

Scenario 129

JAIL-BREAKS DURING 2012-13:

HYDERABAD JAIL BREAK PLAN:

On 19th March 2012, the Sindh Police claimed to have unearthed a brazen jailbreak plan by around 400 convicts at the Hyderabad Central Jail. The prison's Superintendent Pir Shabbir Ahmed Jan had compiled a report concluding that **"....the inmates might escape from the prison any time now."** Sindh's Inspector General and Hyderabad's district police were asked to prevent the fiasco.

Overcrowding might be one of the main reasons; nine or ten inmates were then confined in the 8 x 10 feet cells which were suitable for only a couple of prisoners. The report alleged that some influential criminals in incarceration were backed by political parties; that around 100 prisoners who were given death sentences and another 600 imprisoned for life refused to appear before the courts and misbehaved with judges conducting their trials. It was on record that the judges were avoiding hearings due to such misbehaviour of the inmates.

The report alleged that inmates used to invite women inside the prison at odd hours on the pretext of interviews; they had also established a network to procure and sell contrabands such as liquor and cannabis within the premises. The senior officials were constantly kept informed but no measures to prevent the menace could be implemented. The prison had not held any routine search for illegal items in the past few years. Some inmates possessed arms and use them to threaten authorities. The Superintendent Jail attributed that deplorable condition to the huge influx of prisoners beyond its accommodation capacity.

Sindh Police had also submitted a report to the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Human Rights in response to an incident occurred in 2011 in which seven prisoners had died and 40 were injured along with a policeman in a protest in the same jail. Hyderabad's DIG police, Samiullah, stressing on jail reforms told that: **"I have also given my recommendations to the Supreme Court."**

The NA Standing Committee's Chairperson Riaz Fatyana had directed the Sindh government to take notice of the deteriorating situation. A paradigm shift was needed to revamp the police system and introduce jails reforms. Session Judge Fahim Siddiqui, who had visited the said jail a year earlier, wrote in his report that there were over 1,300 inmates in the said prison – much more than its capacity. Besides the presence of contraband items, an earlier search had recovered around 260 mobile phones from the possession of prisoners.

BANNU JAIL BREAK 2012:

Between 14- 15th April 2012 [Sunday] night; more than 200 heavily armed Taliban militants travelling in several vehicles attacked the Central Jail in Bannu, Southern District of Khyber PK and got released 384 prisoners in a pre-dawn assault.

The Tehreek e Taliban [TTP] claimed responsibility for raiding the jail. TTP spokesperson Asimullah Mehsud told media from an undisclosed location that they [TTP] attacked the jail with hundreds of fighters; saying that: **".....the purpose was to free some of our men;**

we attacked with 150 Fidayeen (suicide bombers) and took over the area for more than two hours."

Four police officials were injured in the attack; another policeman on guard at the police station told that: ***'...dozens of the militants were in vehicles and hundreds of them were on foot carrying AK-47s and rocket launchers. The gate was rooted out after one fired a rocket at it. The militants had punctured the boundary wall to aid in their escape.'***

A large number of militants were then moved to the jail from neighbouring Kohat and Lakki Marwat prisons, which were being converted into centres to rehabilitate former insurgents. The FIR registered for that event said that hundreds of militants attacked the Bannu central jail around 1:15am and 384 prisoners were got released - ***some of them were 'most wanted'***. Talking about the category of the militants that managed to escape, the official record contained that 20 men who were facing death sentences and were very dangerous also fled away.

Officials believed that the attacker's main aim was to release Adnan Rashid, a former employee of the Pakistan Air Force [PAF], allegedly involved in plotting the murder of Gen Musharraf. Inspector General of Police Khyber PK (IGP) Akbar Khan Hoti commented that the whole plan seemed to have been for the release of that top militant. An official from the Bannu Central Prison later told that:

"..... the militants entered the premises of the jail after firing hand grenades and rockets and the only question they asked was - Where is Adnan? - they spoke different languages and their outfit was typical to the Taliban with boots, grown hair and loaded with arms."

An investigative officer confirmed that there was *English and Arabic jihadi* literature recovered from the cell where Adnan was kept.

Adnan Rashid joined PAF as a junior technician in 1997. Security officials apprehended him from Balochistan in 2004 in connection with a plot to assassinate Musharraf. Sources said that he was shifted from Kohat to Bannu Jail some eight months ago. Amongst the prisoners was also one Aijaz, a militant who had previously managed to escape from the same jail. The names of the rest of the **'most wanted'** could not be ascertained immediately.

Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik suspected the involvement of certain prison officials in the attack. Speaking to media in Islamabad, the interior minister added that the attack was due to security failure and that a high level enquiry would be conducted in this regard. Mr Malik added that:

"We will find out about who had sent Adnan Rashid in Bannu jail..... that the cellular service providers would be asked to block their service inside prisons. We got a mobile call traced to a Quetta jail which revealed correspondence between banned outfits, Sipah e Sahaba and Balochistan Liberation Army [BLA]."

However, till a year after, till the end of the PPP's government on 15th March 2013 neither the sponsors of Adnan Rasheed could be identified nor the cellular phones were ever blocked in jails anywhere in Pakistan – no progress of the said jail break case was reported. The same Adnan commanded his contingent a year after to break the DIK prison.

The Khyber-PK government blamed 'intelligence failure' for that brazen jail break in Bannu city, however, intelligence reports claimed that the federal interior ministry was tipped about possible militant strikes three months earlier. **On 5th January 2012**, Commander Askari of the Tariq Geedar militant group was found plotting attacks on different targets,

including on PAF base in Kohat, Kohat garrison and Lachi police station. The matter was brought on the record of Interior Ministry with the warning that the group could mount an assault on the Bannu prison to free Adnan Rasheed and other dangerous militants.

The National Crisis Management Cell [NCCM] of the interior ministry had sent the report to Khyber PK's home secretary, police chief and all others concerned officials, recommending necessary measures to foil such attacks – but nothing was moved.

The Khyber PK government announced a committee to investigate that serious incident which was also asked to find out whether the jailbreak, claimed by local Taliban, had any link to the coordinated attacks in Afghanistan. The committee, led by Director of Reform Management and Monitoring Unit, Dr Ehsanul Haq, was asked to complete its probe within 15 days but till today its findings have not been made public.

Home and Tribal Affairs Secretary Azam Khan, meanwhile, blamed the federal government for not heeding requests to mend loop-holes in security for the province. The paramilitary Frontier Corps [FC] was supposed to be deployed in the buffer zones between tribal and settled areas of Khyber PK whereas:

"... only 38% of FC troops are where they are actually required. The rest are deployed in Islamabad and elsewhere - we had communicated our concern to the federal government five months ago but no action – no improvement."

Later investigations revealed that out of the 93 police officials who were supposed to be on guard, a whopping 63 were absent on that fateful day. Out of the remaining 30, only 10 were armed. Of the 20 FC officials who were supposed to be on duty, 14 were absent. Only six FC personnel were armed and on duty. In short, only 36 officials on duty were monitoring 946 inmates, when there should have been a total of 113 officials on duty. Up to 68% of those who were supposed to be on guard were absent. Of those who were present, only 16 were armed – figures highly contradictory to those provided by the authorities, who claimed that security strength was high on the day of the attack.

Inside job? a militant commander who helped plan the Bannu jailbreak divulged that his group had inside information. Reuters was told that:

"We had maps of the area and we had complete maps and plans of the jail as well. All I have to say is we have people who support us in Bannu. It was with their support that this operation was successful."

DIG Bannu Iftikhar Ahmed also confirmed the media that there had been cell phone contact between the prisoners and the attackers.

The Khyber PK authorities had requested the federal government for the installation of mobile **jammers** in prisons much earlier than the event. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority had not issued them a 'No Objection Certificate' [NOC] despite the fact that they had been in communication with them for four months.

The Inspector General for Prisons in Khyber-PK, Arshad Majeed, had not ruled out collusion of prison staff with the TTP; it was another agony. How such a big attack could be possible without collusion of the inner staff – the management knew it; it appeared.

JAIL BREAK; BUSINESS AS USUAL:

While the attack was a classic manoeuvre, the guards inside the prison hardly put up even a token resistance and obeyed the orders of the attackers to stand aside. The Taliban's intelligence seemed to know exactly where Adnan Rashid was being held. The attackers operated at will for about two hours inside the prison, with nearly any sign of reinforcements, although the prison authorities later claimed news of the attack had been relayed almost immediately. The police reinforcements arrived after the attackers had withdrawn.

As is usual in such matters, an inquiry was ordered to investigate the lack of response or resistance by the staff and guards of the prison, why the movement of such large numbers of armed terrorists riding vehicles went undetected, definitely the attackers had inside support, given their accurate intelligence, and last but not least, a probing of the massive intelligence and security failure.

As in many instances over the years since the TTP and affiliated groups took up arms against the state, it is by now obvious that no place in the country was adequately protected or safe, from north to south.

In their usual fashion, the authorities then set up check posts on all routes leading out of Bannu, particularly towards the tribal areas. This was a classic case of bolting the stable gate after the horse had long fled. Alarming, there were reports in the media that Adnan Rashid, whose appeals against his death sentence had been rejected by the High and Supreme Courts, enjoyed the 'facility' of a cellular phone in all the prisons he was kept in, and even had access to social networks on the internet, on which he regularly posted messages.

The cell phones, taken away at times were restored soon after, allowed Adnan Rashid to keep in touch with various journalists. None of those champions of the media thought it their duty to report the fact to the authorities, no doubt in the hope of exclusive information / stories from Adnan Rashid.

There were many serious problems with the manner in which Pakistani state agencies used to conduct the campaign against terrorists of various hues and shapes. Judicial system has never been equipped, either in law or prosecution capacity, to meet the challenge of putting terrorists away. In the then concluded International Judicial Conference in Islamabad, the Chief Justice of Pakistan had admitted that Pakistan's laws needed to be brought into conformity with international legal provisions against terrorism. Intelligence, security services and the police were woefully inadequately equipped, conceptually or in practice, to combat the most serious existential threat the state had faced in its entire history.

On **21st April 2012**, Khyber PK's IG Prisons said in the inter-provincial meeting held in Islamabad that:

'Prisons Department of KPK is being run without resources and is facing shortage of staff. Rifles used in Bannu jail are so old that influential people of the area have been demanding them against heavy payments only to display them at home as unique items.'

Since 1947, there were 26 jails in the province which reduced to 22 instead of increasing their number like that in other provinces. Prisons Department was also lacking staff since as within last about 65 years, only 36 new posts were created and induction was made against them. No training was being imparted to the jail staff due to which they have no capability to confront with any untoward situation like jail break last week.

The salary package of Prisons department of KPK was meagre; a warder of the Bannu jail as saying that he could not embrace martyrdom only for Rs:8,000 salary,

when he was asked that why he and his colleagues did not retaliate when terrorists attacked Bannu jail.

No ammunition was purchased after 1947 and oldest rifles were being used for the security of jail; there were poor security conditions around the jail and power shortage was at peak and there was no alternate arrangement for the light in the jail.

No promotion system was there and officers and employees were working in the same grade for several years which was demoralising employees and officers. The Prisons authorities were repeatedly drawing attention of the rulers towards this situation but rulers remained unmoved and these deficiencies resulted in a big incident of jail break.'

The Bannu jailbreak was only the latest demonstration of such hard facts. ***Everything was 'business as usual'***; unfortunately, inertia soon returning to the usual laxity was what the terrorists relied on – and the menace continued as a routine matter.

On 17th May 2012; the TTP released a **propaganda video** that detailed the 15th April 2012 jailbreak in Bannu that freed 384 prisoners, including an estimated 200 Taliban members and Adnan Rasheed. The 34-minute-long video, which was produced by Umar Studio, the propaganda arm of the TTP, was originally being sold in all the markets of North and South Waziristan. The videotape was then published in three parts on YouTube by the Khyber News Channel [parts **1**, **2** and **3**].

Hakeemullah Mehsud, the Ameer TTP and Waliur Rehman Mehsud, the group's leader in South Waziristan, both appeared in the video. Both Mehsuds delivered speeches, and Hakeemullah vowed to fight the Pakistani government and military to ***"the last bullet and the last man."*** Hakeemullah and Waliur Rehman were routinely said to be in violent opposition to each other, and were even **wrongly reported to have killed each other** during a *shura* meeting in August 2009 to select Baitullah Mehsud's successor.

In the video, both Hakeemullah and Waliur Rehman were shown directing estimated 150-200 fighters who were gathering to conduct the attack. The Taliban leaders were organizing the large Taliban group in the daylight out in the open. The location of the meeting place is not clear. The Taliban appeared to have had good intelligence on the layout of the Bannu prison. A Taliban leader, whose face was digitally blurred, used a detailed hand-drawn map to brief the Taliban commanders and fighters on the plan of attack.

The fighters were then shown eating and praying before being put into vans and driven to the Bannu prison. The tape had shown the night time assault as the Taliban attacked the prison with rocket - propelled grenades, heavy machine-guns, and assault rifles. The Taliban were then shown opening the jail cells and releasing the prisoners.

The video also included interviews of the freed commanders and prisoners; Adnan Rasheed was among those interviewed. Rasheed had also supposedly worked for Amjad Farooqi, the Pakistani terrorist who engineered the two assassination attempts against Gen Musharraf in December 2003 at the behest of al Qaeda leader Abu Faraj al Libi; Farooqi was suspected of involvement in other terror attacks as well. Farooqi was a member of the *Sipah e Sahaba Pakistan*; the *Harkat ul Ansar* and its successor, the *Harkat ul Mujahideen* and *Jaish e Mohammed*.

Allegedly, Farooqi had also served as a close aide to Qari Saifullah Akhtar, the leader of the *Harkat ul Jihad al Islami*. In addition, he served as the group's representative to al Qaeda's International Islamic Front.

The message from the Chief of TTP Hakimullah Mehsud was recorded before the episode of Jail Brazen attack and in this message he had criticized the JI's leader, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, this message was just interlinked with the story.

The message from Waliur Rehman was genuine as the whole operation was planned by him. Adnan Rasheed was the main focus of the TTP fighters which they wanted to get released at any cost.

In the end of the video ***three security forces personnel were also kidnapped by the fighters*** as both the roads on the front and back of the jail were blocked by the fighters for all traffic and the security forces personnel driving on the road were captured and shifted to rugged region. The incident was not reported in media.

DIK PRISON BREAK:

On 30th July 2013, over 100 militants came in vehicles and also on motorbikes to storm the Dera Ismail Khan [DIK]'s Central Prison from all the four sides simultaneously as one group opened fire on a security check-post near the jail. The militants helped 243 prisoners escape from the British-era prison [built in 1854] after killing 12 people, including six policemen, while five attackers were also killed.

A number of hardened militants were among the inmates of the DIK Central Prison; among them was Walid Akbar, who had been awarded 1,616 years jail sentence for his involvement in bombing of the Ashura procession in the city in 2012. The militants used a loud hailer to call prisoners out by name.

The six policemen killed were Mazhar Hussain, Saifullah, Rustam, Mir Zaman and Piao Sardar. Two prisoners from Multan; Sajid and Juma Malang, who had been awarded death sentences, as well as two other inmates, Akhtar Abbas and Aslam were also killed inside their barracks. The three other people, including the watchman of a bakery, a passer-by and an unknown person, were also killed while 16 persons were wounded. Curfew was clamped in DIK and Tank districts after the attack and a massive search operation was launched by the security personnel.

Dozens of huge and minor explosions starting from 11:15pm on Monday that continued till 2:30am on Tuesday. Due to expansion of the city and increase in the population, the prison's location came in densely populated part and the bomb blasts could be heard in the nearby localities all night. It also scared the people and prompted them stay inside.

Dozens of improvised explosive devices [IEDs] and other explosives were defused during an operation to sweep the prison. The Bomb Disposal Unit [BDU] experts defused 28 time bombs, four remote control IEDs, a suicide jacket, five rockets and eight grenades during the search operation later. The inmates who escaped from the prison included around 30 militants. Five women prisoners were also among those who fled during the jailbreak.

Expressing anger over the jailbreak, Khyber PK Chief Minister Pervez Khattak termed it failure of the intelligence agencies. The Joint Inquiry Committee [JIC] that he constituted to probe the incident was asked to start work on immediate basis. The Committee comprised of Senior Member Board of Revenue Waqar Ayub, Special Secretary Home Department Syed Alamgir Shah, Additional Inspector General Police (Special Branch) Akhtar Ali Shah and representative of Pakistan Army (Headquarters 11 Corps).

Furthermore, 27 cops, including a Superintendent of Police (SP), were suspended for showing negligence during the whole episode. The authorities had reportedly got reports that the

militants were planning to attack the prison. Ominously, a clash inside the DIK Prison a day earlier had resulted in injuries to two cops. The attackers also shot dead the watchman of a nearby bakery when he fired two shots in the air.

Reportedly the local police arrived too late as armed men had taken positions on all the four sides to counter them. The Commissioner's office confirmed that 242 prisoners had escaped during the attack. The residents around were told not to come out of homes as the police and army were clearing the area.

The proscribed Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan [TTP] claimed responsibility for that DIK prison break; over 100 militants, some wearing police uniforms, including suicide bombers took part in the said attack. However, the IGP Khyber PK Ihsan Ghani told that 60 to 70 men, were involved in the said attack. Meanwhile, the case of the jailbreak was registered against the unidentified attackers in the Chaowni Police Station; repair work was also kicked off at the DIK Central Prison.

TTP spokesman Shahidullah Shahid claimed that more than 250 prisoners escaped from the jail. **"Majority of our people along with the freed prisoners reached a secure place. Some of our very senior people also succeeded to escape,"** the spokesman claimed. Police sources claimed that 242 prisoners got escaped during that activity.

The IGP, Additional IGP along with Home Secretary visited the prison and heard the account of the incident from the cops. SP Elite Force Toheed and DSP Behram were among 27 cops suspended in that DIK event. An investigation team headed by SP Investigation DIK was also formed. JIC was already in place for parallel investigation; one Ijaz Ahmad was posted as DIG of DIK as the office was lying vacant due to routine transfer of the incumbent some days earlier to Mardan. Next day; local police claimed to have **arrested 45 of the over 242 prisoners who had escaped during that jailbreak** – thus relaxation in the curfew timings was also announced.

Katherine Houreld, a correspondent for **Reuters** news agency, **told the BBC:**

"Reports also suggested intelligence had warned of an impending attempt on the jail two weeks ago..... it had been a very sophisticated attack - they blew the electricity line, they breached the walls and they set ambushes for reinforcements;an ensuing gun battle raged for three or four hours.

.... the shooting started,soon after, we heard an explosion and the main gate exploded.....then the police started shooting towards the main gate from armed vehicle parked outside.....during this time, may be either a rocket launcher or a mortar shell hit that armed vehicle. Two of the policemen were killed on the spot, and three of them injured..... "

The DIK prison was about century old and was not ever re-designed for high security inmates, but housed hundreds of Taliban fighters and militants from other banned groups. The Commissioner DIK later told that about **30 'hardened militants'**, who had been jailed for their involvement in major attacks or suicide bombings, were among those freed. Mr Jadoon told a local TV station that:

'....militants had taken away six women, five of them inmates and the other a lady police officer - that jail records along with other office essentials had also been torched.

'Among the inmates freed were two local Taliban commanders, Abdul Hakim and Haji Ilyas. The militants had booby-trapped the building with explosive devices, which had now been defused.'

A Taliban spokesman told the foreign media that one of their commanders freed in an assault on a prison in Bannu in April 2012 played a key role in the latest jailbreak. He knew the security failures inside prisons so that was why the militants were able to stage a virtually identical attack here in DIK. That night's violence came hours before Pakistani politicians in the Parliament elected Mamnoon Hussain from the ruling PML[N] party as the country's new president; it hugely embarrassed the government, and once again highlighted the ability of the militants to strike at will.

The authorities had advance warning of the attack, but did not act on it, only made matters worse. The attack rekindled memories of the 2012 jailbreak in Bannu city in which 384 prisoners had escaped, including Adnan Rashid, who had also written an open letter to Malala Yousafzai justifying that why she was attacked by the Taliban.

The DIK jail attack came a month after the police said they had arrested a group of militants who were planning to launch a similar attack on Karachi Central Jail. This was indicative of an emerging Taliban strategy to break jails instead of negotiating the release of their prisoners by taking hostages, which they had successfully done in the past.

The ***Awami National Party (ANP) leadership said Imran Khan's Tehreek e Insaaf [PTI] had left the people of Khyber PK in the lurch*** – it was a failure of the PTI-led government and they were unaware of the situation.

ADNAN RASHEED'S ACCOUNT:

Those investigating the **29th July 2013** midnight jailbreak operation in DIK concluded that the brazen assault was masterminded by Adnan Rasheed, a dangerous *jehadi* and the mastermind of an assassination attempt on Gen Musharraf, who himself was freed in a jailbreak operation in Bannu, conducted on **15th April 2012**. Adnan Rasheed being the chief operational commander of a special unit of *fidayeen* attackers belonging to the TTP and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan [IMU] had planned it all.

Both the Waziristan based *jehadi* groups had joined hands to form ***another jehadi unit called "Ansar Al Aseer"*** (supporters of prisoners) whose prime aim was to secure freedom for the imprisoned *jehadis* by carrying out jailbreak operations across Pakistan. TTP's Ehsanullah Ehsan had said **on 20th April 2012** that the operation was chiefly meant to free Adnan Rasheed, a former officer of the Pakistan Air Force [PAF]. That the Taliban had been working on the jailbreak plan for the past several months and were in touch with Adnan and other prisoners in the Bannu Central Jail.

Referring to **'the News' dated 2nd August 2013:**

'Adnan Rasheed had claimed in an April 2013's rare interview that he was indoctrinated by a covert jehadi group which recruits officers from the three military services and utilizes them to wage jehad along with the Taliban. The interview was published in the first issue of an English-language jehadi magazine "Azan" which was launched by the Taliban elements, primarily to cater to the educated Muslims.

Narrating in a first-hand witness account, Adnan Rasheed joined a clandestine jehadi group functioning in the PAF under the name 'Idaratul Pakistan', or the institution of Pakistan. Adnan Rasheed was led by senior military officers to believe that the Jaish e Mohammad [JeM] founder Maulana Masood Azhar was appointed the AMEER of the Pakistani Taliban by Mullah Mohammad Omar of the Afghan Taliban. Adnan got four months' leave to go home but joined Jaish training camp at Mansehra in Khyber PK.

Interestingly, despite being an al-Qaeda linked convicted terrorist, Adnan was allowed to get married in the jail in 2010 and become father of a daughter. Coming from Chota Lahore village of the Swabi district, Adnan was arrested for his role in an attempt to assassinate Gen Musharraf in Rawalpindi on 14th December 2003. He was subsequently awarded death sentence by a Field General Court Martial [FGCM] on 3rd October 2005 at Chaklala Base of PAF along with six other Air Force men including Chief Technician Khalid Mahmood, Senior Technician Karam Din, Corporal Mohammad Nawazish, and Junior Technicians Niaz Mohammad and Nasrullah.'

Several interviews of Adnan, while he was in prison, were uploaded on the Facebook, wherein he had pleaded innocence besides urging the CJP Iftikhar Chaudhry to take notice of the issue. But in a video message released after his escape from the jail, Adnan Rasheed had confessed to his role in the 2003 assassination attempt on Gen Musharraf.

Adnan was finally made the Chief Operational Commander of ***Ansar Al Aseer***. The formation of that *jehadi* unit was made public through a video which featured not only Adnan Rasheed, but also Yassin Chouka, one of the most wanted German commanders of the Waziristan-based Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; and Abdul Hakeem, a Russian IMU member.

The Ending Lines: the Taliban came to attack the DIK Central prison carrying their lives in their hands; they assaulted it with mortars and rocket - propelled grenades. Reportedly, the guards jumped into the nearest drain to save their lives, their instinct for self-preservation could be hailed. Not the investigators but the provincial Revenue Minister told later that:

'...the Taliban were not put to the necessity of blasting the jail main gate. Those on duty obligingly opened the gate for them.'

But then why and how 13 persons were killed?

The attackers remained inside the jail for some time, using handy loud speakers to call their comrades by name whom they had come to set free. ***They had time to literally slaughter some inmates, probably on account of their 'different' faith.*** No police high-up came to the scene of action and when they appeared the attackers were far away.

ON PRISONS IN PAKISTAN:

Referring to *Sarmad Ali's* essay appeared in the '**Tribune**' of 13th August 2013; there are 32 prisons in Punjab with an authorised capacity of 21,527 but till mid 2013 they housed 52,318 prisoners. Sindh has 22 prisons with a capacity of 10,285 but they housed 14,422 prisoners. Khyber-PK has 23 prisons with an authorised capacity of 7,982 and they housed 7,549 prisoners. Balochistan has 11 prisons with a capacity of 2,173 and the number detained was 2,946.

If prisons of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are included, altogether there are 99 prisons in Pakistan. The authorised capacity of these prisons to detain prisoners was 42,670. However, 78,328 prisoners were housed in these prisons. Hence, the prisons in Pakistan were overcrowded and the prison system held 35,000 more prisoners than its designed capacity.

Thousands of prisoners were waiting for trial as the prison population had grown up owing to an increasing crime rate in Pakistan. Instead of reforming criminals, the prison system in the country proved a fertile ground for their further nurturing.

According to a research carried out by the **International Centre of Prison Studies (ICPS)** in 2012; this state of sorry affairs in Pakistan was compounded by a sluggish criminal justice system. There is only one prison staff training institute in the whole of Pakistan. According to a Punjab University report published in 2011, inefficiency and corruption marked the prison system like all other departments in Pakistan. While the prisons are plagued with administrative and financial problems, security devices are either not functioning or missing altogether.

An important step to reform the prison system and culture is to amend the rules and procedures. The Pakistan Prison Rules are 28 years old and need to be updated. Training of the prison staff at home and abroad is minimal.

The first prison reform programme was introduced in Pakistan in the 1950s under the chairmanship of Col Salamat Ullah, who was a former IG of Prisons for UP in pre-partition India. Later, different reform committees were constituted by the federal government to redress prisoners' grievances. The recommendations of those committees were invariably given official approval but hardly ever implemented, mainly because of financial constraints or lack of political will.

Referring to the '**Dawn**' dated **7th September 2014**: Punjab's IG Prisons Mian Farooq Nazeer told that:

"There are about 6,000 condemned prisoners in Punjab and the appeals of 60pc of these prisoners are pending with high courts, while the cases of 30pc of them are going on in the Supreme Court while there are 400 to 500 prisoners whose appeals have been rejected by the president.

Such prisoners do develop psychological issues but most of them are not related to jails as they can't remain detached from the society and the problems that their families face once they are incarcerated."

Most professionals in Criminal Justice Systems ***maintain that a life sentence is harsher punishment as compared to a death sentence.*** The countries which have abolished death sentence, like Turkey, have replaced it with **life imprisonment, jailed till death**, which is more severe form of torture. After about three year's time, the convicts started crying and urged the authorities to hang them if they were to remain in the cells till death – more cruel than death in fact.

In some countries where the death penalty stands abolished there the life imprisonment is limited to either 14 years or 25 years at the most. Remaining in jail till actual death is inhuman by all means.

As per 2013's report of the Amnesty International, there were over 8,500 prisoners on death row in Pakistan, one of the largest death-row populations in the world, and the number was increasing by every passing day till December 2014 as the government had halted the process of executions.

Referring to *Kamran Khan's TV talk show* at '**Dunya News**' dated **25th November 2015**; till that day only 290 persons could be taken to gallows for hanging till death after December 2014's government withdrawal of '**executions halted.**' With that pace of progress it would require another twenty years to clear the backlog of the death convicts in Pakistani prisons.

Since July 2013's DIK jailbreak, it became a routine practice to block the routes leading to the prison within a radius of around a kilometre and stop all vehicular movement during the

night. Keeping the prison secure has been believed to be an uphill task since then as several of the localities in the outskirts turn into no-go areas after sunset.

Security arrangements in place for Khyber PK's three central prisons at Bannu, DI Khan and Haripur, known for housing the militants and other suspects charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) had turned into a nightmare for the authorities after the two high profile jailbreaks at Bannu and DI Khan in April 2012 and July 2013, respectively.

Pakistan's existing jails are old and not meant for hardened militants. The country does not have any high security prison of international standards. The jailers have placed a three-layer security arrangement in their premises and keep closely coordinating with the army.

Militants arrested in various cases were lodged in different prisons. In Peshawar, only 35 suspects belonging to different outfits, such as TTP and religious factions, were kept during whole 2014; around 15 prisoners were shifted from Bannu Jail. In 2013, an ATC awarded life imprisonment to a prison doctor and a police official for abetting in escaping two prisoners.

The population in Pakistani prisons is almost five times more than the capacity with the prisoners in the barracks in the evenings at closing time not even being able to turn if they lie alongside each other in the tight space. So most just sit or squat on the floor until they can be let out in the morning. This goes against prison rule no: 745, which states that each inmate must get at least 18 square metres in a barrack and 31 square metres in a cell, if placed there.

Overcrowding in prisons leads to other serious problems such as hygiene, sanitation and the spreading of contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, Hepatitis C, HIV and skin infections.

Of the **17 prisons visited by a Survey & Study Group**, seven had detained under trial prisoners [UTP]s and convicted ones in the same barracks; five of the prisons had not segregated juvenile prisoners from the adult prisoners; 12 prisons in Sindh had not segregated repeat offenders from UTPs and four prisons had not segregated civil prisoners from persons imprisoned for a criminal offence. Fifteen UTPs were not segregated from prisoners suffering from infectious diseases, too.

However, women prisons are under – populated in Pakistan. After doing six months in prison here, the women, according to an amendment in the criminal laws, shall be released on bail. Meanwhile, **Youthful Offenders Industrial Schools (YOIS)** are most often just a barrack built near the adult prisoners' barracks leaving them vulnerable to bullying etc.

The Badin Open Jail, an idea conceived in 1958 for some 500 prisoners, was to have no walls, locks, bars or gates on 2,800 acres of farmland. It was a place to allow sufficient space to the '**good behaviour**' prisoners who had served one-third of their sentences there to prove to the authorities that they were capable of resisting temptations of running away and hence could be trusted. They were provided various job-related skills such as farming, bee-keeping, fishery, poultry, gardening etc, there under a stress free environment. There was also an option of calling over family members of the prisoners to allow them to spend time with them to make up for the lost time while they were in jail.

After Badin, open jails were to be set up in Thatta, Haripur, Multan, Jhang and Faisalabad but the pilot project itself failed due to lack of funds.

JAIL ECONOMY OF PAKITAN:

There is an entire economy inside every big Jail; your happiness inside depends on how much money you have and whether you have any political association. **"You want drugs? Alcohol? Women? No problem, if you have money. The jail staff can arrange everything."**

Not paying money is not an option. When an inmate is both poor and without political association, jail staff tend to intimidate and break them down. **"There were people whose families took on loans, just so their loved ones would be spared the harassment."** All research studies led to the same conclusion.

Then there are those who willingly return to a prison, because they end up doing booming business from within. **Many inmates are hired for robbery or murder jobs, which they fulfil by greasing the guards' palms with a share of their earnings.** A hard fact that there is greater advantage in committing crime this way: on paper, they are physically in prison and cannot possibly have committed the crime in question.

"The entire jail knows what robbery or killing will be committed in the city the next day.

Once, an inmate committed a robbery and returned back to the jail by evening. But a few weeks later, a newbie comes to the jail. When he tells what he had been charged with, the inmates laughed: it happens to be the same robbery that their fellow inmate had committed that day. The newbie was framed by the police to declare that robbery successfully investigated."

Some inmates treat private hospitals as their jails. A former jailer [named Razzak Zuberi – but may not be his true name] told that:

"A political leader was charged with murder in mid 2014 — apparently he was drunk, and he shot someone. He was brought to Karachi from Hyderabad.

But the man did not have to spend a night inside the prison. His paperwork showed that he needed medical treatment, and he was shifted to a private hospital. Two rooms were booked, one for the prisoner and another for the jail staff that had come with him. At night, the accused would often leave the hospital premises, go home or even for dinner.

Then there were some gangsters of Kala Pul. When they were first brought to the prisons, they brought a four-wheel drive with them and gave it to the jailer. Almost every night, they were allowed to return home, party all night and be back before morning."

Some jailers were notorious for their cruelty. One legend is that of **Zulm ka Baadshah** (King of Oppression). **"But this man suffered a bad end. He was hit by a trailer near Sohrab Goth in a road traffic accident. His body was not found in a single piece."**

Another jailer whose tales ring around Central Jail is **Jin Chacha**: a flamboyant man, he would drink like a mule and would go around screaming and assaulting all whom he laid his eyes on. His trademark move was to bite people. One account held:

"Everything that is available outside the prison is available inside as well: drugs, alcohol, women, even betting. Everything is happening out in the open.

The sad part is that the police are themselves involved in all these trades. Everyone is doing the same thing inside the prison, but some people are being punished for it. There is something wrong with the law, it has double standards."

In ending 2013; walking into the Karachi Central Jail one didn't feel like it conformed to the stereotype image of what a jail was 'supposed' to look. Instead of plain white walls and bars, there were manicured lawns, murals painted on the walls, art studios, music rooms, a large mosque, a salon in the women's section, cells that resembled dormitories, inmates participating in recreational activities and a large open-air kitchen that served food tasting better than that sold at most popular *dhabas*.

An officer named Nusrat Manghan, the Inspector General Prisons (IGP) Sindh had introduced arts into the jail curriculum. There was a studio where inmates used to paint, while others found teaching, their work was often exhibited and sold as well.

The Karachi Central Jail also launched its own magazine, '**The Prison Review**', in early 2014. They organised poetry recitals as well, in both Sindhi and Urdu. Then they were in the process of holding a drama for which rehearsals were underway; and they were also holding music lessons. Replying a hard question, the IGP held that:

"It's impossible to completely eliminate drugs from entering the prison. Their job is to bring them; our job is to catch them. It's an on-going process. The rate of confiscation is high but obviously it's not 100pc. That's not humanly possible."

Much earlier, in March 2011; a major riot took place in Hyderabad's Central Jail resulting in death and injury to prisoners and prison staff. Inmates involved, who later appeared before a judicial commission, mentioned that drugs were sold to prisoners with the support of the prison authorities and prisoners claimed that cannabis was cultivated inside the prison. The main reason behind riots was mismanagement. If jailers keep everything properly managed, there would be no trouble.

In 2012, the Sindh Chief of Lashkar e Jhangvi [LeJ] Naeem Bukhari was caught with his companions. Hafiz Qasim Rasheed alias Ganja, who was also a high profile target killing suspect with over 100 murders to his credit was arrested and a hand grenade, Kalashnikov, pistol and a hit-list were recovered from his possession. The list contained names of police officers he had allegedly murdered because they created problems for his family when they used to come to visit him in jail during his incarceration. The IG Prisons stated that:

"We have lost many of our people this way. This happens everywhere. Prison officials, guards are always under threat — by the mafia, gangs, terrorists — especially by those who belong to habitual and professional gangs. The pressure on the staff regarding this is always there."

Parliament, Provincial Assemblies and higher courts are all sleeping since 67 years – let them sleep for good.

Now the tailpiece, repeating Ayaz Amir's words: the Taliban had clarity on their side; Pakistan's political elite had confusion. They had resolve and singleness of aim; Pakistanis were indecisive, and going round and round in circles – thus jailbreaks of the same pattern were bound to be repeated – analysis of both Bannu and DIK jailbreaks was leading the nation to ponder.