

Scenario 188

ELECTORAL REFORMS DRAMA

In Pakistan, year 2013 witnessed numerous incidents of malpractice, rigging, improper investigations, and incompetence regarding general elections. Mass rigging was not only witnessed, recorded, and documented by the civil society, concerned political parties, and international bodies but vote-recount was made into a priority in many consistencies.

The **European Union Election Observer Mission**, in its May 2013 General Elections Report, noted that:

"Fundamental problems remain with the legal framework and the implementation of certain provisions, leaving future processes vulnerable to malpractice and Pakistan not fully meeting its obligations to provide citizens the right and opportunity to stand as candidates and to vote. To make future elections more credible there is a need to ensure that they are aligned with the expectations of all stakeholders."

Pakistan's Political Party Order 2002 outlines constitutional framework for the intra-party elections but unfortunately none of the political party in Pakistan's pseudo democratic landscape follow it; the civil dictators heads of family-owned political parties do not allow these constitutional guidelines to be implemented. This malpractice has been made mandatory through 18th Constitutional Amendment in Pakistan – what a pity.

On 11th May 2014; PTI Chairman Imran Khan had, at a rally in Islamabad, called for sweeping electoral reforms, including resignations by all sitting members of the ECP, a change in the mode of selection criteria for caretaker governments, complete autonomy for the ECP to hold errant Returning Officers [ROs] accountable, timely disposal of election petitions and machine-based voting.

On 10th June 2014; Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif wrote to the National Assembly speaker, asking him to constitute a special parliamentary committee comprising members of the two houses of parliament to take up the issue of electoral reforms adding that he was open to electoral reforms,

including a change in the selection criterion for caretaker governments, provided all political parties represented in parliament built up a consensus.

PTI's call for sit-in on 14th August 2014 instant in Islamabad was also a consideration. Whether the move was aimed at countering the PTI ongoing campaign for wide-ranging electoral reforms, analysts held the prime minister made a wise decision to formally engage all political forces in the process. The letter contained that:

"Given the importance of the matter, the National Assembly and the Senate may consider setting up a parliamentary committee on electoral reforms to prepare comprehensive recommendations in respect of electoral reforms required to ensure free, fair and transparent elections in the country."

In his letter, the prime minister referred to two earlier reports, one each by the committees of the two houses of parliament, which remained inconclusive because of the expiry of the previous National Assembly. The new committee could draw upon recommendations of the two earlier reports — report of a sub-committee of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs relating to amendments to electoral laws [Oct 2011]; and report of the Senate Special Committee on Election Issues [Feb 2013].

The parliamentary committee, the PM wrote to the speaker, might comprise representatives of political parties from both the treasury and opposition members in both the houses.

"It may include suggestions to amend the constitutional provisions relating to caretaker governments and the adoption of the latest technology for holding elections." The PM suggested and its final report to the speaker was desired within three months.

PM Sharif once again, unwittingly though, demonstrated that when it comes to important decisions, be on economic or political fronts, he trusts none other than Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. In the opening paragraph of the letter, the prime minister attributed his awareness on the subject of electoral reforms to Mr Dar.

The Senate Committee's earlier report, cited in the prime minister's letter, had recommended amendments to the Constitution:

- *....to make production of the national identity card at the time of election mandatory;*

-disclosure of secret information by an employee of the ECP to be punishable with imprisonment of up to five years or fine up to Rs:5 million, or both; and
-setting up of a local commission system for recording of evidence for speedy trial of election petitions.

PTI'S Information Secretary MNA Dr Shireen Mazari, told the media that her party was already holding consultations with political parties sitting on the opposition benches for electoral reforms. On prime minister's letter, she said: "*Since the PTI has no representation in the Senate, I don't know how the proposed committee will be constituted. Let's see how the issue plays out before the house.*"

REFORMS COMMITTEE NAMED:

On 25th July 2014; Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq constituted a 33-member parliamentary committee on electoral reforms to evaluate shortcomings of the previous electoral process and make recommendations to hold free, fair and transparent elections.

It had already been decided on the Parliament's floor on 19th July that 11 parliamentarians of the Upper House and the 22 parliamentarians of the Lower House would be part of the committee while the Chairman Senate Syed Nayyar Hussain Bokhari would forward the list of 11 parliamentarians to the Speaker National Assembly to constitute a committee of 33 members.

According to ensuing notification the PML[N] nominated eight members including Senators Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Malik Rafique Rajwana, Zahid Hamid, Anusha Rehman, Lt Gen (Rtd) Abdul Qadir Baluch, Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Abdul Hakeem Baluch and Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry for the electoral reforms committee.

The PPP, the major opposition party in the National Assembly, nominated Syed Naveed Qamar, Shazia Mari, Senator Aitzaz Ahsan, Senator Mian Raza Rabbani and Senator Farooq Hamid Naek for the committee.

The PTI nominated Shafqat Mehmood, Dr Shireen Mazari and Dr Arif Alvi for the electoral reforms committee. Senator Col Tahir Hussain Mashhadi, Naeema Kishwar Khan and Dr Farooq Sattar were to represent MQM in the said electoral reforms committee.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-VI

The government and opposition parties agreed to give voice to all the parties which had their representation in the Senate or the National Assembly, thus the rest of the parties, including one member parties like PKMAP, PML[Z], Awami Muslim League etc were also there to contribute towards that noble cause as part of the committee.

The members of the committee themselves had to select a chairman to head the committee. The PML[N] leadership was seen interested to get the slot of the Chairman for its Minister Zahid Hamid who had already served as law minister in Gen Musharraf government BUT finally Senator Ishaq Dar held that portfolio.

On 19th September 2014; the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms, met for the first time since the protesting Imran Khan's PTI and Dr Tahirul Qadri's Pakistan Awami Tehreek [PAT] descended on the capital, and observed that there were ***"complications, confusions, and an absence of coordination in the 2013 general elections."***

The committee, chaired by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and consisting of nearly all the parties represented in parliament – with the exception of the boycotting PTI – examined a host of issues involved in the process.

In the then held joint session of parliament, legislators from several parties in the house admitted that there were apparent irregularities in May 2013's elections. These included allegations of improper use of magnetic ink, the printing of additional ballot papers and vote verification, most of which were raised by the PTI. The committee was shocked to learn that the Printing Corporation of Pakistan [PCP] used 66-year-old machines to print the ballot papers for the 2013 general elections.

On that day, the committee was briefed by officials from several key departments involved in the electoral process, including the National Database and Registration Authority [NADRA], the Election Commission [ECP] itself, the PCP and the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research [PCSIR].

During the briefings, the committee raised questions around the use of magnetic ink. They inquired why NADRA and ECP insisted that voters only use the expensive ink to stamp ballot papers. Next session was to be held on 29th September 2014 for briefing on the points raised.

An ECP source said that staff inefficiency and lack of interest had caused several problems and errors at polling stations during the elections. The committee also asked the ECP to explain whether ballot papers were

printed from a private printing press in Urdu Bazaar, Lahore, as claimed by the PTI.

Till ending February 2015; no meaningful consensus could be viewed amongst the 33-member Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms; complete four months were wasted. Ishaq Dar publicly maintained that the delay in summoning a meeting of the committee was caused on the way to convince the PTI to return to the assemblies and engage in the constitutional process of debating and agreeing on electoral reforms.

The PTI leadership was then insisting for a judicial commission to review May 2013's election results as a pre-condition for its return to the assemblies. The Committee faced its first setback when the PTI members boycotted its proceedings following their resignations from the National Assembly and the party had not participated in any of its sessions since.

In the meantime, fresh Senate elections for half of its members popped up.

A sub-Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Federal Minister Zahid Hamid to go through all laws and prepare recommendations. However, since Zahid Hamid's resignation as minister at the end of November 2014, the sub-committee went slow till 4th March 2015 when meeting of the Sub-Committee was summoned. However, till then, considerable home work had been completed especially in the fields of biometric system and use of electronic voting machines.

LAHORE & OKARA BY-POLLS ANALYSED:

On 22nd August 2015, the Election Tribunal probing rigging allegations in NA-122, PP-147 and PP-148 announced its verdict and declared the elections null and void. The Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP] de-notified Ayaz Sadiq, the sitting Speaker of the National Assembly since 30 months after it received the tribunal's verdict.

[A petition had been filed by Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf [PTI]'s Chairman Imran Khan challenging Speaker Ayaz Sadiq's victory in the 2013 elections. Mr Khan, who had been defeated by Ayaz Sadiq in the constituency, had claimed of widespread rigging.]

Mr Khan termed the judgment as a victory for *insaf* [justice]; showing will, muscles and perseverance he fought for injustice against all odds.

Till **17th August 2015**, Judge Kazim Ali Malik heard the case and reserved the verdict to be announced later. While concluding his arguments, Anees Ali Hashmi, counsel for Khan, told the judge that nearly 45,000 invalid votes had been polled in the constituency; wrong national identity card [CNIC] numbers had been found on a large number of ballot counterfoils; some digits were found missing on many counterfoils. Verification of counterfoils by the NADRA and the report of an inquiry commission suggested that the ECP's record was not accurate. The vote counting process was correct. The number of votes counted by presiding officers was different from that counted by the inquiry commission.

*[Earlier, on **8th December 2014**, Judge Kazim Ali Malik had rejected NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq's request to the tribunal against opening of bags. A single-member commission was ordered to check the records and recount the votes after opening the ballot bags in NA-122.]*

NA-122 was one of the four constituencies where the PTI had sought a recount and verification of voters' thumb impressions. Ayaz Sadiq had defeated Mr Khan in May 2013 general elections and the PTI challenged the results. Imran Khan criticised the election tribunal for not opening up NA-122 bags despite an overwhelming evidence of irregularities while the Speaker Ayaz Sadiq was seeking shelter behind courts' stay orders, one after another, instead of having the moral courage to go through re-counting and verification process. In fact, Speaker Ayaz had lost his moral credibility and should have resigned from Speaker's slot till the completion of the verification process.

Imran Khan had submitted an evidence report to judge Kazim Ali Malik pertaining to alleged rigging in the May 2013 elections two days earlier and got his statement recorded in person; the judge took two days to decide.

Earlier, six witnesses who were polling agents of the PTI, in their written statements alleged that they were forcefully expelled from the polling booths by the presiding officers. They alleged that the presiding officers themselves stamped the ballot-papers on tiger, election symbol of ruling PML[N]. The witnesses said they protested the 'unfairness' but to no avail.

On other hand, the counsel of Speaker Ayaz Sadiq had decided to challenge the Tribunal's order before the Lahore High Court because the tribunal judge had heard Imran Khan and his six witnesses but had not given a chance to the speaker and his witnesses.

Barrister Asjad Saeed, counsel for Ayaz Sadiq had also contended that the tribunal's decision was in violation of the Supreme Court's order in which the apex court had held that tribunal should determine the maintainability of the petition filed first and then take the case forward. He added that the tribunal had issued its decision without determining the maintainability of the petition.

[On 10th December 2014; the Election Tribunal in its 18-page detailed order appointed a one-man commission comprising retired Session judge Mian Ghulam Hussain to inspect the record and ballot bags in the constituency besides recounting each vote cast therein. The tribunal also ordered the verification of Forms 14, 15 and 16 issued by the ECP to the presiding officers in the said constituency, with directions to verify votes through thumb impressions.]

The order had directed District Returning Officer and Treasury Officer to make fool-proof arrangements for the transportation of election record from the district treasury to official building earmarked for the inspection. The tribunal also directed the CCPO Lahore to ensure complete security to the officials engaged in transportation of the election record.

Later, Barrister Asjad, counsel for Ayaz Sadiq, argued that the NADRA and the local commission had not concluded that there had been rigging; the inquiry commission had told the tribunal that Sadiq had a lead of 8,851 votes even if the votes, reported invalid, were excluded from the record. The inquiry commission had examined Forms 14 and 15, thumb impressions of the presiding officers and the various signatures in the presence of representatives of the PTI and the PML[N]. In short, Saeed had called Khan's allegations baseless.

In its report, the NADRA said it had processed 184,151 votes through the Automated Fingerprint Identification System [AFIS] to match fingerprints on counterfoils with fingerprint data of registered voter, held with the NADRA. The software had verified the thumb impressions on 73,478 counterfoils, nearly 40% of the votes cast in the constituency. The report stated that 93,852 votes had not been processed because of the poor quality of the fingerprints.

The NADRA said that during authentication they had discovered that there were 6,123 votes cast on which the CNIC numbers used were invalid. There were 2,862 votes which carried notarisation issues with some digits missing on CNIC numbers. There were 3,440 votes on which the writing was illegible. There were 370 counterfoils on which the CNIC number had

not been noted. On 255 counterfoils, more than one CNIC numbers had been noted. They found 1,715 votes on which there were no fingerprints to scan. Additionally there were 570 CNIC numbers which were not registered in NA-122.

On 7th February 2015, the PTI counsel had cross-examined Sadiq. Counsel for Sadiq had said his client's failure to reply to some of the questions did not establish rigging. On 16th May, lawyers from both sides had cross-examined NADRA's Director General Muzaffar Hussain Shah about the ink used for taking the thumb impressions.

During **6th July 2015**'s Tribunal's proceedings; the judge repeatedly asked Ayaz Sadiq's counsel to respond to Imran Khan's objections one-by-one but he had no concrete arguments.

Ayaz Sadiq announced to challenge the tribunal's decision in the Supreme Court. Speaking to the media outside the tribunal Ali Sadiq, the son of Ayaz Sadiq and his lawyer, said the tribunal's decision did not state that his father was involved in rigging. PM Nawaz Sharif said the verdict of the Election Tribunal was part of the legal process and all political parties should respect the ruling.

Throughout the day the temperature outside the tribunal remained high as PTI and PML[N] workers chanted slogans in favour of their respective leaders. Many times the two charged up sides came close to clashing but the situation was kept under control by a large contingent of police commandos and policewomen deployed on site. Earlier, security around the Election Commission office was tightened and roads towards the commission sealed; entry of unauthorised persons was also prohibited.

Several PTI and PML[N] workers were injured in a clash with the police outside the Election Commission office as they waited for the result to be announced. The Election Tribunal faxed its verdict to the ECP Punjab while the Election Commissioner Punjab, Masood Malik, confirmed receipt of a facsimile of the Election Tribunal's ruling.

After Tribunal's announcement, PTI chief Imran Khan held that the Judicial Commission, which had probed the elections 2013 in general, too had held the ECP responsible for mismanagement in polls. Khan did not mean to upset Ayaz Sadiq in person [*as they were class-mates too*], but his objective was to mend the faulty electoral system.

On 25th August 2015; Punjab's Law Minister Rana Sanaullah accused Judge Kazim Malik of 'requesting' PML[N]'s ticket for his son while Justice

Malik in response asked Rana Sana to substantiate his claim with proof. Rana Sanaullah maintained that when PML[N] declined to give the party ticket to the son of retired judge, the latter turned against the party.

A similar accusation was also hurled against Justice Kazim Malik by Ayaz Sadiq in **Geo News TV** program '**Capital Talk**' of a day earlier. The accusations and counter-accusations began after the verdict was issued declaring the election of NA-122 null and void – NOT before.

On 11th October 2015; in the re-poll, the ruling PML[N] won the battle royal in NA-122 after polling 4,161 votes more than its rival PTI but could not secure the Punjab Assembly's PP-147 seat. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq of the PML[N] defeated Abdul Aleem Khan of the PTI in a close contest by-poll to reclaim the coveted Lahore seat.

PTI leaders appeared to take comfort from the narrow margin of the loss. Aleem Khan pointed out that the PTI had won PP-147. PTI had lost the NA seat in 2013 elections by 9,000 votes, whereas its nominee reduced the gap to just 4,061 votes. The PTI accepted the results while saying that:

"If the government had not reworked the voter lists and moved some voters out of NA-122, we would have won this. We have secured two legs of the throne of Lahore today. Loss by a few thousand votes is no real loss. Our confidence after today's election has increased not decreased."

According to unofficial results consolidated from different polling stations, in NA-122 Ayaz Sadiq bagged 76,204 votes while his opponent secured 72,043 ballots. In the PP-147 by-poll, however, PTI's Shoaib Siddiqui defeated PML[N]'s Mohsin Latif; Siddiqui bagged 31,993 votes while his opponent, who had won the seat in the 2013 elections, secured 28,641 votes. Mohsin Latif of the PML[N] was Kulsoom Nawaz [the sitting PM's wife]'s real nephew.

The irony of fate was that PPP's candidate Barrister Amir Hassan could only get 4400 votes from the ECP's list of 3,49,000 voters for that constituency. ECP was likely to confiscate the surety bonds of the PPP candidate. The PPP had ruled over Pakistan for five years from 2008-13; they did not contribute anything for the welfare of the public – they were thoroughly corrupt - most people had commented.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-VI

PP-147 was the only seat in Lahore where the PML[N] suffered a defeat for the second time in the last 12 years in the by-polls. Last time the PML[N] lost this seat was in early 2003 after it was vacated by Sardar Ayaz Sadiq – he, in the 2002 general elections; he had vacated this seat after retaining the National Assembly seat. PML[Q]’s candidate Aleem Khan had won that seat who was later inducted into the cabinet of Ch Pervaiz Elahi.

An interesting thing related to the victory of Shoaib Siddiqui is his second victory in the by-polls. Last time, he won the election in 2006 on the PML[Q] ticket – but in the general elections of 2013 he had lost to Mohsin Latif.

Astonishing it was that voter turnout for the NA-122 and PP-147 by-elections picked up momentum in the afternoon hours, as large queues started forming in front of the polling stations. A large number of people, men and women, young and old – thronged to the polling stations in Garhi Shahu, Samanabad and around. Compared to other localities, a high turnout of female voters was observed at polling stations there. Young voters were seen queuing up outside polling stations an hour before the voting started; some of them said they were voting for the first time.

More than 8,000 police officials and hundreds of army and Rangers troops were deployed as part of the security arrangements for the said by-elections. No major incident was reported, however, in few altercations four people were injured during the clashes.

But did the result mattered to the larger scheme of politics of the country? Could a country of 200 million spread over 796,095 sq kms be seen through the keyhole of a by-election in small territorial swaths? Since three of the country’s largest parties had invested incredible amounts of time and money in Lahore, and since the whole political system had been held hostage by this part of city, it did serve some useful purposes to distil broader patterns of national politics from those by-elections.

Referring to Syed Talat Hussain’s analysis appeared in ***‘the News’ of 12th October 2015;***

‘On the positive side of the balance sheet of national politics, the most dominant trend was that of growing competition for power. The PTI has changed the organo-gram of political hierarchy that had started to look like a firm run by family chief executives.

Whether by-elections or local bodies polls, Punjab’s politics has already undergone a structural change. New groups with resources,

ambitions, frustrations, dreams and plans have found a platform to assert themselves in a manner the province has not seen since the days of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's PPP.'

Think about Imran Khan's 4,595 votes in 1997 and then 72043 in 2015 - he was crashing through the doors of national power with millions rocking at his rhetoric. And this was happening in Punjab, which for long had been in the grip of Sharifs; the source of their dominance of national politics. Elections like the one in NA-122 were not about registered voters; they resonated even more with under-aged youngsters.

The other welcome political trend was that political monopolies were coming to an end. For different reasons, urban Sindh was opening up to the possibility of an even playing field for political forces that had been kept out of the realm through force and coercion - Hyderabad and Karachi cities were no more under threats of MQM. Similarly, Punjab though was still being ruled by the Sharifs but started waving welcome flags for others too – thus making politics hard and competitive.

As margins for victory and defeat had gone narrower, future elections could demand counting of local provisions like sewerage, electricity, infrastructure, schools and hospitals. The candidates would be required to speak on national issues like corruption, accountability, governance, performance, leadership, national economy and even issues of foreign and defence policy. PPP's five years performance was judged on the same values so the whole PPP was kicked out from Punjab during 2013 elections.

On negative side; NA-122 by-elections divulged political ruthlessness, mad spirit of more hatred and propaganda from both sides. Money was spent like mud; resources were splurged as if there were no tomorrow and media was used to its heights and all media inmates were heftily and happily obliged. Countless issues were raised, from Jewish funding to Nandipur bungling, but no cogent agenda was placed before the voters.

The entire energy was spent on spitting on the opponent in the most regrettable manner - completely contemptuous in all respects; the same could be avoided. Talat Hussain rightly pointed out that:

'National dreams are not built on heaps of hate. Politics is not a gladiatorial contest in which one must die for the other to live. Brutal attempts at getting power or staying in power – even when made in the most democratic way – endanger democracy.'

The crux remains that close contest between the PTI and PML[N] in 2015's by-polls had nothing to rejoice for any of them but it brought a number of lessons for both; the PTI learnt lessons to review its way of nominating candidates in future polls.

While the government machinery and its functionaries put up a heroic effort to ensure a smooth sailing for the PML[N] candidate, the result was not to their satisfaction. It was in fact an alarm bell for the party which was ruling the centre for the third time and the Punjab for the sixth time. No observer could imagine the PTI would poll such big number of votes against the sitting governments.

The PML[N] though retained its seat by a thin margin, it rather needed re-evaluation and review of its big loss of votes which literally speaking of party losing grip over Lahore politics. During initial days of election campaign, the top ministers of Nawaz Sharif cabinet started boasting that Ayaz Sadiq would defeat the PTI candidate by far bigger margin than what their candidate had defeated Imran Khan in 2013 polls but nil performance seen.

Imran Khan lately adapted to the old political sermons which he had been condemning as the '*politics of status quo*'. When question rose about how to win Lahore polls, Khan went for the wealthy Aleem Khan which ended in embarrassment. When the PTI chose Aleem Khan calling him his 'trump card', many disgruntled party workers and opponents had predicted a certain defeat of the PTI, however, Khan took it as challenge and saved his respect for the next local body polls.

NA-144 OKARA-II TRUE STORY: Meanwhile, in NA-144 [Okara-II], an independent candidate Riazul Haq Juj won the by-polls by defeating the PML[N]'s candidate Ali Arif with a huge margin; Haq bagged 83,240 votes while Ali Arif got 41,050 votes. Here PML[N]'s Arif was disqualified by an Election Tribunal but even then the party gave him ticket. In this constituency, the PTI suffered a setback as its candidate Ashraf Sohna got only 7,180 votes. As Sohna secured less than 10 per cent of the total votes on electoral roll, the ECP confiscated his surety bond.

It was disappointing event in Okara-II where PTI's candidate Ashraf Sohna had lost the election as well as his surety money with the ECP. The analysis of this defeat indicated to another plus point of the PTI as a political party.

The PTI lost this seat just due to internal miscalculation. The PTI ticket for this seat was being awarded to Riazul Haq Juj who was basically a PML[N] worker but had left the party because PML[N] had announced to give ticket

to the same Ali Arif who was disqualified by the Election Tribunal. The PTI's MPA Shafqat Ranbera told Imran Khan that Riazul Haq's position in the area was strong; local people liked him and if PTI would nominate him as his candidate he would of course join the PTI in the formal way.

MPA Shafqat Ranbera's proposal was discussed in the PTI's executive committee meeting; Imran Khan was willing to nominate him as PTI's candidate there but Shah Mahmood Qureshi and the majority members came up with an alternate proposal that PPP's Ashraf Sohna had already joined the PTI there so he got the logical prime right to get the ticket whereas Haq would join PTI when he'll get the ticket.

As Ashraf Sohna and Shah Mahmood Qureshi had been very close together in the PPP thus the old friendship prevailed; Sohna got PTI's nomination. Disappointed Riazul Haq Juj announced to fight the seat independently. Shafqat Ranbera MPA helped Haq with all PTI's 83000 votes thus he got success.

Here another tone of Pakistani voters was seen – a remarkable conclusion. Whole of the Pakistan, especially high ups of the PTI, were of the view that the voters come after Imran Khan so that Mr Khan's person could make any candidate win – here the impression was blown up in vacuum. PTI's ticket was with Ashraf Sohna; Imran Khan held the main gathering during election campaign for him, thousands of people attended Khan's address but not a single voter stamped the PTI's election mark - 'Bat'.

The crowd of thousands attended Imran Khan's address but as they considered Riazul Haq better candidate than Ashraf Sohna so all of their votes went to the independent.

PML[N] had immediately realized their mistake too. They came up with open announcements that in Okara-II the match was between two candidates of PML[N]. Nawaz Sharif conveyed the message to Riazul Haq to join PML[N] again and also offered him a seat in the cabinet.

On the other hand, the main PTI body criticized Shah Mahmood Qureshi so much that once there were feelings that he might leave PTI like Makhdoom Javed Hasmi – both from Multan.

HIGH CRY FOR MOMENTOUS REFORMS:

On 18th September 2016; the **Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms** which was constituted in July 2014 to submit its report within three months, had set a record by overshooting its target date by a full 23 months till then. Not that the committee had been sitting idle all this time: it held 18 meetings and its three sub-committees met 72 times. Over this period, the committee expanded its scope and took cognisance of some election-related developments seen during the past two years.

The committee had already lost the best time to develop a consensus: as the nation was getting closer to the next election date. The opposition apprehended that the PML[N] would be hastily rushing through the package of electoral reforms legislation after it is finalised in the committee as it did in the case of 22nd Constitutional Amendment which changed the eligibility criteria for the Chief Election Commissioner [CEC] and the members of the Election Commission of Pakistan.

In fact, the electoral reforms committee had been sitting on the constitutional amendment until the retirement of the four ECP members thus creating a constitutional void and then it introduced the amendment in parliament. Given time constraints, the two houses of parliament quickly passed the legislation.

Any package of electoral reforms proposed by the parliamentary committee was expected to benefit from the recommendations contained in the report of the **2013 General Elections Inquiry Commission**. Although the commission did not find any evidence of organised vote rigging which could alter the election result in a material sense, it did point out a number of planning, execution and management flaws in the electoral process.

Many of these issues pointed out therein were to be resolved by the ECP that must improve its internal procedures and lines of communication and reporting. However, some aspects required legislation such as obligating the ECP to make its statement of counts from each constituency public on its website.

The ECP lately removed some election-related material such as copies of the candidates' nomination papers and legislators' statements of assets and liabilities from its website on the pretext that the law does not expressly demand that. But the democratic norms stipulate that these documents be made public; such lacunae should have been removed by the ECP itself by making appropriate rules.

Automated identification of the voter and casting of ballots were other aspects of electoral reforms demanded by a section of society. Many

countries have returned to conventional balloting after experimenting with electronic voting; India is the best quote in this regard; so utmost care was needed.

Another important aspect of electoral reforms was related to political finance and election spending; an area of ever-growing concern in all democracies. The ever-increasing cost of election and thus the corresponding increase in the influence of money on elections remained worrisome for all.

The ECP completely failed in enforcing the then ongoing election spending limits on candidates for provincial and national legislatures and local governments all over Pakistan. Candidates had violated with impunity the spending ceiling of Rs:1 million and Rs:1.5m for provincial and National Assembly constituencies respectively in the 2013 general election and subsequent by-elections.

Pakistan's laws never placed an election spending limit on political parties. The changing nature of election and the increasing tendency to use expensive electronic media time for electioneering by political parties necessitated proper legislation for that menace too.

The prevailing election laws in Pakistan provide for the annual submission of statements of assets and liabilities by each legislator; the ECP receives these statements and publishes them via gazette notifications but the ECP's job is considered over. The ECP does not even check them for completeness.

The law neither authorises the ECP to scrutinise the statements nor has it the capacity to undertake the said huge exercise seriously – and that is good. The respective opponents do that job of scrutiny in a better way; the government expenses are saved, too.

Similarly, political parties are also required to submit their annual audited accounts to the ECP on a prescribed format. A review of these statements for almost all mainstream parties for the last seven years indicated that there were serious gaps in the statements submitted.

For example, the sources of party funding were never specifically identified; there was a need to bring in serious reforms in political finance. The ECP always remained ill equipped for the job. It had established a political finance wing around the time of the 2013 general election but that one-man wing had been lying dormant since its sole director left the job.

Till ending days of year 2016, the committee made recommendations in respect of electoral reforms, ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections, including adoption of the latest technology, available for holding elections, along with draft legislation and constitutional amendments, if required for this purpose – **but the whole exercise was an eye wash only.**

That so called **ELECTION BILL 2017** unified various elections laws: starting with steps to strengthen the ECP financially and administratively it covered provisions of voting by overseas Pakistanis, better system for publication of results, greater use of NADRA data, revision of electoral rolls, delimitation of constituencies, granting more time for filing objections to the ECP, regulation of local government elections, and special measures to secure women's voting rights. The cropped up features were:

- *Although the ECP has the power to suspend election officials BUT it is being given to respective governments to decide the transfers of election crew like the District Police Officers or Commissioner during the polling process – NOT acceptable so that ruling regimes should not get desired results.*
-
- *The ECP can disqualify elected members found to have submitted false statements of election expenses or false wealth statements. Such matters are suggested to be referred to the Session Courts – NOT acceptable given its lengthy procedures and appeals. Only the ECP should be able to adjudicate, no one else.*

If disagreements arise; the matter be appealed against in the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

- *The bill limits freedom of information and access; the media would no longer be part of the scrutiny and would not be authorized to see the polling process – should NOT be acceptable.*
-
- *In the new bill, the ECP officers can face up to five years in prison and a fine of Rs:5 million if they **'leak information or data to any other person'**. [And yet the penalty for those involved in the rigging process is far less, about 3 years in prison and a fine of Rs:100,000] – NOT acceptable as all the info about the candidates from public should be known to and available for public.*

[Spearhead Analysis on media pages dated **31st January 2017** researched by ShahBano Khan is referred.]

On 6th March 2017; the ECP announced it would boycott proceedings of parliamentary committee on electoral reforms after it faced critical remarks from the PTI in the committee's last meeting.

PTI MNA Shireen Mazari during the meeting of sub-committee on electoral reforms questioned the ECP's neutrality and its capacity to hold fair elections. Her criticism prompted ECP officials to walk out of the meeting. Later, another PTI Senator filed a privilege motion against the conduct of ECP officials in the Senate Secretariat.

The ECP held a meeting in its head office to discuss the development and issued a statement, conveying to the National Assembly speaker that it would not be taking part in the meetings of parliamentary committee on electoral reforms.

It claimed that at the time of formation of the parliamentary panel, it was decided that all its proceedings would be in-camera. It demanded the speaker take action against the members who breached this agreed upon code of conduct.

On 6th April 2017; the ECP warned all that time was running out for the enactment of electoral reforms. Expressing concern over the delay in the promulgation of the Election Laws 2017, the ECP wrote to the NA's Speaker:

*"The Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms **to finalise its recommendations and lay the bill before the parliament for making necessary legislation and enact the Election Act 2017 as early as possible so the ECP could start and complete its work in time according to the new law**".*

The draft Election Law 2017 was earlier presented by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar — who headed the parliamentary committee — in an interim report on 20th December 2016 before both houses of parliament. The committee had decided to seek feedback from all stakeholders, including parliamentarians; a final draft was to be completed within 30 days once all recommendations had been incorporated.

The ECP's letter, however, maintained that:

"Under Section 14 of the draft Election Law 2017, the ECP was required to prepare a comprehensive action plan specifying all legal and administrative measures that have been taken or are required

*to be taken **at least six months before the general elections are due to be held.***

Keeping in view the importance and magnitude of work, it is apprehended that in case of delayed enactment of new election act by the parliament, timely completion of the aforesaid activities could become a huge challenge for the ECP, impacting quality of elections."

The additional tasks included *"delimitation / re-description of constituencies; revision of electoral rolls; appointment and training of DROs, ROs, AROs, polling staff; printing of ballot papers and engagement of printing presses; establishment of the Result Management System; arrangements for election observers; appointment of appellate and election tribunals and ensuring security measures."*

However; following the ECP's urgent call to finalise legislation on the Election Law 2017, the government, the opposition and the ECP opted to shift the onus of delay onto one another.

The two main opposition parties — the PPP and the PTI — put blame on the government and the ECP, whereas the ECP maintained that its hands were tied in the absence of the required legislation.

The PTI's Dr Arif Alvi lashed out at the ECP and alleged that the ECP did not seem to be interested in carrying out electoral reforms; no meeting for the past two months was held due to the ECP's boycott. Perhaps, the ECP had been **"deliberately delaying"** the process.

Dr Alvi regretted that there had been no progress on the use of Electronic Voting Machines [EVMs], biometric devices for verification of voters' identity and the right of vote to overseas Pakistanis. In fact the ECP had earlier committed that they were ready to use the biometric verification system, but later termed it **'risky'** as the data could be hacked.

In fact the government and the ECP were hands in glove with each other as **'...the delay suits the government as well and that PML[N] would not allow the ECP to hold next year's elections without enacting electoral reforms first'.**

Shazia Marri of the PPP agreed that the ECP had not been "pro-active"; the government was responsible for the delay. The PPP wanted to strengthen

the ECP and it seemed that the commission wanted autonomy, but the government's priorities were different.

PML[N]'s minister Dr Tariq Fazal held that in the last meeting, the opposition parties had sought time to review the draft before giving their final assent. Since then, they had been waiting for their response.

Meanwhile, ECP Secretary Fida Muhammad said the proposal of using EVMs and BVMs in the election, instead of ballot papers, had been incorporated in the draft election bill; but it was still in the draft stage.

The ECP had submitted a summary to the prime minister, requesting procurement of some of the machines to test them out first. The contracts for purchase of 185 EVMs and 100 BVMs had been signed and the machines would be available in June 2017. It was estimated that ECP would require at least 300,000 EVMs in the general elections, the cost of which would be over Rs:30 billion, including maintenance and services.

For country so poor like Pakistan, the EVM machines could be considered as luxury and wastage of money as the EVMs were to be mainly used after every five years – and in the age of silicon technology, the EVMs were sure to be like typewriters in the next elections.

WOMEN & MINORITY VOTES:

Referring to the Election Commission of Pakistan's data released to media on **1st January 2017;**

"Over 95 percent of registered women voters in at least 17 National Assembly constituencies did not cast their votes in the 2013 general elections."

A document prepared by the Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP] revealed that turnout of women voters was less than one per cent in five constituencies during May 2013 general elections; only one woman out of the total 138,910 registered voters in NA-33 [Upper Dir] had exercised her right to vote.

In the constituency adjacent to it, NA-34 [Lower Dir], women's turnout was 0.11pc as only 231 out of 206,566 voters had cast their ballots. In NA-37 [Kurram Agency], 459 out of 156,811 women voters used their right.

However, the constituency registered an overall low turnout as 2,072 men out of 230,107 male registered voters had cast their ballots.

In NA-34, located in the troubled Bajaur Agency, women's turnout was at 0.02pc and in NA-46, Khyber Agency - 0.2pc. The trend wasn't only limited to the tribal areas where certain cultural norms and the law and order situation could play a prohibitive role in this regard. Low women's turnout was also reported in some constituencies of large cities in Punjab like as NA-152 [Multan].

The turnout of women voters was alarmingly low in some rural areas of Punjab as 1.92pc as only 75,422 out of 3.9 million women voters had cast their ballots. The turnout of women voters was 2.13pc in NA-178 [Muzaffargarh], 2.24pc in the adjacent NA-177, 2.34pc in NA-175 [Rajanpur], 2.71pc in NA-174 [Rajanpur], and 2.82pc in NA-145 [Okara]. The turnout recorded in NA-61 [Chakwal] was 4.42pc and 9.52pc in NA-64 [Sargodha].

The turnout of women voters in NA-271 [Kharan, Balochistan] **was 3.51pc, but higher than the turnout for men, 3.04pc.** In NA-31 [Shangla], 4.59pc of registered women voters had cast their ballots.

Interestingly enough, the turnout figures for women outstripped those of men in some constituencies, including NA-48 [Islamabad] where the **women voters' turnout was 61.75pc, compared to 61.01pc of male voters.**

Similarly, in NA-51 [Rawalpindi] 53.24pc of registered women voters had cast their ballots compared to 52.31pc men. The difference in Attock's NA-58 was even higher — the women's turnout was 64.35pc while 61.81pc of registered male voters had cast their votes.

In NA-62 [Jhelum] 17.71pc women had voted, compared to 16.67pc men. Constituencies where the percentage of women voters was higher than that of male voters included NA-74 [Bhakkar], NA-93 [Toba Tek Singh], NA-101 [Gujranwala], NA-103 [Hafizabad], NA-111 and 112 [Sialkot], NA-115 and 116 [Narowal] and NA-180 [Muzaffargarh].

The ECP identified over 26,000 census blocks where the ratio of registered women voters was below 40pc of the total enrolled electorate; 10,440 of these census blocks were in Punjab alone.

As per data available **till ending year 2016**; Lahore topped in terms of the number of census blocks with low enrolment of women voters. The number of such blocks in provincial capital was 872, followed by Sialkot (755), Rahim Yar Khan (743), Sheikhpura (733), Narowal (620), Kasur (509), Bahawalnagar (501) and Jhang (490).

Sindh had 5,779 census blocks, including 1,575 in Karachi West, 629 in Karachi Central, 560 in Malir, 509 in Karachi East 401 in Korangi, 258 in Ghotki, 204 in Hyderabad, 131 in Khairpur and 117 in Kashmore.

In Khyber PK, the number of census blocks with less than 40pc registered women voters were 3,782, including 601 in Lower Dir, 600 in Kohistan, 469 in Upper Dir, 343 in Peshawar, 250 in Mardan, 147 in Mansehra, 138 in Chitral, 132 in Charsadda, 127 in Batgram and 103 in Bannu.

Balochistan had 3,539 such blocks, including 554 in Khuzdar, 315 in Kalat, 223 in Quetta, 208 in Dera Bugti, 196 in Killa Abdullah, 188 in Kohlu, 162 in Pishin, 143 in Awaran, 137 in Mastung, 132 in Lehri, 125 in Loralai, 121 in Labella, 114 in Kachhi and 105 in Jhal Magsi.

In Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA], the number of census blocks was 2,410. They included 736 clocks in North Waziristan, 350 in Bajaur, 337 in Mohmand, 266 in South Waziristan, 240 in Khyber agency, 141 in FR Bannu and 121 in Kurram agency. The Federal Capital had 53 such constituencies.

The MINORITY Vote:

Documents are abundantly available that how a large Christian organisation in Punjab, the All India Christian Association [AICA] backed Jinnah's call for a separate country.

"On June 23, 1947, when a resolution was moved in the Punjab Assembly to make Punjab part of Pakistan (which would come into being in August 1947), all the Christian members of the assembly voted for the resolution's passage."

[Nadeem Paracha's essay in daily 'Dawn' dated **15th January 2017** is referred]

In her book **Christians of Pakistan** Linda Walbridge writes that by the 1977 election, the PPP had lost much of its Christian electoral support due to the Bhutto regime's nationalisation of educational institutions run by Christian priests and nuns.

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-VI

In 1985, Gen Ziaul Haq introduced the separate electorate system in which Pakistan's minority groups could only vote for candidates belonging to their respective religions. This system stayed put across the 1988, 1990, 1993 and 1997 elections and the two major parties, the PPP and the PML[N] that came to power during these elections did not change it.

Since the Muslim candidates couldn't receive votes from minority groups anymore under the separate electorate system, minority interests were ignored by the parties. The system was finally abolished by Gen Musharraf regime [1999-2008] and joint electorates were reintroduced.

The minorities were clearly not happy with the PPP and PML[N] when they went out to vote during the 2002 election; a majority of Christians and Hindus in Pakistan voted for the King's Party PML[Q]. Rural Sindh's minorities though voted for the PPP but could not matter much because the MQM had received the bulk of Hindu and Christian votes in urban cities especially in Karachi.

During the 2008 election which marked the ouster of Gen Musharraf regime and when the economy had begun to nosedive and extremist violence was on the rise, the PPP and PML[N] managed to win back their minority voters. The Hindu and Christian vote in the Punjab was visibly split between the PPP and PML[N]; Hindus voted overwhelmingly for the PPP in rural areas of Sindh, for the MQM in major cities including Karachi.

During the May 2013 elections, the PPP regime at the centre was a disaster, but in Sindh it had done well because it swept the polls here. As per predictions appeared in media on 9th March 2013, the fate of as many as 96 NA and PA constituencies in Punjab and Sindh depended on how the minorities were to vote here.

The final results of the above mentioned constituencies showed that in 2013 polls, a majority of Hindu, Christian and Sikh votes in the Punjab went to PML[N], whereas in rural Sindh, Hindu votes were again cast in favour of the PPP though in lesser numbers compared to 2008 elections.

In Karachi, during the 2013 elections, Imran Khan's PTI bagged the majority of the city's Christian votes. According to media reports, MQM managed to sneak past PTI in some tight contests in Karachi due to Hindu votes; Hindu votes in Balochistan largely went to Baloch nationalist parties and PML[N], whereas in the Khyber PK, a bulk of minority votes were cast in favour of PTI.

But just as the importance of minority votes is increasing among mainstream parties, thus triggering certain minority-friendly legislation, the '**Ahmadiyya minority**' have been boycotting elections since 1974.

There were 119,749 registered *Ahmadi* voters, mainly in Punjab. Just before the 2013 elections, Imran Khan tried to bag *Ahmadi* votes by making some statements which were sympathetic to the plight of the *Ahmadis* but due to the criticism he received for that from the religious parties, he retracted his statements later.

GUIDELINES FOR PROPER REFORMS:

Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad, the former Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP], at media pages like of globalaffairs.com.pk suggested very cogent electoral reforms based on his personal experience in the institution – but in Pakistan's rotten '**mooroosiat**' [family dynasty politics] in the name of democracy would never allow any of the progressive way to flourish.

Mr Dilshad formulated these policy recommendations in the light of ongoing geo-political developments in Pakistan and the then prevailing national debate on electoral reforms – and considered them '**attainable, measurable and accountable**'. See some of the remarkable notes of advice:

- *The existing parliamentary system in Pakistan has largely failed. The country needs a hybrid system where the President should be elected directly by the citizens while the executive powers of the government are shared by the President and the Prime minister with an integrated system of counter checks & balances.*
-
- *The Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP] should be empowered to directly supervise the intra-party elections of political parties. Provisions of constitutional framework given in Political Party Order 2002 be made strictly to comply with.*
-
- *Political leaders should be allowed to function as political party's office bearers for only 2 consecutive terms to ensure that dynasty politics does not grow in the country any more - as in most developed nations.*
-

- *Political parties should be barred from opening and operating party head offices / offices abroad, as like of PPP's and PML[N] in Dubai & London etc.*
-
- *New senate constituencies should be marked for citizens of the state to directly elect senators as opposed to the current elections through electoral-college of provincial assemblies and seats reserved for women & technocrats.*
-
- *No candidate be allowed to contest election [**from Union Council member to the Senator – all inclusive**] unless he / she had not filed his / her tax return for the last 3-5 years at least; even though the Zero-Tax had been shown.*
-
- *The time for scrutiny of election candidates and their nomination papers should be increased to 30 days minimum so that all verifications could be done in meticulous way.*
-
- *Special procedure be worked out for direct election of all special seats-candidates like of academics, doctors, engineers, scientists, philanthropists, artists, media men & special consultants – it should not be through nominations by heads of political parties.*
-
- *Women candidates should contest elections on open seats with amendments in political parties procedures by percentage of election tickets. Seats reserved for women are defeating the spirit of mainstreaming females into political leadership.*

[Presently, the daughters & nieces are nominated by the party heads without competition or merit – the decades old party workers are never given participation; analyse the history of PML[N], PPP & others etc.]

- *Official counting should be replaced with "**physical counting**" of the ballot papers both in the constitutional article as well as in practice. The current practice of filling ballot-count from Forms 14 to 16 amounts to '**official corruption / rigging**'.*
-
- *Rogue practice of offering bribed FATA seats to chosen persons sitting in Islamabad or Karachi be discontinued; FATA should be elevated to the status of province through formal constitutional amendment and the elections there should be just in other parts of the country.*
-

- *Returning officers should be made a party for hearing before ECP, Election Tribunals and courts in matters of arising disputes during or after elections. They should also be answerable and thus liable for punishment if found guilty.*
-
- *In the Constitution, Article 246 be re-amended again to allow secret balloting in the Assemblies & Senate; the ongoing practice of raising hands has weakened democracy and strengthened party leaders giving birth to '**Morroosiat**' and dictatorship.*
-
- *The appointment of four Members of the ECP is not in accordance with provisions of Article 213 and 218 of the Constitution. Hence, all these appointments are void ab-initio – proper transparent procedure based on merit be devised.*
-
- *Rigging of elections began with the illegal appointment of the four ECP members, leading to pre-poll illegalities; ECP failed to take corrective measures and also could not take action against the Returning Officers [ROs] etc.*

The ECP is composed of mostly retired judges thus their speed and impartiality are both questionable as the norms of tainted Justice in Pakistan. Similarly, the Returning Officers [ROs] are generally junior Civil Servants; all too conscious of the power of politicians to make or break their careers. Presiding Officers are even of lower grades being drawn largely from state schools and colleges; how can they resist pressure.

Another issue: conduct of elections in Pakistan is not subjected to accountability; thus since decades the candidates and political parties invariably cry foul after losing. When a rare appeal is upheld, and fresh elections ordered, how many Returning Officers have been jailed or reprimanded for their partisan role. In the given scenario, all the Pakistanis are privileged and guilty.

Pakistan's electoral system is not suitably aligned with changing demographic and political realities; representations are hugely distorted. To ensure adequate account and delimitation of constituencies, the census should not be manipulated in favour of any particular region or nationality.

Simultaneously, weaknesses in the legal and administrative framework need to be addressed urgently. No piece meal reforms – a complete restructuring of the ECP is required, making the electoral process more credible, transparent and inclusive.

It is a long journey but a beginning must be made. A Judicial Commission comprising of enlightened judges was required to dig out the truth about May 2013 elections – but no political party bothered.

If the same electoral system continued then forget any change for another century. In a hugely unequal society like of Pakistan, powerful, feuds, and wealthy candidates can coerce their voters easily and usually manipulate the polling staff too.

Kanwar Dilshad, cited above, recommended for a **proportionate representation system** that eliminates the incentive to rig, and is more democratic and representative. This will not only help liberate disempowered voters from the coercion of the powerful elite during elections but also political parties from the stranglehold of dynasties.

E REFORMS - WASTAGE OF 3 YEARS:

'...reforms are mostly common sense...' is very true – but the problem was that *'common sense is not very common'*. Sincerity and transparency were important to ensure impartiality which were not known to ruling PML[N] government.

Till 21st July 2017 morning at least, the details were not made public, but in principle the decisions had been taken. After years of struggle and delay, parliament was not able to move further because the quality of reforms was not as was envisaged in the beginning. Electoral reforms, of the sweeping kind that Pakistan needed was no doubt an uphill task but more than four years had passed since the last general election, the recommendations could have been worked out much earlier. The outcome was in fact disgusting as a number of recommendations were contrary to the improvement.

Soon it became evident that the government only expedited a consensus on electoral reforms under pressure from the ECP before the run-up to the 2018's elections. The problem was the willingness to act only under pressure and seemingly at the last moment, rather than improving the quality of institutions.

However, on the same evening [21st July 2017]; giving more autonomy to the ECP, the Parliamentary Committee

on Electoral Reforms approved the Elections Reforms Bill 2017.

As per PML[N] government claims, new draft included tough measures to stop corrupt practices and to make election process more transparent but the sermon was contrary to the work accomplished AND the needs of the hour. In the new proposal, it was approved that:

- *The ECP will have powers to make rules without prior approval of the President or government.*
-
- *The ECP will have powers of High Court to issue specific directions for performance of its duties throughout Pakistan.*
-
- *The [Election] Commissioner will have full financial powers, including powers to create posts within budgetary allocations.*
-
- *The ECP has been authorised to redress complaints during various stages of election process and its decisions will be appeal-able to the Supreme Court of Pakistan.*
-
- *The commission will delimit constituencies after every census and variation of population amongst constituencies in the same assembly from the same province or territory - has been restricted to 10 percent.*
-
- *NADRA will submit relevant data of every CNIC to the ECP so that every citizen who is enrolled in the database can automatically be enrolled as voter. Nomination form has been simplified and the same form has been prescribed for candidates for all seats.*
-
- *Nomination or candidature fee for the National Assembly, Provincial Assemblies and Senate has been fixed as Rs:30,000, Rs:20,000 and Rs:20,000 respectively.*
-
- *In case of equality of votes between two candidates, both will be declared returned candidates and each will become member for half of the term of assembly. In case of equality of votes between three or more candidates there will be a re-election in that constituency.*
-
- *Maximum limit of election expense has been set as four million rupees for National Assembly, two million for provincial assemblies and one and half million rupees for Senate elections.*

The Living History of Pakistan Vol-VI

-
- *Every member of an assembly or senate will submit annual wealth statement in the same form as submitted under the income tax ordinance 2001.*
-
- *The [Election] Commission will scrutinise wealth statement of members and in case found false may direct prosecute the member for offence of corrupt practices.*
-
- *In order to check mushroom growth of political parties, conditions for enlistments of new party with the ECP will include minimum 200,000 members and Rs:200,000 enlistment fee in addition to existing requirements.*
-
- *Each political party will submit its annual statement and list of donors to ECP, who have donated Rs:100,000 or above to the party.*
-
- *The caretaker government has been restricted to day to day routine non-controversial matters, necessary to run affairs of government.*
-
- *Members of caretaker government will submit their wealth statements to ECP as required by members of parliament.*
-
- *The ECP will make special measures to encourage participation of women in electoral process including registration of women voters and actual voting on polling day.*

The bill was to be tabled in parliament and after approval it would become part of legislation.

The whole world and Pakistani intelligentsia itself had a big laugh when the above 'REFORMS [?]' became public after Committee's final approval. The above minor improvements in the ECP's working could be drafted by an Assistant Secretary of the Commission alone AND in one day – what was the fun in wasting time and enjoying the state perks for holding 72 meetings for such rubbish.

NOT a single structural change, as enumerated in preceding paragraphs above, was discussed or finalized – in fact the PML[N] government was not serious about reforms.