faizabad sit-in. "We had no role in the sit-in, Panama leaks, or Dawn leaks. We did not cause any of these issues," a lawmaker quoted him as saying in reply to a question. The blockade of the crucial intersection of the twin cities by a religious group paralysed traffic for three weeks before the government signed a deal with the protesters.

Most senators hailed the army chief's appearance and said it had cleared many of the misunderstandings and debunked conspiracy theories that were making rounds. They also appreciated his candidness in responding to their critical questions.

The briefing came days after the National Assembly speaker expressed apprehensions that the assemblies might not complete their five-year term.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, who heads the Senate defence committee, said he found the army chief "a straightforward person who played with a straight bat".

When a senator asked the COAS about recent newspaper articles by some retired military officers suggesting a presidential form of government, he clarified that the army was bound to follow the Constitution and there was no room for a presidential system in it. He said it could be the individual point of view of any person, but the military had nothing to do with it.

DG ISPR Maj Gen Asif Ghafoor later told a private TV channel that there was no threat to the democratic system from the armed forces. The armed forces, as an institution of the state, would continue to work for the country's security, he added.

He said former military officers who appeared on TV channels as defence analysts expressed their personal points of view when they commented on any political issues. "They are allowed to express their views two years after retirement. When they speak on political issues, it is their personal point of view. It should never be taken as the armed forces' opinion. However, when they speak on some defence issue, they speak on the basis of their experience," he remarked.

The military's senior-most spokesman also praised the house, saying lawmakers should be well aware of the security challenges faced by the country.

On a recent statement from US President Donald Trump that the US had been giving billions of dollars to Pakistan and it should take decisive action against terrorists, Gen Ghafoor said Pakistan had been doing what was in its best interest. The US has been giving reimbursements for Pakistan's own

spending. “The army chief has told them that we need nothing from the US. We want them to acknowledge our sacrifices.”

“We want good relations with our neighbours. We want them to add to our security, nobody should be using their territory against us,” Gen Bajwa was quoted as telling lawmakers with reference to Pakistan’s relations with Afghanistan and Iran. He briefed the senators on his recent visits to Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and different aspects of military diplomacy at a time when the region was going through important geostrategic changes.

According to a lawmaker, when some senators raised the issue of bad foreign policy pursuits from earlier years and the armed forces’ role in them, the army chief said, “We all made mistakes in the past. Let’s move on now.”

The DGMO gave the senators a detailed briefing on the security challenges.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1587001/1-army-chief-arrives-parliament-brief-lawmakers-security-situation/>

ARMY SUBSERVIENT TO CIVILIAN AUTHORITY: BAJWA
Business Recorder, December, 20th, 2017

Ali Hussain & Nuzhat Nazar

Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Tuesday categorically denied military’s role behind last month’s Faizabad sit-in protest by a religious group and offered to step down if the role of the institution is proved. In the first-ever briefing to the Senate in parliamentary history, the Army Chief along with Director General Military Operations (DGMO) Major General Sair Shamshad Mirza gave an in-camera briefing to Senate Committee of the Whole House on the national security paradigm.

The meeting chaired by Chairman Senate Raza Rabbani was also attended by DG ISI Lieutenant General Naveed Mukhtar and DG ISPR Major General Asif Ghafoor. Briefing reporters after the meeting, the DG ISPR said that DGMO’s briefing to Committee of the Whole focused on full-spectrum issues, which lasted for an hour after which there was a question-answer session for around three hours in which the Army Chief responded to the queries asked by senators.

“It was a wonderful session and the DGMO briefed the senators on the geo-strategic environment from security lens and informed them about the threats to the national security,” he said. He said that the DGMO also updated the lawmakers on the war on terror and the future course of action.

“The session [question-answer] was very candid, very free, very frank, [and] very objective...The senators were pleased that the Army Chief and his team visited Senate and briefed them on all issues,” he said, adding that it was a good beginning. “There was a feeling that the senators were more aware of the security situation and they also recognized and appreciated the role of Pakistan Army...there was a consensus that Pakistan is a strong country and we will have to move forward together and deal with the challenges together,” he said.

He said the proposal for such an interaction was given by members of the Standing Committee on Defense of the two houses during their visit to GHQ in September last. Chairman Senate Raza Rabbani had also extended an invitation to the Army Chief to brief the House, he added.

Talking to a group of reporters after the meeting, Senator Nehal Hashmi of ruling PML-N said that the Army Chief categorically denied any role of the military behind the Faizabad sit-in staged last month by Tehreek-e-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYRA).

Hashmi said that the Army Chief was responding to a question by PML-N Senator Mushahidullah Khan who asked to know about 'the elements' behind the sit-in protest. "The Army Chief even offered that he would resign if any role of the security establishment in the sit-in is proved," he added.

Hashmi further said that the Army Chief also ruled out possibility of a presidential system in the country, adding that General Bajwa was of the opinion that presidential system not only weakens a country but also gives way to dangerous polarization.

He said that the Army Chief also stated that the army is 'subservient' and 'answerable to the public', and the institution has to act according to the law. He said that the Army Chief also stated that it is the job of the lawmakers to frame defense and foreign policies, adding that the army would only implement the policies.

On Faizabad sit-in issue, another senator who requested not to be named said that the Army Chief told the senators that he suggested that "the sit-in protest should end peacefully and a Lal Masjid operation like situation should not be repeated."

He said that the Army Chief stated that the situation went from bad to worse due to failed police operation against the protesters as countrywide protests erupted following the action and a crackdown by the army could have further worsened the situation. However, the Army Chief admitted that "the army official should not have signed the agreement" which was agreed between the government and Allama Khadim Hussain Rizvi of the TLJR.

About distribution of Rs 1,000 per participant among the sit-in protesters after their release from police stations by DG Rangers Punjab, the sources said that the CoAS stated that the military had nothing to do with it as it was distributed on the orders of the Prime Minister. He also said when the protesters started their march from Lahore, the government was conveyed that they would create problem but no attention was paid to it.

In an obvious reference to the already dominant role of the powerful military in matters of the country, PPP's Farooq H Naek asked, "What more roles the military wants." The CoAS plainly stated: "Our [military] role is well defined in the Constitution, which is defending the country's frontiers. We don't need any other role." MQM's Senator Colonel Tahir Hussain Mashhadi (ret'd) while talking to Business Recorder said that the Army Chief and the DGMO gave a detailed briefing and satisfactory answers to the senators' questions.

Mashhadi maintained that the Army Chief, to his question about the Saudi-led 41-member military coalition of the Islamic countries, stated that the coalition would not be allowed to turn into a "sectarian forum." "The coalition would neither go for a war against Iran nor would it be allowed to be a sectarian forum," the Army Chief was quoted as having said. He said that the Army Chief also

stated that the terms of reference (ToRs) of the coalition are yet to be framed and when concluded, these would be presented before the Parliament.

Another senator who wished not to be named said that General Bajwa also talked about relations with the neighbours including India, saying that the military is ready to support improving relations with all the neighbours including India. PML-N Senator Pervez Rashid, while talking to reporters, said that the two sides openly discussed all the issues. "The senators posed questions quite openly which were responded candidly...the positive thing of the today's briefing was that a state institution considers itself accountable before the elected representatives of the people," he said, adding that it would send a positive message to the world.

Senator Mir Hasil Khan Bizenjo said that the Army Chief categorically stated that the military has only one role to defend the country's frontiers and not to indulge in the politics. He further said that the Army Chief also stated that it is the job of the civilian government to frame the policies and the army would implement them.

He said that open discussions were held on Balochistan's situation, the threat of Daesh and the militants as well as other challenges being faced by the country. PPP's Senator Rehman Malik said that Pakistan has given message to its enemies that the politicians and the military are on the same page on the issue of national security and together they would defeat the nefarious designs of the enemies.

Sources said that some senators raised the role of military dictators such as Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf in radicalizing the society. However, the Army Chief declined to comment and stated that "I would only respond to the queries about my own term." To a question posed by Senator Pervez Rashid about the military's alleged support to political wing of Hafiz Saeed's Jamaat-ud-Dawa – Milli Muslim League (MML) – the sources said that the Army Chief denied any support to the MML, saying that the politicians should deny giving any space to such elements.

They said that the Army Chief also updated the senators about his visits to countries such as Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran, which he described as positive. The DGMO, according to the sources, briefed the senators about the action taken by security forces under Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad. Since the launch of the operation, the DGMO stated that 1,249 combat and intelligence-based operations have been conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA that also included 31 major operations.

While 13,011 operations were conducted in Punjab including seven major operations, he said, adding along with 29 major operations a total of 1,410 operations were conducted in Balochistan. While 2,015 operations were conducted in Sindh, including seven major operations, the DG MO further told the House.

The DGMO said that 18,001 operations were conducted on the basis of intelligence information while 4,983 search-based operations were also conducted in which 19,993 weapons were recovered.

In Karachi, the DGMO said that since the launch of the Rangers operation in Karachi in 2013, around 8,780 suspects have been handed over to police, 12,105 weapons have been seized and 1,948 terrorists have been apprehended. The DGMO further said that 154 abductees have been freed from captivity and 154 kidnappers have been apprehended during the period.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2017/12/20171220328612/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 11th TO DECEMBER 17th 2017

ARMY BACKS REFORMS IN FATA, SAYS COAS

Dawn, December 14th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Army has again publicly voiced its support for reforms in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata).

Addressing a delegation of elders and youth from Fata on Wednesday, Chief of the Army Staff Gen Qamar Bajwa said: “Pakistan Army fully supports the mainstreaming of Fata and shall pursue it in line with aspirations of our tribal brothers.”

This is not the first time the army chief has expressed support for the wide-ranging Fata Reforms Package that was approved by the federal cabinet on March 2.

The package envisages both legal and administrative measures. However, the timing of the army chief’s statement is important as it comes at a time when the government is looking to dither on its pledge to introduce a legislative bill in the National Assembly to extend the writ of the Peshawar High Court and the Supreme Court to the tribal regions, in what could have been the first major concrete step towards implementation of the reforms.

The legislative bill, which was supposed to be introduced on Monday, was held back for unexplained reasons leading to vociferous protest by opposition parties that have been pressing the government to move ahead with the reforms. The government’s reluctance is believed to be linked to the opposition to the reforms expressed by two of its key allies — the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl and the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party.

Further progress on the matter is expected on Friday when Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who is currently in Istanbul for the extraordinary OIC summit called in the wake of US President Donald Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, would brief the parliamentary leaders on the issue.

The military is a proponent of Fata reforms and has been pushing for their implementation. The institutional view has been that the Fata reforms are imperative for the development of tribal areas and sustaining the achievements of security forces.

Gen Bajwa told the tribal delegations that the achievements in the fight against terrorism were being “consolidated” as the region moved “from relative stability to enduring peace”. He advised the youth to continue playing a positive role towards peace and progress of Fata. According to the ISPR, the visiting tribal delegations had shared their views regarding mainstreaming of Fata and the possible ways forward.

Gen Bajwa also shared his engagement with Afghan leadership for enhanced cooperation and security measures along the Pak-Afghan border.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376521>

RANGERS CHIEF SEES STREET CRIMES AS BIG CHALLENGE FOR LAW ENFORCERS

Dawn, December 14, 2017

Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: The director general of Pakistan Rangers, Sindh, on Wednesday agreed that the menace of street crimes was still a major challenge for his force and law enforcement agencies in the city, where a targeted operation has been under way for the past four years.

However, Maj Gen Mohammad Saeed claimed that the number of incidents of heinous crimes such as targeted killings, extortion, kidnapping for ransom etc registered a significant decline in the metropolis because of the Rangers-led targeted operation.

He said this while talking to a group of media persons at his office, according to a Rangers spokesperson.

During the interaction in which he defended the performance of his organisation by presenting comparative data that suggests a significant drop in almost every crime, the Rangers chief made it clear that the paramilitary force would not allow any political party to resort to violence, take up arms or work against the integrity and solidarity of the country.

He said prior to the targeted operation, launched in Sept 2013, around Rs80 million to Rs100m extortion was collected from citizens, but in 2017 extortion cases had come down considerably.

He claimed that “no incident of terrorism” — bomb explosions or suicide bombings — occurred in the city during 2017.

He said that 45 people, including many policemen, fell prey to targeted killings in the current year.

He said the Ansarul Sharia Pakistan outfit was involved in 15 incidents of targeted killings.

The Sindh Rangers chief said Karachi was at number six in the world crime index in 2013 and now its ranking had been improved as the city stood at 52.

He said over 1,400 criminals allegedly involved in street crimes were arrested and handed over to police for further legal action in 2017.

He proposed that cases against street criminals and robbers should be registered under the Anti-Terrorism Act to curb this menace.

He hinted that the Sindh home department was working on such a proposal.

The Rangers DG said that the solution to elimination of street crimes lay in the use of modern technology.

Data provided by the Rangers revealed that incidents of snatching/theft of two-wheelers registered an increase in 2017 compared to 2016.

A total of 24,848 motorbikes were either snatched or stolen during 2016 compared to 25,038 two-wheelers snatched/stolen so far in 2017 in the provincial capital.

As many as 1,781 four-wheelers were snatched/stolen in 2016 and a total of 1,377 cars were snatched or stolen this year so far.

The number of incidents in which people lost their mobile phones stood at 35,410 in 2016 compared to snatching/theft of 28,164 mobile phones so far in the outgoing year.

According to the Rangers' data, a total of 89 targeted killings took place in 2016 and the number was reduced to 45 in 2017.

As many as 101 cases of extortion were reported in 2016 compared to 52 such cases this year.

A total of 26 kidnapping for ransom cases took place in 2016 compared to 13 in 2017.

The data also showed that a total of 16 cases of terrorism took place in 2016 but no such incident occurred during the current year.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376452>

TRUMP SIGNS BILL THAT INCLUDES \$700 M REIMBURSEMENT FOR PAKISTAN Dawn, December 14th, 2017

WASHINGTON: 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 on Tuesday, which also authorises additional spending on missile defence programmes to counter North Korea's growing nuclear weapons threat.

The US Congress passed the National Defence Authorisation Act 2018 early last month, allowing up to \$700m in Coalition Support Fund (CSF) for Pakistan as well. 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.

Two successive US defence secretaries — Ashton Carter and James Mattis — refused to give such a certification, preventing the administration to release the funds set aside for Pakistan in the two previous budgets.

The bill, signed into law on Tuesday, includes the restriction attached by Congress and so far there's no indication that Secretary Mattis will issue the required certification for Pakistan.

The law also requires the Pentagon to monitor Washington's security assistance to Pakistan and ensure that the country does not use it to support militant groups.

An earlier version of the bill asked the defence secretary to certify that Pakistan had taken steps to demonstrate its commitment to prevent the Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba from using Pakistani territory as a safe haven and for fundraising or recruiting efforts.

But when the US House of Representatives and the Senate released their joint version of the 2018 National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA), they deleted Lashkar-e-Taiba from the list and focused only on 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.

The law in its present form also seeks a declaration from the US defence secretary that Pakistan is working with Afghanistan to restrict the movement of militants along the Afghan border, and has shown progress in arresting and prosecuting senior leaders and mid-level operatives of the Haqqani network.

The previous version also sought a similar declaration for Lashkar-e-Taiba, but is not there in the present law.

The NDAA 2018 also expresses concern about the alleged persecution of various political or religious groups in Pakistan, including Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, Sindhis, Hazaras and the Baloch.

It urges the secretary of defence to ensure that Pakistan will not use any assistance provided by the United States to persecute minority groups.

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

RANGERS CHIEF SEES STREET CRIMES AS BIG CHALLENGE FOR LAW ENFORCERS
Dawn, December 14, 2017

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376452/rangers-chief-sees-street-crimes-as-big-challenge-for-law-enforcers>

ARMY THROWS WEIGHT BEHIND FATA REFORMS

The Express Tribune, December 13, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The army threw its weight behind the demands of merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) with the rest of the country in a statement issued on Wednesday at a time when the government is under pressure to table the Fata reforms bill in parliament.

The statement came from Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa during his interaction with Fata delegations of tribal elders and youth jirga held at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The ISPR said the Army Chief assured both the delegations that Pakistan Army fully supports mainstreaming of Fata and shall pursue it in line with the aspirations of “our tribal brothers”.

The army chief’s support for Fata reforms came just three days after the government relented on its promise to table the much-awaited Fata reforms bill in the National Assembly.

The government’s last minute change of decision drew strong reaction from opposition parties, forcing them to boycott the National Assembly session until the government presents the bill in the lower house of Parliament.

The government reportedly delayed the presentation of the bill after reservations by its allies — including JUI-F’s Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai.

Also, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi convened a meeting of parliamentary leaders of all political parties on Friday to discuss the controversy. Tribal elders and opposition parties have been demanding merger of FATA with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and doing away with the colonial era laws that govern the region.

Meanwhile, according to the military’s media wing, the army chief separately held detailed discussion with both the delegations.

The delegations acknowledged and appreciated Pakistan Army’s sacrifices, efforts and contributions towards peace and stability, and socioeconomic development of Fata. The delegations expressed their respective views regarding mainstreaming of Fata and the way forward.

Gen Qamar lauded tribal elders and youth for their determination and support to Pakistan Army in the fight against terrorism.

He valued their views regarding the future of Fata. He said achievements through sacrifices of brave tribals of Fata were being consolidated while “we transit from relative stability to enduring peace”.

The army chief also shared his engagement with the Afghan leadership for enhanced cooperation and security measures along the border with Afghanistan. He advised the younger generation to continue playing their role towards peace and progress of Fata and Pakistan as “they are the future leaders”.

Commander Peshawar Corps, DG ISI, CGS and other senior army officers were also present.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1583145/1-army-supports-fata-mainstreaming-line-tribal-peoples-desire-gen-qamar/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 4th TO DECEMBER 10th 2017

BAJWA BRIEFS COMMANDERS ON 'MILITARY DIPLOMACY'

Dawn, December 6th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Top military brass said on Tuesday that the army would help achieve peace in Afghanistan and the region at large.

The commitment was expressed at the conclusion of the monthly conference of corps commanders that discussed the situation in Afghanistan in addition to regional peace and internal security.

"The forum concluded to continue efforts towards internal enduring peace while contributing towards peace in Afghanistan and the region," said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations at the conclusion of the corps commanders meeting presided over by Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa at the General Headquarters.

The meeting took place a day after US Defence Secretary James Mattis visited Pakistan to push the country's political and military leaders to step up their fight against militants and terrorists allegedly operating from here.

Gen Bajwa briefed the commanders about his interaction with Secretary Mattis and other recent military diplomacy undertakings.

It has long been an American grouse that Pakistan's counterterrorism effort has largely focused on the terror groups carrying out attacks within the country, whereas externally focused outfits have remained unaffected. Pressure has been ramped up on Pakistan to decisively act against alleged terrorist sanctuaries following the announcement of the Trump administration's policy for South Asia and Afghanistan.

Gen Bajwa had in a rare show of flexibility told Secretary Mattis that despite having eliminated terrorist safe havens from the country's soil, he was open to looking into American complaints of "miscreants exploiting Pakistan's hospitality". Gen Mattis' visit had concluded with the understanding to undertake "specific and sustained actions" for addressing each other's concerns.

The decision to work for peace in Afghanistan in a way reinforced the commitment extended by Gen Bajwa to Secretary Mattis.

"Progress of Operation Raddul Fasaad, enhanced security measures along Pak-Afghan border and recently initiated 'Khushal Balochistan' programme aimed at stability of Balochistan through socio-economic development and security was also deliberated upon," the ISPR said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374825>