

Scenario 132

MQM's ORIGIN – YOUTH - MATURITY

The ***Mohajir Qaumi Movement*** [MQM] was formed in 1984 to represent the interests of Sindh's Urdu-speaking *mohajirs* who had migrated to Pakistan from India in the years immediately following the creation of Pakistan in 1947. However, one would have to peep into the contemporary history of Pakistan, a little earlier than the formal launching of the MQM.

Mohajirs, mainly Urdu-speaking migrants from India who came to Pakistan after Partition, were allegedly subjected to prejudice and discrimination in many spheres of life as early as the late 1950s. From 1958 onwards, they saw their significance and power as a community slipping away rapidly, as *Punjabis* and *Pakhtuns* began dominating the military, bureaucracy and even businesses. The insecurities were further heightened by two major incidents of violence in Karachi, in 1965 and 1972, which pitted first *Mohajirs* against *Pakhtuns* and then *Sindhis*, respectively.

Altaf Hussain noted in his autobiography, ***Safar-e-Zindagi***, when he was receiving paramilitary training in the wake of the 1971 war with India, the derogatory language that mainly Punjabi trainers used to address Urdu-speaking trainees from Karachi and Hyderabad, left an indelible mark on his mind mounting to his first experience of prejudice.

KARACHI UNI's APMSO – 1978:

Developing his scenario later, as a student at the Department of Pharmacy at Karachi University, Altaf Hussain felt the need to create a platform for *mohajir* students to protect their rights. Along with Azim Tariq and other radical students, he laid foundation of the ***All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation*** [APMSO] in June 1978. Altaf Hussain had to struggle single-mindedly for keeping the said body alive during first three years at least.

The APMSO became the leading reason for the decline and ouster of the *Islami Jamiat e Talba* [IJT] from Karachi's student community. Altaf Hussain till 1977 was with the IJT and played an active role in the move-

ment against Bhutto regime orchestrated by the Pakistan National Alliance [PNA] in 1977, while Azeem Tariq was with the Liberal Students Federation [LSF] then headed by one Raza Rabbani later, the PPP Senator and the Chairman Senate.

With the brains of Azim Tariq and Dr Farooq, Altaf Hussain emerged as the public face - the beginning of his rise as a symbol of the *Mohajir* liberation. Meaning thereby that Urdu-speaking *Muhajirs* be recognised as an ethnic groups living in the country, along with *Sindhis*, *Baloch*, *Punjabis* and *Pakhtuns*. The stalwarts of Karachi's *Muhajir* intelligentsia supported the message, giving it much-needed legitimacy.

[Professor Karrar Hussain, perhaps the most well known educationist in Pakistan during the 1960s and 1970s, and famed philanthropist Hakim Muhammad Saeed, were both known MQM sympathizers in the early 1980s.

Hakim Saeed was assassinated allegedly by the same MQM radicals to whom he used to support.]

In fact, the birth of the *Mohajir Qaumi Movement* [MQM], later named as *Muttehida Qaumi Movement* in 1997, took place from APMSO.

[It remained an illusion for long that MQM was conceived by Gen Ziaul Haq to counter the Bhutto's PPP – but the real history was known to Altaf Hussain only.

PPP insisted that the MQM had been formed by Pakistan's intelligence agencies to curb them politically in Sindh

Sindhi nationalist parties propagated that MQM was coined to suppress the Sindhi nationalists who had protested against Gen Zia during 1983 in Sindh.]

Whatever be the truth, the MQM quickly became an aggressive independent entity leaving the 'agencies' far behind - where political and economic frustrations of *Mohajirs* played the key role.

Once, MQM dispatched a delegation of APMSO members to Hyderabad to meet a militant group from the Sindhi separatists, the *Jiyey Sindh Students Federation* [JSSF]. Though Sindhi nationalists had been campaigning against *Mohajirs* ever since 1950s, Altaf began warming up to JSSF's mentor and figurehead, Sindhi scholar, GM Syed.

[It was JSSF that sold the APMSO its first large cache of AK-47s that were then used to tame the heavily armed IJT in 1987 and 1988, eventually breaking IJT's hold at KU and other colleges.]

Some historians take this *Mohajir* phenomenon far back - the rise of Bhutto's PPP caused a sense of dread rising in Karachi; see the details of 1972's '**language riots**' there when the Bhutto regime re-introduced Sindhi in educational institutions and *Mohajirs* took it as '**an attack on Urdu**' as a community.

Referring to Nadeem Paracha's essay in '**Dawn**' dated **23rd August 2012**:

*"The aftermath of the riots [of 1972] saw the formation of a '**City Government Movement**' [CGM]. Studied with Mohajir intellectuals and former leftist student leaders and some businessmen - **calling for Karachi to be separated from Sindh.***

This movement failed to take off until the 1978 formation of Altaf Hussain's APMSO."

The history tells that the APMSO's evolution into giving birth to MQM in 1984 was mostly an economic one; the '**Punjabi economic hegemony**' which had increased immensely in Sindh during the dictatorship of Gen Ziaul Haq. This situation had a negative impact on Karachi's leading business communities like *Memons, Gujaratis* and *Mohajir* businessmen.

The said communities then formed the **Maha Sindh** [MS] — an organisation set up to protect the interests of Karachi's original population. The MS then encouraged and financed the evolution of 'strongs in streets' — later known as the MQM. Both Altaf Hussain and Azeem Tariq, who were from lower middle-class *Mohajirs*, handled the affairs then.

Hussain in his autobiography, '**My Life**' claims that he criticised JI for joining Gen Zia's military regime and then accused the party of exploiting the *Mohajirs* of Karachi who had been supporting JI since the 1950s.

In a 1981 speech, Altaf Hussain had described APMSO as a progressive and secular student party working against 'Punjab's hegemony in Pakistan's politics and economics' and against the '**mullah-feudal nexus**'. He had already been arrested in 1979 for allegedly burning the Pakistani flag to protest against the supposed ill-treatment tangled with the *Mohajirs* by the Punjabi rulers, in fact Gen Zia. Altaf Hussain was also tried by a Military

Court on the charge of 'burning of flag' where he had denied the allegations.

Soon the APMSO moved its operations to the *Mohajir* majority areas in Karachi and in 1984 launched the *Mohajir Qaumi Movement* [MQM] – an ethnic *Mohajir* party.

The demand for *Mohajir* ethnic identity immediately caught on in Karachi and other urban parts of Sindh, which were dominated by Urdu-speaking migrants – and Altaf Hussain got encouraged. A Dutch scholar Oskar Verkaaik echos opined in his book, ***Migrants and Militants: Fun and Urban Violence in Pakistan*** that:

".....Hussain derives his charisma from the fact that he transforms himself into a living symbol of the Mohajir nation."

MQM's one pamphlet titled '***Nazm-o-Zabt Ke Taqazay***' [Rules for organisational discipline], written by Dr Farooq, describes the four pillars of MQM. The first and most decisive pillar is "***blind faith in the leader***". Without a firm belief on this, the remaining three pillars don't carry much meaning. The entire MQM narrative indeed is based on Altaf Hussain's person as mythological belief.

Altaf Hussain was presented as a personality who also possessed spiritual powers. That was why, during the late 1980s and 1990s, he was alternately addressed as ***Quaid-e-Tehreek*** and ***Pir Sahab***. Altaf himself encouraged his mystification in many ways. A picture in the corridors of MQM secretariat shows an ailing person lying in bed during his hunger strike in 1990, with birds perched on him. Its caption reads: "***Pigeons remain perched on Altaf Hussain's bed and refuse to fly away...***"

Without cultivating Altaf Hussain's image as prime symbol of the *Mohajir* cause, the success was not possible. Uninterrupted training, and the enforcement of organisational discipline, remained the key elements in MQM's evolution as a unified political force and the rise of Altaf Hussain as its unquestioned leader of the upcoming MQM.

In February 1981, immediately after the APMSO engaged in its first running battle against the *Islami Jamiat Talba* [famous students organisation backed by the *Jama'at e Islami* (JI)] at the Karachi University, Altaf Hussain left for the US.

Exactly three years later, he again flew to the US **in February 1984**, three months before the formal launch of MQM, and returned only in October 1985. He was also travelling abroad when MQM was facing a military operation in Karachi in 1992. During his absence, Tariq Azeem and Farooq ensured the development of a strong system to impart training to the MQM cadre.

Low level local clashes gradually transformed into major *Mohajir - Pashtuns* riots in Karachi, due to large scale weaponisation of MQM and Pashtuns both. They started retaliating violently against each other. *Mohajirs* got a platform in MQM from where they could stand up and be counted. This realisation drew *Mohajir* youth to the party in droves, for ideological reasons, for seeking social and economic justice, or somewhere just for fun – as it was a new opening for the youth.

MQM was also able to align leisure activities, such as “gym culture” and social clubs, along with its political message to attract the youth. Street nationalism mobilised *Mohajirs* in urban Sindh under the MQM being used as platform.

During 1985-86, low-level clashes between *Mohajir* and *Pushtun* communities spread outside the educational premises where the APMSO members helped the *Mohajir* communities invariably and thus kept on going radicalised in armed scuffles. The *Pushtuns* were supported by the Afghan refugees who had poured into Pakistan during the US-Saudi funded Islamic *Muhajideen* insurgency against Soviets Afghanistan. Many of these refugees had arrived in Karachi with automated weapons and drugs.

Another key factor; the sudden growth in the population of Karachi - started putting pressure on the city’s infrastructural resources and also triggered a two-fold growth in the crime rate. The simmering tension between the *Mohajir* community and the *Pushtuns* erupted in widespread violence when a *Mohajir* college student, Bushra Zaidi, was crushed by a speeding mini-bus **in April 1985** that was being driven by a *Pushtun*.

College and school students poured out onto the streets to protest. The protests soon culminated into clashes between the students and the police and ultimately between the *Mohajirs* and the *Pushtuns*.

After the violent end of the Gen Ziaul Haq dictatorship in August 1988, MQM swept the 1988 elections in Karachi and Hyderabad and got into a ruling alliance with the PPP at the centre and in Sindh. The tussle continued as a turf war in colleges where IJT’s hold had weakened and where both

APMSO and the PPP's student wing, the Peoples Students Federation [PSF], moved in to claim the space left behind a retreating IJT.

The clashes between the two student groups went so intense that the APMSO formed special militant units; Nadeem Commandos and Black Tigers. The Black Tigers were initially created to check dissenters within the MQM; the PSF retaliated strongly.

Dozens of students from both sides lost their lives. In 1990, the clashes ultimately affected the PPP - MQM political alliance; MQM resigned from the PPP's government and joined the opposition. The clashes came to a sudden halt when an armed group of youth, allegedly belonging to the Black Tigers, assassinated PSF's Karachi chief, Najeeb Ahmed.

To infuse and inspire loyalty to the party, MQM's nuclear think tank under Altaf Hussain concentrated on its four-point strategy; ideology, spiritual and emotional connections, personal relationship with party workers, and economic and physical empowerment - and then there was the X factor.

Karachi city's walls of 1990s were full of graffiti saying; "**Jo Quaid ka ghaddar hai - woh maut ka haqdaar hai**" [He who betrays the leader deserves death]. Then a rift began appearing between Altaf Hussain and its dissident faction under Afaq Ahmed and Aamir Khan, who later founded the faction called **MQM-Haqiqi**.

See the level of commitment in MQM's oath of allegiance:

*"... I shall remain loyal to MQM and Altaf Hussain for my whole life ... I swear by my mother that if any conspiracy against MQM or Altaf Hussain, or any act harmful to them come into my knowledge, **I shall immediately inform Altaf Hussain, even if the conspirator be my brother, sister, mother, father, any relative or friend.***

I swear that I shall accept Altaf Hussain's decision as final in any matter. If I disobey any of his decisions, I must be regarded as a traitor..."

In July 1991; 33 MQM parliamentarians, including senior leaders such as Dr Farooq Sattar and Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, flew to Lahore and expressed their allegiance to the MQM by reading out their oath, drastic even by MQM standards, equating betrayal with "**.....committing incest**

[the] minimum punishment for traitors who betrayed Altaf Hussain is death."

"That press conference was held to expose those who had planned to leave the party," the office bearers held.

MQM joined respective governments in Islamabad and Sindh in the 1990s and 2000s. Thus it was able to provide secure jobs for its party members. Such government jobs meant that party members were indebted to Altaf Hussain, for providing them employment and the strength in state organisations – a great achievement in a way.

Early 1990s era was marked by rapidly escalating crime, ethnic and political violence in Sindh. The menace in Karachi and Hyderabad was allegedly sponsored and backed by the MQM, to which successive national governments responded with mass arrests, sweeping clean-up operations and emergency legislative measures.

MQM ruled supreme in Karachi during the early part of the first Nawaz Sharif government i.e. in 1991, but certain acts of violence against some army personnel stationed in Karachi by APMSO boys led the military to begin a '**clean-up operation**' in 1992. That clean-up operation was mainly aimed against the 'highway robbers' allegedly backed by MQM's youth / APMSO's militancy but the party took it so ill that the whole history of Pakistan went distorted after those years.

In 1992-93, when an anti-Altaf faction of MQM, named as **MQM-Haqiqi** [allegedly backed by the military intelligence] emerged, Altaf Hussain escaped to London and Azeem Tariq was assassinated.

In the meantime, the two factions of the MQM cut each others' throats to the maximum. During the same years, many criminals joined both sides as 'political workers' but in fact they had sought both factions' protection while started looting the innocent citizens for *bhatta* [ransom] and extortion, kidnapping, land grabbing and settling business scores for money etc.

In June 1992 the army launched Operation Clean-up, deploying about 30,000 army and paramilitary personnel to Sindh to help CM Muzaffer Hussain Shah's coalition provincial government restore law and order. Initially confined to rural Sindh, where it was relatively successful in combating bandits and kidnapers, the focus of Operation Clean-up was shifted to the urban areas, where the army claimed it sought to eliminate criminals and terrorists especially in Karachi.

The MQM alleged that it was being specifically and un-necessarily targeted by the army but the contemporary historians had termed the MQM's activity as a '**virtual parallel government**'. Still no historian has come up with an independent and factual analysis that who was wrong – MQM or the PML[N] government or the Pak-Army.

KARACHI OPERATION – 1992:

On 19th June 1992, combined police and army forces raided MQM offices in Karachi with the assistance of the dissident **MQM Haqiqi** group [MQM-H]. Army and their intelligence factions had uncovered 23 MQM torture cells where hundreds of political opponents and party dissidents had been tortured and killed.

Consequently, many MQM's activists in Karachi and Hyderabad were arrested and the key party workers went underground while Altaf Hussain and the top MQM leadership had already left the country and went into self-exile in London. As the police and army carried out raids and mass round-ups; the search operations in pursuit of MQM militants continued over the next 30 months.

During the same raid of 19th June 1992, the raiding forces had taken many documents from the MQM offices. Next day's print media was full of front page leading news that the raiding team had caught hold of proposed '**JINNAHPUR**' maps and drawings along with other related plans. Analysis and opinions started appearing in all leading journals and newspapers describing that MQM had plans of making Karachi independent with the new name of Jinnahpur. Hue & cry started cropping up from all corners of the country demanding ban on the MQM and Altaf Hussain's trial under high treason clauses of the Constitution of Pakistan.

However, the subsequent investigations told that Jinnahpur plans might have stocked with some MQM leader like Dr Imran Farooq, that too till year 1999, but Altaf Hussain had abandoned it much earlier – during Gen Musharraf's regime with sure, if at all it was true.

BUT why the Local Police failed to control Karachi?

.....mainly because the Karachi Police had gone politicised in succession. The police had not only been politicised during the last decade but also became more loyal to the ruling regimes rather than the state. Much was ex-

pected from the PPP-led Sindh government when the party won the elections in ending 1988 and again in 1993 and 2008, that it would reform the police and make it more people friendly but the party had no plan on cards.

It is also available on history pages that police and security agencies were excessively used against the PPP, first by Gen Zia regime and later under Jam Sadiq Ali, the Chief Minister Sindh from 1990-92. A point came when the entire police force went politicised in routine while being used against the rivals – and corruption also penetrated as a side effect.

Unfortunately, no efforts were made to reform the police during the 1992 army operation. Instead the target was to pick the MQM's alleged militants and forced them to join rival factions. At times, this policy brought serious differences between the two premier intelligence agencies – ISI and MI. Mazhar Abbas wrote in **'the News' dated 30th June 2106** that:

'In 1992, the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sent a retired Lt-Gen, Shafiq-ur-Rehman to probe against police over the complaints of businessmen, women and others regarding extortion and harassment. Jam was the CM, Irfanullah Marwat adviser on home and DIG Samiullah Marwat. The trio has been accused by the PPP, in the opposition at that time, of creating a reign of terror in the city.

The [Gen] Shafiq report confirmed most of the allegations..... It also recommended measures to de-politicise the police and punish the responsible. Most of these recommendations were brushed under the carpet but DIG Marwat paid the price and lost his job. He was also sent to jail.'

On 1st May 1993; the then MQM Chairman, **Azeem Ahmed Tariq**, was murdered by unidentified gunmen at a safe house in Federal B Area of Karachi; his murder remains a mystery to this day. At around 3 'o' clock in the morning, intruders came into the house, picked his bedroom lock and fired multiple rounds as he was sleeping on the floor of his drawing room.

Azeem Ahmed Tariq never contested election, like his leader Altaf Hussain, he was not an elected member of the national assembly [MNA] or the Sindh Assembly [MPA].

Referring to **defence.pk** page dated **8th September 2013;** one Maj Faheem Ahmed, a former officer of the ISI, later based in Chicago, United States on the basis of asylum granted to him in 1998, confirmed while sitting in a coffee shop at Jinnah-Gandhi Street in Chicago – allegedly admitted that:

".....I was asked by superiors to assassinate Azeem Ahmed Tariq to further destroy capability of Altaf Hussain and break MQM. Azeem Ahmed Tariq was a reconciliatory figure who was in touch with Aamir Khan, Afaq Ahmed and Altaf Hussain as Chairman to bring peace and stop further splitting of MQM.

Col Imtiaz Junjua was heading a cell which was confidentially given a task to clean what they perceived as rats of MQM. The objective was clear, to break MQM which I was against. It was not our duty nor did my superior officers know the dynamics of Karachi. Its very unfortunate how intelligence in our country functions with totally wrong priorities."

However, on the same page of Defence.pk, another account tells a different story which stated that:

"Later, a Captain XXXXX XXXX was assigned to do the job and Azeem Ahmed Tariq's location was given to us by a close associate of him from MQM who worked for us from within and we watched and recorded Azeem Ahmed Tariq's activities until a six member team decided to hit to my objection - "

Analysing the two paragraphs, it appears that Maj Faheem might have just fabricated the story and documents to get an asylum in the United States otherwise; Azeem Tariq's murder is still a mystery.

On 2nd February 2013; the said story of Maj Faheem had already been discussed in **GEO TV's program 'Aapis ki Baat'** of Najam Sethi before its account was displayed in Defence.pk.

Later in 2015; **Ali K Chishti's** book '**MQM**' also tried to solve the said mystery but remained confined to the statement of Maj Faheem nothing beyond.

GEN BABAR'S OPERATION - 1995-96:

By the time Benazir Bhutto was re-elected in 1993, the military had handed over the ongoing operation to Pakistan Rangers. The situation went worse when the MQM activists allegedly started target killing those police officers and men who had taken part in the 1992's operation against them. Such

revengeful killings were also launched against those officers of intelligence agencies who mostly belonged to Pak-Army.

Under Benazir Bhutto's second government, police was again tasked with targeting criminals and terrorists, but the suspected MQM militants remained its focus. Though BB gave a freehand to Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar and the police chief, Dr Shoaib Suddle, they continued zooming in on the MQM, and many of its militants were killed extra judicially. This operation was stopped when BB's own brother Mir Murtaza Bhutto was killed in a similar encounter and in mysterious circumstances in September 1996.

BB could have reformed the police through his IGP Dr Suddle, because he had the acumen and will but, at the end, some 16 police officers faced trial and imprisonments in Murtaza Bhutto's murder.

Coming back to the mainstream:

On 30th November 1994; the MQM launched a massive violence quickly after the army withdrew from Sindh and by the end of the year the law enforcement agencies appeared to be losing control of Karachi. People were killed daily in clashes between armed ethnic, sectarian and criminal groups, and vendetta killings between the two MQM factions were also a commonplace; ***about 1100 people were killed in Karachi city till ending 1994.***

Media reporters, editors and publishers critical of the MQM-A, used to be threatened and attacked by its activists all around during those days.

On 4th December 1994, Mohammad Salahuddin, editor of the Urdu weekly Takbeer, was shot and killed outside his office in Karachi. Salahuddin had been highly critical of both the MQM and the PPP, and in late 1991 had got his office ransacked and house set on fire by MQM activists.

The MQM was though in shambles by the end of Operation Clean-up but, as media sources indicated that, its mass support among *mohajirs* had grown tremendously. On-going tug of war amongst the MQM and the Haqiqi faction had alienated Karachiites, strengthened the hand of extremists on all sides, and precluded the possibility of a more moderate leadership emerging within the MQM.

Referring to ***The Herald of January 1995:***

'...even those mohajirs who never subscribed to violence as a means of achieving their political aims, considered the MQM as saviour'.

The Karachi situation continued to deteriorate in 1995 with violent clashes between both MQM factions and government forces, and between various militant Shiite and Sunni groups. The [PPP] Benazir Bhutto government, attributing the violence to a 'foreign hand & enemy agents', maintained that the provincial government had succeeded in getting the situation under control whereas it was not at all so.

The facts were on intelligence record that members of both MQM factions abducted, tortured and killed members of the rival faction - the most in 1995. After 30 months of alleged official patronage the MQM-H was dumped when the military withdrew from Karachi **on 30th November 1994**, and the MQM-Ataf, normally called as MQM, moved quickly to settle accounts and re-established its authority in areas such as Nazimabad, Korangi, Pak Colony, Malir, Faisal Colony, Landhi and New Karachi. The MQM leadership characterized MQM-H's campaign as a drive to "*purge the party of terrorist elements*". Foreign media often commented that:

"In fact, extortion was a "major source of revenue" for both factions, and the fighting was often about 'who gets a bigger piece of the cake.'"

On 13th February 1995; five teenage MQM-H activists were killed and three wounded in a drive-by shooting in front of their party office in Nazimabad. In return within 24 hours three MQM-A activists were killed, as were another two MQM-H – and the killing spree went on.

On 8th March 1995; following the killing of two American employees of the US Consulate Karachi and due to an escalation in killings in February 1995, the security forces launched a crackdown and arrested hundreds of suspected militants. The number of killings fell to 21 in April but the respite was short-lived and in mid-May violence erupted again.

While the MQM held the advantage in what amounted to an insurgency until the end of June, the government control collapsed in large sections of Karachi's Central, East and West districts with the passage of time.

Rocket - propelled grenades were fired at government installations, including the TV station and Liaquatabad police station, Rangers patrols were ambushed, vehicles bearing government licence plates came under fire and dozens of

bullet-ridden and torture-marked bodies were abundantly seen in Karachi streets, drains and trenches.

About 300 people were killed in June [1995] only including 60 police and Rangers personnel. Many of these security forces personnel died in targeted killings rather than in shoot-outs with militants.

Eighty people were killed and hundreds wounded during last three days of June, while another 44 were killed in Karachi in first two days of July 1995, most in incidents connected to 2-days general strike called by the MQM.

On 12th March 1995, seven MQM-H activists were killed in Pak Colony of Karachi's West district in a gun battle at their Command Centre which was subsequently searched and set afire; the remaining members were located and killed after the MQM's gunmen conducted a house-to-house search in the area.

On 11th May 1995; the government and MQM entered into negotiations in Islamabad; the army had played a key role in bringing the government to the table. But later, the army had to adopt a harder line after MQM militants began targeting armed forces personnel. The government presented a list of 21 points for discussion and the MQM brought 18 of their own but with no common ground between the two parties upon which to base a settlement.

In late June 1995; the PPP's federal government decided to intervene describing the move as an 'action against terrorists'. Benazir Bhutto's government posted 10,000 to 12,000 paramilitary Rangers and about 1,500 Frontier Constabulary [FC] personnel to Karachi to beef up city's 22,000 police force which had been demoralised [and disappeared] by militant's attacks on police stations and targeted killings of police personnel. The exercise was commanded by the Federal Interior Minister, Gen [R] Naseerullah Babar.

The strategy of the new operation was totally different from the earlier action of 1992, with the government relying more on the Federal Investigation Agency [FIA] and its own intelligence departments than on military intelligence. Soon the perception prevailed that the FIA & Police Intelligence had failed to penetrate the inner circles and their *modus operandi* of the MQM, whereas rival intelligence agencies had allegedly backed different MQM factions.

Gen Babar's marked difference was a decision to go for 'target arrests' rather than the 'generalized arrests' that caused widespread resentment amongst the MQM members. The old practice of sealing off entire localities for days and hauling away almost every young man in sight were considered counterproductive. This time round, there were no mass arrests of men and boys belonging to 'suspicious' age groups etc.

Weeks later, the law enforcement officials claimed to have broken the inner cordon of the MQM.

The government released information containing discoveries of MQM torture chambers, execution sites and arms caches. The records indicate that by mid-August 1995 the violence had declined significantly, the MQM went on the defensive and a semblance of normalcy had returned to Karachi. Interior Minister Gen Babar claimed that all of the major MQM activists had been apprehended, and that the flow of arms to Karachi were halted; the coming years, however, proved that the MQM had made a 'tactical withdrawal' and had gone underground like during Operation Clean-up of 1992.

Once again both sides were bent upon settling political scores; the talks soon entered a deadlock while leaving open the possibility of future political accommodation. After about a dozen rounds of talks, demands, counter-demands, MQM boycotts and failure to agree on even a single phrase, negotiations collapsed soon.

On 22nd July 1995; one MQM-run torture cell was uncovered during a joint police and Rangers operation in Gulbahar area of Central district having several persons tied down. Journalists taken to the site hours later reported seeing ropes, electric cables and blood-stained floors; area residents claimed the site had been occupied by militant youths ten days earlier and reported seeing blindfolded people being dragged inside. The local residents told the media persons that the nearby *Khajji Grounds*, a football field, had also been used by MQM militants to mal-treat their 'prisoners'.

On 1st September 1995; Karachi police uncovered another alleged MQM run torture cell, this time in Korangi. As in the Gulbahar case journalists were given a tour of the cell, where they saw an axe, knives, a handgun, an iron chain and a rope, as well as the dried blood, clothes and jewellery of victims, some of whom police claimed had been tortured for ransom. The cell had reportedly been in operation for six months, and was one of several uncovered in Korangi in the previous few weeks.

Mohajirs who joined political parties other than the MQM were also subjected to violence; several *mohajir* PPP members were harassed, threatened,

beaten and got their property destroyed by MQM activists in 1995. Reports that the MQM kept and used **torture cells** against political opponents and party dissidents were available with the foreign press in abundance.

Government record is available to speak that 10 *mohajir* PPP members were killed in the four-month period of **1st June 1995 to 30th September 1995** in West district alone. Official statements, media reports and individual descriptions indicated that at least 32 PPP members were killed in Karachi in the whole year of 1995.

On 17th January 1996, MQM-H's offices in Landhi, in East district, were attacked with automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades by MQM-A militants. **The MQM-H claimed that their 95 party workers were killed by MQM-A militants in year 1995.** As per Amnesty's Annual Report, the MQM-H was also responsible for attacks on MQM-A activists; allegedly seven female MQM-A workers were raped by MQM-H activists in 1995's full year.

But, as given in '**The Herald**' of April 1996:

'.....by early 1996 almost everything appeared to be going Benazir Bhutto's way, with the law and order situation in Karachi ... look[ing] better than at any time during the past two or three years.'

GOVT'S BOGUS POLICIES FOR KARACHI:

Since 1993, PPP's federal government had set up a "**Human Rights Cell**" to investigate reports of human rights violations. Established within the Ministry of Interior but soon it was transferred to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in **August 1994**. It had a very broad mandate and used to report directly to the prime minister, but with "**no means to enforce its recommendations or to initiate prosecution**" it could do little to correct chronic abuses. The Cell was not able to inquire into the case but had to ask for the information from the local authorities – thus soon termed as 'toothless'.

Senator Syed Iqbal Haider of the PPP was made responsible for human rights affairs, but his statements to the media suggested that his role was primarily to defend government actions. **In October 1995** the federal cabinet approved creation of a human rights ministry but with no powers to

exercise thus went dormant with the passage of time – a dumping place for the poor and 'non-compliant' officers; worse than the OSDs.

The historians have consensus in saying that the successive governments demonstrated a lack of resolve in addressing the Karachi situation and enforcing the rule of law in 1995-96. Although the government preached that it was taking adequate measures to protect the citizens of Karachi but the **"consistently high number of daily deaths in Karachi appeared to belie any such assertion"**.

Militants of various groups who were known to have committed serious offences moved around Karachi virtually at will. The hide-outs of groups responsible for killings and abductions were well-known to local journalists and intelligence agencies, too; long gun battles between rival groups for control of territory were openly revealing their presence to the authorities - but no action seen.

The official record reflects that numerous cases of killings and attacks were adequately investigated and certain offenders were arrested and charged during December 1994 to mid 1995. The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights of Pakistan (LCHRP) estimated that by mid-August 1995 the government had made more than 12,000 arrests on terrorism-related charges [9200 in Karachi alone] but **"only few ...were tried and convicted – hats off to the Pakistani justice"**.

Amnesty International mentioned in its Annual Country Report 1995 that:

'When the authorities initiated action against militants, the courts were frequently compelled to dismiss the cases and release the suspects on the pretext that security forces personnel had not followed proper procedure.'

The report indicated that the conviction rate was only 5% for suspects arrested red handed during operations. The problem stemmed from a combination of failing to follow the guidelines and legal lacunas such as **"poorly written FIRs and inadequate investigations done under Police Act of 1861 and Police Rules of 1934 - [Pakistan's successive Parliaments - Hurrey]"**.

Various foreign press reports commented on the difficulties being encountered by the most Karachiites who wished to file complaints about abuses with police but avoided for fear of firstly killing by the two MQMs and secondly police retaliation. Common citizen were so alienated and the police so hated and feared that even common crimes were not reported. Especially,

the women used to face a particular difficulty in lodging complaints with police – for fear of being raped within the police stations.

Partisan police officers frequently shielded colleagues and obstructed investigations to favour their preferred factions; in most cases investigating officers deliberately conducted inquiries improperly in order to protect their political affiliates.

Simultaneously, judges and doctors helped cover up beatings, torture and deaths in torture cells and police stations by issuing medical reports that the injuries were self-inflicted or the victim died of natural causes. ***They were keener to save their own skin rather to uphold truthfulness.***

VENDETTA KILLING OF POLICE OFFICIALS:

Well known fact since two decades that political parties and groups in Karachi kept armed militias and that none of the militias hesitate to commit serious crimes to further their political or criminal objectives. While both MQM factions had repeatedly denied their involvement but, as the ***Amnesty International Country Reports of 1995 & 1996*** indicated elaborately, the MQM members had extensively used violence to further their political ends. According to monthly '**The Herald**' of **October 1996**:

'.....the MQM leadership is well-informed about which of its members are involved in [criminal and] terrorist activities but chooses not to expel them because such people are useful to achieving the party's short-term goals.'

Referring to '**The Frontier Post**' dated **16th March 1996**:

'..... about 225 to 250 Karachi police personnel were killed by MQM militants in 1995, as were at least 13 Rangers and 11 military personnel. Most of these law enforcement personnel died in targeted killings rather than in shoot-outs with militants.'

According to **Amnesty International's Report of February 1996**:

'Many [of the police & army personnel killed] were off-duty, unarmed and not in uniform, and many were abducted and tortured before being killed. Many of these were retaliatory or revenge killings.'

'The Herald of January 1996' stated:

'...each time an MQM activist was killed [in 1995], the death of a law enforcement official invariably followed, after which more MQM men were gunned down. That these were vendetta killings is certain.'

On 18th July 1995; retired police official Raja Mohammad Ishaq was abducted from a bus and tortured to death. His body was later found in a car in the Gulbahar area of Karachi.

In a separate incident on the same day of **18th July 1995**, ASI Abdul Razak was shot and killed in the same Gulbahar; he had been abducted, blindfolded and his hands and feet bound before being shot, after which his body was placed in a sack and dumped. A note found on the body had stated **'anyone who confronts us will meet the same fate'**.

On 14th August 1995, 14 people were killed in Karachi. The blindfolded and bullet-riddled bodies of six of the dead were found in the back of a minibus; one body was reportedly stuffed in a sack clutching a note stating **'a gift for Interior Minister Gen Nasirullah Babar and the fate of an informer'**.

On 27th September 1995, two adult sons and the guard of Superintendent of Police Karachi, Kazi Abdul Rashid, were killed when their car was ambushed outside their home in Central district. The driver and a second guard were seriously wounded in the attack.

The mutilated body of another suspected police informant bearing a note with the message **'a gift for Nasrullah Babaar'** was found on **27th September 1995**.

On 30th September 1995, the bodies of two airmen from the Korangi Air Force Base were found on a deserted road in Korangi. The men were abducted at gunpoint and then bound, gagged and shot in the head from near range. Colleagues of the slain men had identified them from their army hair-cut as military personnel; both were killed for being from army.

[Then military personnel were instructed NOT TO WEAR UNIFORMS when off duty, and many officials had removed government number plates from their cars.]

On 15th October 1995, five family members of Deputy Superintendent of Police in Karachi Khawaja Nisar were shot and killed by gunmen in their North Nazimabad home. Nisar, who was not home at the time, had reportedly escaped an earlier rocket attack on his house. Police speculated this latest attack was in retaliation for the custodial deaths five days earlier of MQM activist Fahim Farooqi and his three colleagues.

The same day of **15 October 1995**, another Karachi police officer was killed. He was brother of a murdered Central district PPP official, and closely related to Ahmed Ali Soomro, Advisor to the Sindh CM.

On 13th November 1995, one person was killed and ten people injured, mostly family members of police officers, in a mid-morning attack on a police station and adjacent housing compound in the Garden East area of South district. Militants hidden on the rooftops of adjacent buildings fired five to ten rocket-propelled grenades at the complex, followed by heavy automatic weapons fire; in 20-minutes gun battle one militant was also killed. Police blamed the MQM for the attack.

On 23rd November 1995, Ehsan Ali Shah, the younger brother of sitting Sindh Chief Minister Abdullah Shah, and his friend and driver, were killed near his home in Karachi's Federal B Area. Two days earlier the Urdu daily *Takbeer* had quoted an MQM source as stating that one of Shah's relatives would soon be killed.

In Karachi, most of the mutilated bodies found in gunny sacks in 1995 had notes attached - declaring them to be the police officials or informants.

VIOLENCE ON ALL COUNTS:

Record is available to indicate that members of certain ethnic groups in Karachi were deliberately targeted and killed in 1995, but determining responsibility for those killings was often unworkable under the given police investigation procedures and Laws of Evidence. Those killings definitely were intended to create, maintain or spread a climate of fear and terror.

On 3rd August 1995, the day after the killings of Farooq Putney and three other MQM workers in an alleged encounter with police near Karachi Airport, 27 people were killed in what police described as MQM's revenge killings; monthly '*The Herald*' of **August 1995** is referred.

Twelve dead bodies were found in a minibus in Orangi, where they had been blindfolded, had their wrists tied and been killed with shots to the head and chest. Police initially said the 12 victims appeared to have been chosen at random but later claimed the dead were Punjabis and Sindhis killed by the MQM on suspicion of being police informants. The MQM denied responsibility for those killings.

On 2nd November 1995, another incident involving the MQM was of slaying of 15 *Seraiki* speaking labourers from Southern Punjab in a house in Samanabad, Federal B Area. The labourers were blindfolded, lined up against a wall and shot, and a note saying "***a gift for Naseerullah Babar***" left with the bodies.

Hundreds of Sindhis had fled Gulbahar in July 1995 after MQM militants took control of the area and began targeting them. One source indicated that Pashtuns and Baloch, fed up with having their property destroyed by MQM gunmen, sometimes abducted, tortured and killed, had finally planned to leave those *mohajir* neighbourhoods because police itself was helpless.

Most political parties and factions in Karachi collected ***bhatta (protection money)*** from businessmen, shopkeepers and traders which they used to arm and maintain their militias. An "age-old" practice in Karachi and other parts of Pakistan, *bhatta* collection reportedly became "***much more deadly and organized***" in the late 1980s and early 1990s when "***the MQM and PPP activists came to the forefront of this practice***".

The practice became especially prevalent in Central and East districts, where it was considered a routine affair, with party *goondas* (musclemen) approaching people at their residences, and those who refused to pay were beaten and their businesses or property damaged. While *bhatta* was collected by both MQM factions in Karachi, the *Haqiqi* faction had more skill and brutality, it is said.

Both factions of MQM activists restricted Karachiites' freedom of movement in 1995. The militants erected barricades, blocked roads with burning vehicles and established checkpoints to prevent security forces personnel and activists of rival factions from entering MQM-controlled areas. Residents could not pass without adequate assurances and the checkpoints in some areas were impassable at night.

Large parts of predominantly *mohajir* areas such as Orangi town-ship, and Korangi town were '***virtual no-go zone[s] for the rest of the city's residents,***' and off-limits even to heavily armed convoys of police and Rangers, especially after dark. Parts of Karachi were in a state of complete

paralysis with residents unable to return home after sundown because of heavy fighting between the MQM(A) and MQM(H).

The MQM called for **28 strikes in Karachi in 1995** and at least seven in the first four months of 1996, most to protest harassment, arrest, torture and extrajudicial executions of party activists. Although compliance with MQM-sponsored strikes was ostensibly voluntary, but the MQM activists enforced them to go by the party.

It has been a fashion in whole of Pakistan to protest with violence and the threat of violence attacking motorists, pedestrians and businesses that tried to remain open. Fear of political parties - sponsored violence often prevented the rest of the population from leaving their homes to go to work, schools, and the market – Karachi was not alone.

It is available on media and state records that the Pakistani judicial system had since long been marked by shortage of judges, lengthy court procedures, a heavy backlog of cases, bureaucratic infighting, inactivity and the overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions of different court systems [**still the same situation - no chance of reform**]. Despite government promises to reform the judicial system and strengthen judicial independence, it made no serious attempt to do so since last many decades.

Politically motivated abuse of the courts remained a "common" trait throughout Pakistan's history; coupled with selective use of preventive detention, criminal charges, denial of bail and spurious lawsuits to harass political opponents.

There was no **"serious government effort to reform the police or ... prosecute those responsible for abuse"** in 1995 or 1996 or even after. About 500 police personnel were suspended or fired for various misdeeds in 1995 and early 1996; and 138 police officers were being "dealt with under [police] departmental rules" but the menace prevailed with same vigour. It was because the police and security services were highly politicized and still are. According to common perceptives, the police always functions as **"the strong arm of the party in power"** since decades, and consequently are **"no longer accountable"**.

By politicizing the police, successive governments have created a situation whereby the police only functions as a security service for the powerful few; simultaneously they are free to play havoc with people's lives. A veteran police officer held that:

"It is an accepted fact that in Pakistan the law enforcement agencies function as the coercive apparatus of the state and for those who have access to it.

It is a system that serves the politicians; in a state inching its way towards anarchy, a police force which provides them protection can get away with anything as long as it serves its masters."

Till the recent past [and still the practice prevails], the politicians had a direct hand in the recruitment of police personnel at all ranks & levels. ***"Each MNA and Senator can recommend five DSPs, 10 SIs, 15 ASIs and 20 constables, while MPAs can nominate five ASIs and four SIs"***, every one knows this pity practice in Pakistan – and still in vogue.

The foreign press noted that senior government officials used to sanction extra-judicial execution as a strategy for eliminating "terrorism". Many heads of the government, including PM Benazir Bhutto, Interior Minister Gen Babar and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Abdullah Shah, had openly stated that the courts were not doing enough to punish suspects; "we arrest the culprits and then the courts release them on bail," they maintained. But they never thought that they should have made adequate changes in respective laws, could have formulated or coined new legislation through their assemblies and parliament to bound the courts.

In response to allegations from MQM senators that law enforcement personnel were killing suspected militants in custody, Interior Minister Babar had once told the National Assembly:

"....the law-enforcing agencies have a right to enforce the law, and in encounters some killings do take place.... Let them dispense with the path of militancy and terrorism".

'**The Herald**' of **November 1995** quoted a senior official as stating that

"....if the MQM stops killing policemen, perhaps its own activists will not be killed in the encounters", while one Sindh minister Zaffar Leghari had stated that ***"a killer has to be killed"***.

Residents of Orangi, a predominantly poor *mohajir* area of Karachi's West district that was one of the worst affected by violence in 1995, were attempting to escape the violence by taking refuge with friends and relatives

in other parts of the city. While Orangi residents were fleeing to parts of Central district, residents of Central district were seeking refuge in Gulshan-e Iqbal in the east or Clifton in the south. But while some areas of Karachi were relatively safer than others in 1990s, there was no such thing as absolute safety for the Karachi's residents.

Even in South district, home to Karachi's political and business elite, between 125 and 184 killings were reported in 1995, while in the newly created Malir district on the city's outskirts, about 120 killings were reported during 1995. Relatively peaceful areas like Clifton, already more expensive than neighbourhoods in East, West and Central districts, had seen real estate price increases of 20 to 40pc in two years 1995-96.

One businessman who relocated three times in order to escape extortionists' demands for *bhatta*, stated his belief that people who wanted to escape Karachi could leave the city and move to a safer, and cheaper, part of the country. Many *mohajirs* in fact had escaped the situation in Karachi by fleeing to northern Pakistan including **Ansar Burney**, the known Human Rights flag bearer. In 1995, he shifted to Islamabad and then to UK.

It also remained a fact that ID card counterfeiting rackets flourished high in Pakistan during those years; that people who obtained such cards [then available for Rs:500 to Rs:2000 [£3-7 only] moved to **"various parts of the country safely under new identity"**.

The nut-shell remained that gruesome acts of violence were committed by both the sides and the regime also used extra-judicial ways to eliminate the militant backbone of the MQM. Dozens of policemen were slaughtered by MQM militants, but hundreds of MQM activists were also put to death in the most brutal manner.

By 1996, leaders of the Nadeem Commandos and Black Tigers, the two terror groups and the target killers, were all eliminated.

In 1997, MQM changed the word *Mohajir* in their names to '*muttahida*' [united] to suggest that they were no more a *Mohajir* ethnic party. It then began explaining itself as a secular, centralist national party.

In 2002, MQM became an ally of Gen Musharraf and a new crop of leaders in MQM started the process of rebuilding newer Political relationship. Altaf Hussain continued to control the party from London.

In 2006, the Federal Court of Canada declared the MQM as a terrorist organization, not allowing party members to visit and stay in Canada, and considered it a serious security threat to Canada. The Court said:

'...the MQM is engaged in the harassment of opponents and has used the proceeds of crime to fund the party.'

MQM always insisted that it never indulged in violence; but police records and the party's opponents tell another tale. The police claimed that even after the NRO was rescinded, none of the MQM cases were reopened for re-investigation or prosecution and CJP Iftikhar M Chaudhry's Supreme Court never bothered to take up the biggest anomaly of Pakistan's judicial history.

[When Gen Musharraf promulgated the National Reconciliation Ordinance [NRO] in 2007, MQM was its biggest beneficiary as the ordinance had annulled 3,775 mostly criminal cases against its members.]

Top MQM leadership including Saleem Shehzad, Dr Farooq Sattar, Dr Imran Farooq and Ishratul Ebad were nominated as accused in 68 cases of murders, 30 cases of attempted murders and 10 cases of kidnapping; Altaf Hussain alone was accused in 31 cases of murder.

Like other key-political parties in Pakistan like PML[N], PPP, JUI[F], PML[Q] etc, MQM, too, never operated like a political party at all. A democratic or a political party culture prepares its cadre for a succession of leadership. People should be able to disagree with their leaders without fearing for their life. Altaf Hussain and its MQM had no succession plan and it never liked dissent like Nawaz Sharif, Zardari and *Maulana* Fazlur Rehman.

"The moment Altaf Hussain feared that Mustafa Kamal will surpass him in popularity, he got him sidelined.

The fear came true; Mustafa Kamal announced his own political party later in 2016 – the full details are available in the next book: The Living History of Pakistan Vol-IV"

During Gen Musharraf's military regime [1999-2008], the dead / forgotten APMSO also started regenerating its militant wing – which had shown their

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-III

muscles during the 2007 anti-Musharraf Lawyers Movement because the MQM was and had been in close association with the General.

How the nation could forget a heart breaking episode of **12th May 2007** when MQM and APMSO allegedly instigated violence on the streets of Karachi to offer bloody welcome to the deposed Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar M Chaudhry in Karachi by offering gift of 43 dead bodies and 153 injured persons in hospitals.

[for details '**Judges & Generals in Pakistan Vol-II**' [2012] Chapter 45, pp515-527, GHP Surrey UK is referred]

After 2008's general elections MQM joined the PPP-led coalition government along with the *Pushtun* nationalist party the ANP. All three parties, the PPP, MQM and ANP were on one pitch then - struggling to reign in their respective 'rouge elements' in the shape of sponsored student organisations - nevertheless, the APMSO prevailed.

In 2009, the US Consul General in Karachi Stephen Fakan revealed in a cable that:

'MQM has a militant group named Good Friends having thirty five thousand members, of which ten thousand are active. MQM has been getting the funds from India to continue its activities in Karachi.'