

## Scenario 167

### MQM [PAKISTAN] LAUNCHED

#### MQM [ALTAFA] vs MQM [SATTAR]:

Before holding his first press conference during ending days of August 2016, Dr Farooq Sattar spoke to party leaders, lawmakers, including the London-based members of the coordination committee, and communicated his desire and decision to disown Altaf Hussain's statement and take over the MQM. He got support from everyone, including most members of the MQM International Secretariat.

Though not articulated in so high words, the message given by Dr Sattar along with Nasreen Jalil, Khawaja Izhar, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and other leaders at the press conference was loud and clear: Altaf Hussain was not to be allowed, at least for the time being, to address gatherings of his followers in the 'famous old style'. Dr Sattar said at the press conference:

*"I want to assure the citizens of Pakistan that we won't allow anyone to repeat what was said on Aug 22. We will also ensure that no matter the health or mental condition in which our Quaid speaks, we won't let such a statement be repeated again.*

*Don't suspect my integrity as a Pakistani. I speak for the workers and supporters of the MQM who should not be suspected of having anti-Pakistan sentiments."*

However, being gentleman and mature politician, he stopped short of condemning Altaf Hussain, whom he frequently referred to as MQM Quaid and Altaf Bhai throughout his press conference and the whole nation felt it bitterly; Dr Sattar reiterated his stance with ultimate firmness time and again.

*[There was no justification for making anti-Pakistan statements irrespective of emotional or mental stresses.*

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*Dr Sattar only confined himself to 'dissociation from the anti-Pakistani statement' NOT with the person who had made it.]*

Referring to Altaf Hussain's apology about raising anti-Pakistan slogans because he was under "*immense mental stress*", Dr Sattar said: "*If mental stress is at the core of Monday's statement, then we have decided to address the issue itself.*"

Dr Sattar categorically rejected the impression that he disowned Altaf Hussain's statement because of some 'dictation' - referring to his arrest by the Rangers and said:

*"We wanted to hold this press conference last night, but the way we were deprived of our democratic right is deplorable.*

*All I'm saying is that from now onwards, decisions will be made in Pakistan. This message is for the London office as well as for Pakistan office-bearers; something which the Quaid [Altaf Hussain] won't disagree with."*

Dr Sattar also apologised to the Karachi Union of Journalists, as well as the media houses that came under attack a day before, for whatever happened and said that *'he firmly believes that those involved in the incident were not MQM workers'*.

Later in the same evening, a gathering of elected union committee chairmen and vice chairmen of the MQM was held in *Community Hall in PIB Colony*, which was declared as the temporary headquarters of the MQM, where Dr Farooq Sattar vowed that MQM candidates for mayor and deputy mayor of Karachi, Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas would emerge victorious in Mayor's elections.

However, Dr Farooq Sattar's press conference was termed 'eyewash' by Pak Sarzameen Party Chairman Syed Mustafa Kamal. He asked about the guarantee that MQM Chief Altaf Hussain would not influence the decisions of the MQM [Pakistan]. *"Has a ban been imposed on phone calls of Altaf Hussain? Will Farooq Sattar not take the phone call when he [Altaf Hussain] calls him?"*

The damaging statement of Altaf Hussain continued to cast a shadow on the decades old and well founded MQM, as Dr Aamir Liaquat, who was present at the press conference, announced parting ways with the MQM on

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Kashif Abbasi's live TV program of ARY News, later in the same evening. In a choked voice and raising long live Pakistan slogans, Dr Aamir Liaquat Hussain said that:

*'.....after being arrested from his office on Monday night he felt himself all alone. He said there was a lot of confusion even in the mind of Dr Sattar.'*

In the same TV show, London-based MQM leader Wasay Jalil said:

*"Dr Farooq Sattar has said nothing unusual in his press conference. I am very clear, Altaf Bhai is my leader and he will continue to endorse the decision of the Coordination Committee [of MQM Pakistan]."*

Daily the 'Dawn' dated 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 wrote:

*"It is worth remembering that it is not the first time that Mr Hussain has been practically sidelined by the Pakistan-based MQM leadership. In Dec 1992, Mr Hussain announced retirement from politics in favour of then MQM chairman Azeem Ahmed Tariq.*

*However, about three months later, he became active again, formed a coordination committee and appointed the late Ishtiaq Azhar its convener. The Nine-Zero HQ was then opened by Mr Azhar and later on Mr Tariq was assassinated in his Federal B Area home on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1993."*

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016; the leadership of the MQM in Pakistan removed the London-based coterie of MQM founder Altaf Hussain from the top decision-making forum of the party after Coordination Committee convener Nadeem Nusrat asserted that the much-reviled supremo Altaf Hussain was still the party's uncontested chief. No doubt it was an uncomfortable reminder from the MQM London Secretariat for the Karachi-based MQM leadership.

Dr Farooq Sattar, however, pushed the last nail of dissociation in the MQM London's coffin.

Nadeem Nusrat, who was since long recognised as the convener of the MQM Coordination Committee by the Pakistan-based leadership, said so at a programme held to celebrate the 63rd birthday of Altaf Hussain in London that no one could separate the *Mohajir* community from Mr Hussain as he

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was the one who gave them a separate identity. *“Altaf Hussain himself is the MQM,”* it was emphasized in roaring voices.

The MQM leader Nadeem Nusrat’s speech — posted on the party website that had been blocked in Pakistan since Mr Hussain’s 22<sup>nd</sup> August tirade — put the Dr Farooq Sattar-led MQM in Pakistan in an awkward position. Under MQM London’s interpretation of the party constitution, Nadeem Nusrat was still working as the party convener.

The MQM [Pakistan] [Dr Farooq Sattar’s MQM] issued a brief statement in the evening saying it had *‘unanimously dissociated itself from London’* after the 22<sup>nd</sup> August incident and the statement issued from London had no value for them and that the same could not be construed as its statement.

After issuing the statement, the MQM [Pakistan]’s Coordination Committee went into an emergency session at their temporary HQ in Karachi’s PIB Colony. The meeting, presided over by Dr Farooq Sattar and attended by all members of the Coordination Committee in Pakistan, *unanimously decided to remove four London-based members from the Committee*; London-based MQM convener Nadeem Nusrat and members Wasay Jalil, Mustafa Azizabadi and Qasim Ali Raza.

Wasay Jalil, Azizabadi and Raza were sacked because they again chanted “anti-Pakistan slogans” during the birthday celebrations of Altaf Hussain. Another member, Inbisat Mallick, was not expelled as he did not take part in any such activity. The meeting also decided that the basic membership of any member or office-bearer would be terminated if they were found involved in any act against the country’s integrity and solidarity.

Three weeks earlier, Dr Sattar had announced at a press conference that *an article in the MQM constitution giving utmost authority to Altaf Hussain had been omitted*, while another about the role of the MQM convener as party head had been substituted to allow senior deputy conveners of the Coordination Committee — he himself and Amir Khan — to act as party leader in the absence of Nadeem Nusrat in Pakistan.

Like Altaf Hussain, Nadeem Nusrat also remained silent since the 22<sup>nd</sup> August incident and the subsequent press conferences by Dr Sattar. But his latest assertion was being seen as an attempt against the backdrop of ‘assumed’ failure of the MQM [Pakistan] to get any relief despite doing everything to what a senior party leader said appease the establishment.

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The MQM [London] leadership carefully reviewed the situation in Pakistan before sending that message to Dr Farooq Sattar and his team that they could not eliminate Altaf Hussain's role from the party at the stroke of a pen. They believed that the decision to expel them from the Coordination Committee would not stop them from running the MQM from its International Secretariat. Apparently, it all worked well but from inside all arteries and veins of the MQM [London]'s body were intensely bleeding.

DR FAROOQ SATTAR COMES OPEN:

*Verbatim* interview conducted by *Ali Arqam and Yousuf Sajjad* with MQM [Pakistan]'s Chief Dr Farooq Sattar, appeared in the monthly magazine 'Newsline' of September 2016:

What prompted Altaf Hussain's sudden tirade against Pakistan and his exhortations to his supporters to embark on an orgy of violence and destruction that culminated in the sorry state the MQM is in now?

*I would describe Mr Hussain's speech as seditious and as an act of suicide by the founder of the party. It put us in a state of shock, and the shock was followed by a state of depression and demoralisation – and that's an understatement. All of us from the party, voters and supporters, and Mohajirs in general, suddenly felt we had been put in the dock. People from across Pakistan were maligning us, talking of us as traitors, as people who had committed a huge crime.*

What steps did you take to effect damage control?

*I kept an eye on events as they unfolded, and tried to analyse the reaction from across Pakistan. I shared my findings with Kh Izharul Hassan, who had contacted me. We were on the same page. We knew we had to do something: a line had been drawn in London, and we had to draw a line here. This was an extraordinary situation and required an extraordinary response.*

*Then Khwaja Sohail Mansoor, one of the MQM MNAs, Deputy Mayor Arshad Vohra, and Sanjay Parwani approached me. I decided we should go to the Karachi Press Club and address the issue at hand. I thought we should make clear our personal reaction and*

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*the party reaction to what had transpired. At that point, we did not know whether the local Rabita Committee was with us or not.*

*I had already spoken to Shahzeb Khanzada, and Pervez Rashid, the Federal Minister for Information, told them how contrite we were because of what had happened, and categorically denounced Mr. Hussain's anti-Pakistan harangue, the subsequent violence, and the attack on TV channels. I also told them that we were taking charge of the party from now onwards, that we would run the party, make our own decisions and not take dictation from London.*

*The Rangers officials did not allow me to talk, even for two minutes. They took us into their custody and you must have seen the way they were treating us. The Rangers held us for eight hours. During this time they sought our help to identify the people who were raising anti-state slogans and those involved in the violence who were caught on camera.*

Why did you feel the need to speak to the Federal Information Minister?

*I had a meeting with him on August 22, and he had listened to us and assured us that all issues would be resolved after our meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, which was scheduled to be held on August 25.*

*After the August 22 incident I felt I should call him and tell him quite unequivocally that I was sorry because despite our political engagement with the centre and the province, and the government's assurances the same day, Mr. Hussain had gone haywire, and had lost control. His rant and behaviour was incomprehensible to us. I also told him that Mr. Hussain had transgressed all limits and was no longer acceptable; that we were going to do something about it.*

You had faced problems arising from Altaf Hussain's statements for a long time, but rather than part ways with him then, you only went out and did damage control. Why did it take so long to finally call it a day with him?

*We had been worried about the consequences of his statements before. It was felt that Mr Hussain's attitude and decision-making had become erratic. We were made fun of. But these things were discussed privately, not publicly.*

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*Altaf Hussain was aware of this, and kept giving us assurances that he would not repeat this. But he did. And this time his ranting was against the state and constitution of Pakistan. So we knew we had to draw the line. If I had done so earlier, like Mustafa Kamal or Anis Qaimkhani had done, the workers' cadre would not have followed us. Now they will. The journalists and TV anchors carrying out informal surveys are finding that while people are not in favour of Altaf's statements, they will still vote for the MQM.*

*Altaf Hussain remains the founder of the party, and will remain so in history and in our documents. But now that he is speaking against the integrity of Pakistan, he has become a liability. This is a win-win situation for us.*

*We can use his statements to extricate ourselves from the problematic position that the MQM has found itself in. Wisdom has prevailed among some of our colleagues in London as well, and they have agreed with our decisions – but we feel that the media anchors are trying to exacerbate the crisis by trying to create the impression that there are divisions in the party that are deeper than may actually exist.*

The DG Rangers says everything that happened on August 22 was pre-planned. If that is so, how could you and members of the Karachi Rabita Committee have been unaware of this?

*The Director General Rangers shared his viewpoint after initial investigation based on interviews with those arrested. But I have personally probed his allegation and am certain no one from the Rabita Committee was aware of any such plan.*

*When we were held by the Rangers, and they were showing us footage [of the crowd listening to Mr. Hussain's speech], none of the males present were responding to his slogans. Only two female voices could be heard echoing the slogans of 'Pakistan murdabad.' Most of the people conducting the havoc that followed were unknown to us. They could have been low-level workers, or those who were expelled from the party for in-disciplinary acts.*

*There have always been saboteurs, disgruntled party people, or those thrown out for taking undue advantage of the situation. But I believe whatever happened was not planned. It happened on the spur of the moment. Nonetheless, if it is established, if there is any*

*evidence that there was a plan, and it is shared with us, we will denounce it and take disciplinary action against those involved.*

What do you propose to do about the party leaders held for involvement in the August 22 [2016] mayhem?

*Let me tell you, Kanwar Naveed Jamil, Shahid Pasha and Qamar Mansoor – none of the three were present there on August 22. Yet they were held the same evening and have been implicated in this case. Also, there is the issue of the arrests of our women workers. At least two of them – Rabia and her daughter – and our councillor Quratul Ain, were not involved. They have not been identified in the video footage.*

*If the law-enforcement agencies overdo the operation they have embarked on, if they arrest innocent people, bulldoze offices that were entirely legal constructions on lawfully purchased land, this will be a violation of our constitutional rights. And this becomes more serious if you examine the timing of the action.*

*Why did the Rangers wait till now to demolish all these MQM offices? Couldn't they have waited till Waseem Akhtar took charge and then pointed out all the illegal buildings to him? We would have razed them ourselves. Now it looks like the law-enforcers are just out to exact revenge from the MQM.*

What are your long-term plans for the party?

*We have had to opt for a multi-pronged strategy. To begin with, we have tried to bring the people out of their disillusionment and demoralisation, save the party, and conserve our 40-year-long political struggle. In the past, when someone parted ways with Mr. Hussain, he had to leave the party as well. But now, for the first time, we have decided to bring the party out of the shadow of Mr. Altaf Hussain.*

*We have disconnected from London, dissociated from Mr. Hussain, and unequivocally declared that henceforth no decisions will be ratified by him. By adopting this course of action, we are violating our own constitution, which insists that all important decisions must be ratified by Altaf Hussain. But we have done this to save the party from falling apart.*



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*Also, we had to work to keep our support intact, especially in lieu of the local government elections for city mayor, deputy mayor, and chairmen of the District Municipal Corporations [DMC]. Elections were on August 24, and could not have been delayed. So it was remarkable that not a single vote of the party was wasted. Each and every vote was polled in favour of the party candidates.*

Some people have raised the objection that those who have taken oaths of allegiance to Altaf Hussain, as per the party constitution, have lost the right to take oaths for elected institutions?

*This is a political gimmick being used by our opponents, nothing else. There is no constitutional demand on those from the MQM to take an oath of allegiance to Altaf. This practice within the party was a mere tradition, an accepted norm, and it was done out of respect and love for the founder of the party.*

*And even if they took an oath, it was in December last year, before Altaf Hussain raised any anti-Pakistan slogan. But yes, after August 22, when he disrespected his own party's constitution, its political ideals and manifesto, and beyond that, the country's constitution, the entire party distanced from him and now there is no question of any allegiance to him.*

Do you feel you have stolen Mustafa Kamal's thunder by doing exactly what he had made the very *raison d'être* of his new party – i.e. Distancing from Altaf Hussain?

*Mustafa Kamal parted ways with the party, but in the beginning, he was only critical of Mr. Hussain. His behaviour towards most of us was not that hostile. He kept saying that Farooq Sattar was alright, the party was alright. But, then I did what he had done – in 2013 – i.e. separated from Altaf Hussain. And I did this the right way. I did not leave the party. Thereafter his behaviour towards us completely changed.*

*It seems he [Mustafa Kamal] thinks that Dr. Farooq Sattar has stolen his 'turban' – the initiative. So does that mean that Dr. Farooq Sattar is now bad? Judging by this, what reliability is there in respect of his decision-making ability? He will lose credibility if he continues like this. In fact this has already started happening. People are coming back to us. I have already announced that people like Asif Hasnain and others who left the party under pressure, may come back at any time. For them the doors are open.*

They say politics is the art of the possible. So can Mustafa Kamal return to the party fold?

*If you had asked me about Aamir Khan or Aafaq Ahmed in 1992, when they had deserted the party and had gone out on their own, I could not have imagined that Aamir Khan would one day come back, and be a part of the party. But there he is. So it's like that situation. Today, sitting here in 2016, I can't say whether Mustafa Kamal can return to the party. I don't know if he wants to come back or whether he would be accepted.*

Families of the missing from your party, and those arrested, are apprehensive that the recent turn of events will deflect attention from the recovery efforts of their loved ones. Would you comment?

*After all of this is over, we aim to reconnect and start from where we disconnected on August 22. The issue of enforced disappearances and the matter of extrajudicial killings has never lost focus. We have approached the federal government and the provincial government, and asked for meetings with the Prime Minister, the Interior Minister Ch Nisar, and the CM Sindh, in this respect.*

On 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016; the 'pro-Altaf' group of the MQM launched its ground team against Dr Farooq Sattar in a bid to reclaim the party reins. The newly formed 12-member 'interim' *Rabita Committee* comprised lesser known faces, except for former lawmakers Kunwar Yunus and Dr Nadeem Ehsan and London-based Wasay Jalil and Mustafa Azizabadi.

In their first press conference held in a tense environment at the Karachi Press Club, nine members of the committee announced to carry on the political struggle on the lines laid by MQM founder Altaf Hussain. Dr Hasan Zafar Arif, who worked at Karachi University's philosophy department during Altaf's youth days, addressed the press conference while reading from a script. He recalled the party's founding and subsequent split into factions.

Terming MQM [Pakistan] leaders as '*Farooq Sattar and company*', Dr Arif alleged that they had joined hands with the establishment – terming it 'not the first hard time for MQM':

*"In 1992, when slain MQM leader Azeem Tariq served as its chairperson, it was Sattar, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Dr Ish-*

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*ratul Ebad Khan who had suggested that if Altaf stepped down, the operation against the party would end.*

*....that despite the MQM Chief's stepping down as the party leader, the crackdown did not stop."*

When asked who had the right to use the party's name since MQM was registered under Dr Farooq Sattar's name, Dr Arif insisted that morally it was Altaf who could use the title of MQM Chief and head the party.

A large number of party workers were present at the conference while a bigger crowd was outside the venue. Chants of *Jiye Altaf* were raised at intervals too. Meanwhile, Rangers were allegedly barring people from entering the venue but when the crowd began to grow, they retreated – but later news proved that it was only a propaganda and disinformation spread by MQM-London faction.

THE KARACHIITES TURNED ABOUT:

On the one hand, Karachiites were quite satisfied with the radical reduction of militancy and crime as a result of the indiscriminate Karachi operation since started in September 2013. But, on the other hand, the same Karachiites were critical of the violations of law and fundamental rights committed by the same law-enforcement agencies [LEAs] by their regular use of torture and alleged extrajudicial killings; including showing displeasure for alleged targeting the MQM's activities.

Between the 1980s and 2013, the situation in Karachi could easily be described as a violent anarchy; mainly the result of a politicised and weak state, which had lost its writ on various counts. The period between 2007 and 2013 was especially brutal as Karachi was handed over by the political elites to secular militants [of People's *Amn* Committee, MQM and ANP] and religiously inspired militants of the LeJ, Shiites and Taliban etc leading to weak governance.

In very rare literature of effective governance, the only realistic, quick and short-term solution to societal anarchy was the state brutality; so was exercised in 2013's Karachi. The world was then laughing at Pakistan that being a nuclear state it couldn't even administer polio drops in its metropolis – numerous killings were on record.

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Another point; the Karachiites approved that state brutality because in the public perception, it was considered a lesser evil as it led to a radical decrease in militancy and crime; notes on the political philosophy of Hobbes is referred for further reading.

In other words, there can be no legal justice or democracy without an effective iron hand of the state and there can be no effective state without monopoly over violence. But why were Karachiites not satisfied by the 'peace' established by state brutality; the intelligentsia held that basically such hue & cry and media roars were frequently managed by those few rogue politicians who had criminal minds in their heads but had taken shelter of political parties like the PPP or MQM or ANP to deter the LEAs and want to continue with their malicious designs.

Even the high voices were true; there could be reasons for this:

- Firstly, Karachiites feared that the next extrajudicial killing or torture or unlawful disappearance might happen to himself or one of his loved ones.
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- Secondly, Karachiites understand that a city of around 22 million inhabitants could never be made peaceful in the long run by mere state brutality, whereas providing legal justice for Karachiites, both against societal and state injustice, was a time-tested solution.

The fact remains that no amount of state brutality or fundamental rights safeguards in law can solve the problems of violence and crime if there is large-scale economic and social inequality in a society like Karachi. In other words, the key causes of violence and crime in Karachi were political, economic and social inequality and deprivation of the majority of Karachiites – and still the same position prevails.

It is precisely for this reason that despite knowing about the large-scale corruption of PPP's political elite and the violent politics of the MQM, the people of Karachi would still vote for the same two parties in majority.

In the words of Faisal Siddiqi, referring to his essay in daily 'Dawn' dated 5<sup>th</sup> July 2016; it could be for two main reasons:

*"Firstly, as opposed to the elitist upper and middle-class nature of the bureaucratic, military and capitalist elites, these political parties also give representation to the non-elite in Karachi."*

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*Secondly, the majority of Karachiites believe that they have no access to state resources, or have no ability to solve their inequality and deprivation problems except through the corrupt and violent representative politics of the PPP and the MQM.*

*Politics is used by the powerless to counter unjust laws, inequality and the elitist state."*

In fact, Karachiites needed new institutional governance reflecting the changing socio-economic realities in the city. The populace also expected having democratic governance in Karachi to negate the politicising of LEAs – but who could come out with solution; all were without under-garments in that pool.

Broken Windows Theory:

Referring to the monthly magazine 'Newsline' of September 2016:

*[A well-tested 'Broken Windows Theory' - if petty street crime and minor civic offences like wall-chalking and graffiti, encroachments, traffic violations, tinted car windows, mobile-snatching, illegal car registration, illegal drugs and illicit guns sales are controlled, more serious crimes like armed robberies, rapes, murders, target-killing and, in fact, even terrorism, will see a decline.... that crime and criminals should be nipped in the bud.]*

Romana Khan in her special report cites case studies from New York City [NYC] and the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez as live references. Both at one time infamous for dangerously high crime rates – but by employing the 'Broken Windows Theory' they achieved the optimal results in the fight against crime.

See Karachi; how it became a breeding ground for violence, before long these areas were identified as '*No Go Areas*' – all too familiar in Karachi, even the police didn't venture into localities like Lyari, Katti Pahari etc.

In the early 1990s, NYC was considered extremely dangerous, with averaging five murders a day [1,800-2,200 murders a year between 1989 and 1993], 10,000 robberies and 130,000 auto thefts, among others. Snatching of bags, home break-ins, street muggings, even murder, were the norm, and the sense of insecurity was all-pervasive.

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Karachi, meanwhile, averaged 10 murders a day [3,500-3,800 murders a year] and roughly around the same number of robberies & theft – i.e. 10,000 annually between 2011-2014, and the statistics is only slightly better, not changed much since then; hats off to the Rangers.

The New York experiment made it clear that local governance was the crux of crime control. The central idea behind that working was that *'disorder breeds crime'*. Neat, tidy and immaculate neighbourhoods go a long way in ensuring crime-free areas; governance and crime both need to be actively managed on a day-to-day basis - what required is vigilant oversight.

Unfortunately, there is neither strong nor bold leadership in Pakistan, nor good intentions, and no political will - without these, *'Broken Windows'* remains beyond reach in Karachi.

MQM Lost Karachi By-election:

PPP's candidate emerged victorious in by-election in Karachi's PS-127 constituency held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016 but there were too many variables at work. However, the indication was there that the MQM's internal and external frictions had affected the party's performance in the constituency; the MQM candidate was runner-up in the race. The seat fell vacant after its representative jumped ship and joined Mustafa Kamal's PSP.

[On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016; *the MQM had re-captured both the constituencies of PS-106 and PS-117 of the Sindh Assembly in by-elections because the uproar and turmoil of Altaf Hussain of 22<sup>nd</sup> August was not yet displayed.*

*In PS-106, MQM's Mahfoozyar Khan bagged 18,137 votes to defeat his closest rival Sardar Abdul Samad of PPP who could manage only 960 votes while PTI's Nusrat Anwar could muster only 524 votes. Out of over 176,000 registered voters in the constituency, only 19,976 cast votes, with voter turnout recorded at 11pc.*

*In PS-117, MQM's rtd Maj Qamar Abbas emerged victorious with 10,738 out of total 14,235 votes cast. His closest rival Ali Raza of Tehreek-i-Islami secured 1,018 votes, PTI's Rifaqat Qamar managed to get 950 votes, followed by PPP's Javed Maqbool Butt (924) and JUI's Syed Naeem Shah (432).*

*With total 14,235 votes cast out of over 163,000 voters in the constituency, the voter turnout remained at the lowest at 9pc only. At least 79 votes were rejected on technical grounds.]*

PS-127 area is ethnically mixed and covers both rural and urban localities; both PPP and MQM candidates had, in past elections, clinched the seat. Turnout was abysmally low this time. In constituencies with over 200,000 registered voters, the votes cast in a number of polling stations struggled to go beyond two digits. It was likely that violence had a role to play in keeping voters away, as MQM and MQM-Haqiqi workers clashed on the polling day. Vehicles had also been set alight in different parts of Karachi in the run-up to the by-election.

It was premature to term the election loss as the beginning of the end of MQM dominance over Karachi's electoral politics. Even without the use of violence and questionable electoral practices — which the *Muttahida* has allegedly been blamed in past elections — the party fared well at the ballot box, as the results of a few by-elections, as well as the Sindh local bodies' polls, were pointing towards.

In the aftermath of Altaf Hussain's *speech of 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016*, how much electoral clout the MQM retained in urban Sindh under Farooq Sattar's stewardship — it was not the time for that analysis. After all, much of the MQM's militant wing was either on the run or in custody, which had paved the way for fairer electoral contests; most media analysts opined.

Moreover, the MQM was facing challenges of varying degrees from the PSP and a resurgent Haqiqi. Most importantly, much was concerned with the MQM's internal dynamics, especially when the militant wing seemingly remained loyal to Altaf Hussain of MQM [London] but was seen in low profile.

Waseem Ahmed, MQM's candidate who had lost by-election to PPP's Murtaza Baloch in Karachi's above mentioned PS-127 by-election, later challenged the polling results in Sindh High Court [SHC]. In a petition, Waseem contended that systematic rigging was carried out in 51 polling stations of the constituency.

The MQM candidate sought from the court an order to bar issuance of notification regarding Murtaza's victory. In that election, the PPP candidate won the by-election, securing 21,187 votes, while the MQM's candidate was trailing behind with 15,553 votes. This seat of Sindh Assembly's constituency had fallen vacant after resignation of MQM's Member of the Sindh Assembly Ashfaque Mangi.

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A total 487 polling booths in 134 polling stations had been set up to facilitate 207,467 registered voters.

MQM Leaders Charged:

Anti-Terrorism Court [ATC] accepted charge sheets on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016; in four cases against Karachi Mayor Waseem Akhtar and 19 other suspects for their alleged involvement in the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007 carnage in city.

The charge sheets said Waseem Akhtar, an MQM leader who was then adviser to the chief minister on home affairs, and 19 other men were involved in 12<sup>th</sup> May violence that left more than 50 people, mostly activists of various political parties, dead.

As workers of different political parties, including the PPP, left for the Karachi airport to receive the then deposed CJP, Iftikhar M Chaudhry, who had flown in to address lawyers, shootings and arson attacks started in various parts of the city.

The metropolis witnessed chilling scenes as gunmen in groups opened straight fire on rival political activists, with law enforcers nowhere to be seen. The carnage continued throughout the day and the deposed chief justice had to return to Islamabad from the airport. The whole city was blocked with containers on most main roads. The charge sheets mentioned that the key accused, Aslam Kala, Akhtar and another were involved in the massacre. Seventeen accused were mentioned as absconders in the said four cases.

The administrative judge, while accepting the charge sheets, referred the cases to ATC-II for conducting the trial against the suspects, who had been charged with murder, attempt to murder, rioting, firing, arson attacks and ransacking property in the jurisdiction of Airport Police Station. An ally of the then military regime Gen Musharraf, the MQM was blamed for the violence in the city.

In two similar cases, the supplementary charge sheets were accepted by the administrative judge on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2016 – the same day when Waseem Akhtar was elected as mayor of the city Karachi. As many as 56 other MQM activists and leaders, including MPA Muhammad Adnan and Kamran Farooqui, were also named as accused in the two cases related to the 12 May 2007's massacre. Brought to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's [KMC] office to cast his vote on that day, Waseem Akhtar held that all the cases against him were politically motivated.



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The AT Court was further informed that the government was approached to form a Joint Investigation Team [JIT] to probe the incidents. The city mayor had earlier been named in six cases regarding the same carnage too. He was also facing two cases pertaining to facilitating provocative speeches made by MQM founder Altaf Hussain. In the later cases, Waseem Akhtar's attorneys had claimed that he himself was not present at the time when the speeches were made from London.

Waseem Akhtar was also standing a separate trial over charges of facilitating the provision of medical treatment for criminals at PPP leader Dr Asim Hussain's hospital in Karachi as well as of providing shelter to them; Dr Asim was the key accused in this case. Waseem Akhtar, another MQM leader Rauf Siddiqui, PPP leader Abdul Qadir Patel, PSP leader Anis Qaimkhani and Pasban Pakistan leader Usman Moazzam were also nominated in that 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007 case, while Saleem Shehzad – a suspended member of the MQM – was declared an absconder.

The ATC also accepted a charge sheet against MQM MPA Shiraz Waheed for involvement in distributing CDs of a provocative speech made via telephone by the MQM Chief Altaf Hussain on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016; he was arrested from Landhi three days after the said speech.

SHC Banned Liquor Shops:

The Sindh High Court [SHC], while disposing off two civil legal petitions on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2016, ordered the Sindh government to shut all the liquor shops across the province; authorities were asked to cancel licence of all liquor shops operating in the province and issue fresh licenses after detailed scrutiny. The ruling observed that, in past, licences were issued without scrutiny and fulfilment of formalities.

Irfan Ali of Thatta district argued in his petition that a liquor shop had been operating near a school in his locality. He also mentioned that liquor was easily accessible to all, including Muslims and minors.

The second petitioner, Sheryar David, a resident of Karachi pointed out to the presence of 15 illegal wine shops in the city. During the hearing of the case, police also submitted a report, affirming the allegations that several liquor shops were operating in violation of rules.

Meanwhile, representatives of Hindu, Christian and Sikh communities appeared before the court, saying that *'consuming liquor, on occasions other than specific religious festivals, is prohibited in their respective religions'*.

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Two days later, on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2016, Chief Justice SHC Syed Sajjad Ali himself commented that:

*'Pakistan's Constitution allows only non-Muslim citizens to consume wine and that too on the occasion of their religious festivals, hence, there is no justification for liquor shops to remain open round the year'.*