

THREATS OF PANDORA BOX:

By Inam R Sehri

These days the election encounter between Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz [PML(N)] and the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf [PTI] is at high pitch in NA 122 of Lahore. Today the PML(N) had come up with another instalment of allegations that PTI's Chief Imran Khan has been receiving funds from Jewish and Indian lobbies of United States.

In electronic media, PTI's Punjab Chief Mehmood ul Rashid is busy in opening another Pandora Box against the PML(N) and the Sharif brothers.

The election campaign in NA 122 reminds me of a similar situation of ending 2012, about three years earlier, when the Supreme Court had announced its landmark judgment in Air Marshal Asghar Khan Case. The two former army Generals were named to be tried and the then PPP stalwarts went jubilees for calling Sharif brothers in the dock for receiving ISI funds during 1990s.

Referring to Rauf Klasra's column in the daily 'Dunya' dated 22nd December 2012; Gen Aslam Beg, the most important character of the said scandal, told the media that 'if the FIA would take up the case, another Pandora Box would be opened before the nation.'

Those were the days when every wrong doer in Pakistan when approached by NAB or the FIA threatened about 'opening of a Pandora Box'. Earlier the Pakistani nation was endangered by the Pandora Box of '3rd November 2007's Emergency' when Gen Musharraf was being tried for the follies committed by his associates.

Though Gen Beg had admitted his guilt before the SC bench in open that 'he was involved in the distribution of money to the politicians through ISI under the command of the then President GIK' but even then he was ready to open a Pandora Box for the nation. Extending threats to the poor Pakistani population had become a routine talk by the crocodile public figures.

On 23rd December 2013, National Accountability Bureau [NAB] decided to take up the inquiry of scandal regarding issuance of more than 2,000 blue passports [passports issued to the government officers to travel abroad for official job or duty only] to unauthorized persons by Rehman Malik during the PPP regime of 2008-13. The PML(N)'s Interior Minister Ch Nisar, when asked to divulge the names of those 2000 persons, told the media that 'had he made those 2000 names open, many people would hold their heads AND a Pandora Box would be opened'.

The fact remains that the judges, Generals and the politicians had made the whole Pakistani nation terrified. They were threatened with Pandora Boxes of various kinds each day with in fact no substance in them. Result; that citizens equipped themselves with guns and grenades. The state departments were sufficiently corrupt but then gradually started feeling threatened. The height of the syndrome was that Gen Beg sponsored a wrong practice in 1990, then admitted his guilt in the Supreme Court and then started extending threats to the whole nation through media and TV live programs – that new Pandora Box was ready.

Of course, it was not the mandate of the SC to investigate the details of the Asghar Khan Case. When FIA started investigations, the threat of Pandora Box was once more repeated. FIA wanted to know the answers of certain odd questions like:

** How many bulky amounts of payments were being continuously received by his NGO titled 'FRIENDS'; and from where the amounts were coming; and why those amounts were finally transferred into Gen Beg's personal account.*

** How an ex-army chief had managed to send continuously heavy amounts to America even after retirement to one named person.*

There were tens of more questions to be added, the details of which were available in detailed judgment of the SC. The SC was quite angry when Gen Beg went silent on above questions. Further; the said details were given to the apex court by none except his own colleague Gen Durrani.

Gen Beg remained contended throughout the court proceedings that he had done nothing wrong; only distributed money amongst the politicians on orders of President GIK to cause defeat of the PPP and Benazir Bhutto. Three years later, the same GIK was found taking oath from Benazir Bhutto's husband Zardari as federal minister under a new deal with PPP.

Some bureaucrats were also equally culpable along with Generals in that dirty game of 1990. Younas Habib had stated before the SC on oath that one Roedad Khan, the most powerful Secretary of those days and attached with the Election Cell of the Presidency, had called him from Karachi and ordered for releasing required funds. 'When I showed my inability to do any more, I was picked up by an FIA team from the Karachi Airport the moment I landed back', Younas Habib had divulged in open before the media.

Another Pandora Box was ready to be opened by the civil bureaucrats like Roedad Khan.

Every thing is already out on record; what is left in the Pandora Box for which the nation was being threatened. Is it on the court record that son of an Advisor to PM Nawaz Sharif was also mentioned on the list of Mehran Bank eaters because he had managed to finally approve the license of the said bank.

Amongst the other eaters and looters, there were names of numerous relatives of PM Nawaz Sharif who were all issued large amounts of loans on phone call from the PM House. Mehran Bank was 'advised' to approve loans against those names on phone and the compliance report regarding money transfers into the respective accounts had to be conveyed on phone during the same night. So what was left behind in the Pandora Box.

The PPP stalwarts had known about the weak points of Younas Habib much later. Firstly, the PML & Sharifs looted the Habib Bank through Younas Habib and later the PPP + others plundered the Mehran Bank through the same person. That was why the PPP did not issue green signal to FIA to start investigations as per SC orders during their regime.

After going through the history of Habib Bank and Mehran Bank, the tradition of loot and plunder was sincerely followed during Gen Musharraf's times under the active advice of the then PM Shaukat Aziz.

During that army regime the loans worth Rs:60 billion were made zero while during PPP's rule of 2008-13, the loans worth Rs:130 billion were condoned. This time the National Bank of Pakistan was targeted and the beneficiaries were intimate friends and family members of Mr Zardari and PM Gilani.

PM Gilani's wife got relief of Rs:550 million while the Speaker Fehmida Mirza got her Rs:870 million pardoned from five scheduled banks.

So what more to be seen in the Pandora Box by the poor Pakistanis except that some more cruel faces of bureaucrats and politicians would be there – not of any Rahim Bux or Faqero or Tony or David; so why to worry any more.

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