

## Scenario 156

### KARACHI AFFAIRS IN YEAR 2015 [I]

#### MQM & ANP CALLED ARMY:

On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015; the senators belonging to the *Muttahida Qaumi Movement* [MQM] and the *Awami National Party* [ANP] demanded a stern and conclusive military operation against terrorists in Karachi – in fact a meaningful extension of Zarb e Azb which was already going on successfully in the whole country; Daily ‘Dawn of 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015’ is referred.

Their demand was based on the facts and figures released by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan [HRCP] for year 2014 related to Karachi which is highlighted below:

*[As many as 2,909 people, including women, children, suspects and law-enforcers, were killed in the city in 2014.*

*While the law enforcement agencies killed 594 suspects in the city during Jan-Dec 2014, some 142 law-enforcers were also killed in the metropolis in that one-year period.*

*134 political activists were killed during the year, while 340 bodies were found in different city areas.*

*661 people were murdered for no political reasons.*

*As many as 120 people were killed on sectarian grounds, 89 were targeted by some banned outfits, 70 people were abducted and killed and 28 people lost their lives in bomb blasts.*

*87 people were killed in the Lyari gang warfare.*

*457 and 135 suspects were killed in encounters with police and Rangers, respectively, while police torture killed two during the period Jan-Dec 2014.*

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*Of the 142 law-enforcers killed during the last one year, 130 were policemen and 12 were paramilitary soldiers. Twenty-seven private security guards were also killed during the year.*

*134 people were killed owing to personal enmity, 107 were killed by robbers, seven were burnt to death and three were killed by security guards.*

*36 men were killed by stray bullets; 28 were killed on railway tracks; 61 died due to the overdose / toxic liquor while three people died in prison, etc.*

*78 children were killed during the year. Eight of them were kidnapped and murdered, 15 died in bomb blasts, 20 killed by stray bullets, 18 killed due to enmity; five were raped and killed and one child was killed on sectarian grounds.*

*Of the 154 women killed during the one year, 55 were killed by their relatives, 61 were killed by influential persons; 14 were killed by stray bullets, 11 died in bomb blasts, three were killed on the railway tracks and four women were burnt to death.*

*Six women fell victim to the karo kari [the killing in the name of so-called honour]. Four men were also killed in the same category.*

*The highest number of killings reached to 281 in the month of March 2014, while the lowest figure of killing was 187 in the month of December 2014.]*

The demand came when ANP's Shahi Syed drew the Senate's attention to what he called the continued targeted killing of his party's workers as well as *Pakhtuns* in Karachi. The opposition senators also staged a token walk-out with the ANP members to express solidarity with them. Chairman Nayyar Bokhari sought a report from the Sindh government on targeted killings in Karachi.

*Launching a support for ANP's call for the military action, Nasreen Jalil of the MQM said it was her party which had been demanding an army operation against terrorists in Karachi where Taliban were strengthening their presence. The senator had written a letter to the prime minister on the issue.*

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The Senate held that not only the Pakhtuns, but the Sindhis and Urdu-speaking people were also being targeted by terrorists, understanding that issues being faced by the ANP and her party were not different from each other. Senator Jalil Nasreen condemned the killing of ANP leaders and workers in Karachi and said the Taliban had also targeted the MPAs of her party which could not run the election campaign in 2013 because of terrorism. The apex house raised questions that:

- *“Why are the murderers being protected?”*
- *Why is a military operation not being carried out in Karachi?*
- *Why not to launch a military operation in Karachi to clean it of filth.*
- *What will happen if the people picked up weapons.”*

All members knew and discussed that billions of rupees were being collected as extortion in the city. Senator Syed regretted that ANP's third Karachi president had been killed but not a single killer was arrested. ANP's Ilyas Bilour held Interior Minister Ch Nisar Ali Khan responsible for what he called *continued genocide of the Pakhtuns* and asked the rulers to quit if they could not protect people.

Senators had the consensus that till then over 1,200 activists and ministers of the ANP and their children had been killed by terrorists – though most of the victims belonged to Khyber PK province.

However, on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015; a local leader, Rafiq Rajput, of MQM appeared in court while accused of involvement in violence of 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007; *BBC of the same date is referred here for details.*

*[On 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007; over 50 people were killed and more than 100 vehicles torched during the visit of [then defunct] CJP Iftikhar M Chaudhry, to Karachi who had arrived in the city to address a lawyers' gathering.*

*The City police had registered an FIR against the Sindh government and the leaders of the MQM regarding the incidents of that day. MQM had claimed that their 14 workers were also killed.*

*In September 2007; MQM had asked its workers and supporters, who had witnessed the incidents of 12<sup>th</sup> May, to attend all future proceedings related to that day and furnish personal affidavits.]*

MQM denied allegations saying that Rajput was not a criminal, adding that he was a "dignified and honest man" who should not have been arrested.

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His detention followed by Rangers' report found that MQM was responsible for 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012 factory fire also which killed more than 250 people – known as Baldia Town Arson case.

The MQM once more rejected the allegations categorically.

BBC added that it was part of Rangers' new policy to bring factional, sectarian and ethnic killings under control in the city. Since the late 1980s, successive governments used force and appeasement to control MQM, which was understood to have a large armed wing and the ability to destabilise Karachi. Rafiq Rajput was leader of the *Mehmoodabad* branch of MQM.

*"It is strange that he has been arrested seven years after the 12 May incident,"* Amir Khan of MQM's leading Rabita Committee told the media.

In fact, on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2012, the Sindh High Court had *restored to its original position* a constitutional petition seeking a judicial inquiry into the incidents of 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007 filed by civil rights campaigner Syed Iqbal Kazmi, who had previously withdrawn it in November 2007.

Later; another MQM affiliate confessed to his involvement in 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007 and Tahir Plaza of 2008 incidents which saw many political workers and lawyers killed in 2007 and 2008 during lawyers movement for restoration of the then CJP Iftikhar M Chaudhry; *'the News'* dated 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016 is referred.

In a leaked video made during the course of one JIT [*consisted of officials from police, Rangers and intelligence agencies*]'s investigation, Kashif Qadir said he carried out the killings at the behest of MQM chief Altaf Hussain. *"MQM chief gathered party workers a day before May 12 and asked to stop Chief Justice's rally come what may,"* Kashif said in the video and added that:

*"Two teams were set up for this purpose; the MQM workers were positioned at the FTC Bridge where they resorted to firing. Before the burning of lawyers at the City Court in 2008, MQM chief asked party workers not to spare anybody."*

At least four people were killed when gunmen opened fire from flyovers in Baloch Colony and FTC on people passing through the *Shahra-e-Faisal* on

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12<sup>th</sup> May 2007. Six people were killed in Tahir Plaza when unknown men had set fire to the building in April 2008.

The suspect Kashif Qadir admitted to killing Advocate Sohail Anjum, Wahid Anjum and six workers of the *Sunni Tehreek*. He claimed that the *Sunni Tehreek* workers were murdered on the orders of Hammad Siddiqui. Kashif Qadir's father worked in the construction sector and joined the MQM after being intimidated for paying extortion.

Reacting to allegations made in the video, the MQM said the video was part of the media trial of the party.

J RANA BHAGWANDAS EXPIRED:

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015; Former acting chief *Justice Rana Bhagwandas* passed away in Karachi. The 73-year-old former judge was under treatment for a heart ailment at a private hospital at the time of his passing. He was the first Hindu and the second non-Muslim head of Pakistan's judiciary and had been a Supreme Court judge since February 2000.

Born in Naseerabad, Larkana District [now Qamber Shahdadkot District] in Sindh in December 1942, Justice Bhagwandas had a postgraduate degree in Islamic Studies and was considered an expert on constitutional law. He was a practising advocate for about two years before being appointed as a judge in July 1967; was made judge of the Sindh High Court in June 1994.

In 2002, the Sindh High Court had dismissed a challenge to his appointment to the higher judiciary on the grounds that he was a non-Muslim.

He was appointed acting Chief Justice for a few days in 2005 and 2006, during the absence of then Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry from the country. He was again appointed as acting chief justice of Pakistan during the judicial crisis in 2007.

Justice Bhagwandas was appointed as the Chairman Federal Public Service Commission [FPSC] on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009 after his retirement from the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, the powers enjoyed by the FPSC chief had been cut drastically, as he was no longer responsible for top appointments / promotions in the bureaucracy. This was seen as a major jolt vis-a-vis merit - based promotions in the bureaucracy.

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Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani had already reconstituted the selection board for senior positions in the civil services. The Secretary of the Establishment Division had been made the chairman of the board, which recommended promotions against BPS-20 and BPS-21 posts.

A couple of months earlier, an ordinance was promulgated, amending the Civil Servants Act of 1973 for the removal of the Chairman of FPSC as head of the board. Under the ordinance, the prime minister could appoint anyone as chairman of the board; bureaucrats still fear that this may lead to “*political promotions*”.

On Performance of Judges:

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 2016; the Chief Justice Sindh High Court [SHC] Syed Sajjad Ali, while addressing Thatta Bar, said that:

*“....no comparison should be made between the performance of judges and lower staff of courts. Under the influence of an ailment plaguing the society, everyone wants to get his work done by hook or by crook. So if somebody in connivance with court staff wants to achieve desired results, his act should not be attributed to judges.*

*By the grace of God, we have the best of judges and corrupt judges are in tiny minority - that 25 judges had been sacked on various charges over the past one year. We have launched reforms in judicial system and begun with ourselves [judges].”*

Meanwhile, the SHC Hyderabad bench recommended departmental proceedings against Benazir Abad’s District and Sessions Judge for misconduct. The bench comprising Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and Justice Iqbal Mehar directed the Sessions Judge [SJ], Manazir Hussain Zaidi, to submit his compliance report of the high court’s order dated 10<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

The matter pertained to the administrative and financial issues of the Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Benazirabad District, raised by a petitioner, Mumtaz Ahmed Qureshi.

Vide the 10<sup>th</sup> October’s order, the SJ Zaidi was supposed to inspect the teaching hospital affiliated with the university and to submit a detailed report of the raids carried out and action taken. Instead of going by the SHC order, the SJ held a dialogue with the petitioner and reported to SHC that the petitioner Mr Qureshi had no *locus standi* in the matter; thus the petition was filed declaring it ‘*not maintainable*’.

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After going through the report, the bench noted that the judge was entrusted with a specific duty under the court's Oct 10 order which never authorised him to hold conversation with the petitioner - thus deciding fate of the petition on his own.

The bench observed that SJ Zaidi's act was a pure case of inefficiency. The bench, meanwhile, ordered DG Health Services to appear in person in the high court along with detailed report of all hospitals of the district, particularly the teaching hospital affiliated with the Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, after paying surprise visit to the hospital.

In his petition Mr Qureshi had stated that after amendments to the Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women, Benazir Abad Act 2015, all administrative matters of the university were transferred to its vice chancellor. But till that date funds, medicines and rules etc were under the control of the respondent Benazir Abad's Deputy Commissioner [DC].

The budget was still lying with the DC due to political interference and certain employees were '*ghost employees*'; private clinics, ultrasound examination and x-ray businesses were being run under the supervision of the university's professors. The petitioner had prayed to the SHC to declare the DC's act of keeping the budget and medicines of university unlawful.

*MQM HQ - NINE ZERO RAIDED:*

On 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015; a heavy contingent of Rangers raided Nine Zero, the headquarters of *Muttahida Qaumi Movement* [MQM], in Karachi's Azizabad neighbourhood in the morning. A number of party workers, including member of MQM Rabita Committee [Central Coordination Cell]'s Amir Khan, were detained during the raid.

The operation was managed and executed by members of the paramilitary force alone and there was no sign of local police in the area. The Rangers' raid at the MQM HQ appeared to have symbolic significance in the Karachi operation that had been underway since October 2013.

The MQM announced a protest by party activists and a subsequent call for a day of "peaceful mourning" across the country. The private schools in Karachi remained closed next day; the examinations and entry tests scheduled for that day were postponed.

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MQM Chief Altaf Hussain, in a telephonic address from London, denounced the said raid; the summary of his address was:

- *'This was the first time that the house of a political party chief was raided.*
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- *....remarked that Rangers have authority but they are unable to deliver justice.*
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- *The establishment does not tolerate MQM's presence.*
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- *The ammunition seized from Nine Zero by Rangers does not belong to MQM - if the weapons belonged to MQM, they would not have been stored in Nine Zero.*
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- *The ammunition recovered was planted by Rangers personnel themselves, who carried it inside concealed in blankets.*
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- *..... that "terrorism in the name of search operations" be stopped.*
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- *..... more than 60 people were arrested during the raid by Rangers.*
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- *The demise of party worker Waqas Ali Shah has deeply upset him.'*

The MQM alleged that a senior party office bearer, Waqas Ali Shah of the central information committee, was killed by Rangers during the raid – he was killed in straight fire by Rangers at 7:45am. The MQM narrated that:

*"Dozens of mobiles of Rangers appeared at Nine Zero around 6 am. Personnel proceeded to raid the 50 offices in our HQ; went to each office, went through all the files and broke telephones."*

Additional Inspector General [IGP] Sindh Police Ghulam Qadir Thebo, while speaking to the media, said that Waqas Shah was not shot by Rangers personnel, but that the bullet was fired from a hand-held gun from within the MQM people around. Rangers Director General [DG] Maj Gen Bilal Akbar also told that:

*'MQM activist Shah did not die of gunfire by Rangers personnel; the young man was shot with a TT pistol and the fact would become clear once the medical board's report is received.'*

A Rangers spokesperson briefed the media that *no one was killed during the raid but that 'unidentified men' opened fire injuring an Express News*



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*cameraman*. Rangers personnel, after breaking barricades leading to MQM HQ, had cordoned off the area and searched through departments of the party's offices. They also raided adjoining houses and arrested a number of MQM activists and leaders from around.

Speaking to media, Col Tahir called the two hour raid a "*purely information-based operation*" and divulged that the Khursheed Memorial Hall at Nine Zero was sealed and handed over to police for further investigation. During the raid, telephone lines at Nine Zero were cut-off, disabling communication with the outer world.

Contrary to the MQM Chief's speech that the recovered guns did not belong to the party [*– rather the same were brought in through concealed blankets and planted by the Rangers*], the party leader Haider Abbas Rizvi, who was in Islamabad that day, confirmed the raid to the media but narrated a different stance and '*maintained that all the weapons seized by Rangers are licensed*'.

Express News cameraman Waseem Mughal who was at Nine Zero among other media personnel was injured due to firing from the MQM's mob but his condition got stable later while taken to the hospital in time. According to Ranger's Col Tahir, ammunition stolen from NATO containers was also seized during the search operation at Nine Zero.

Speaking to media, MQM's Faisal Subzwari admitted that weapons were seized during the raid, but upheld the stance adopted by Haider Abbas Rizvi in Islamabad that day:

*'... they were all licensed and were being kept for security in view of the threats being received from the Taliban and other extremist elements. After the Army Public School attack, even schools and colleges are now being asked to keep weapons for security. We were also told to keep weapons for our security.'*

Scores of activists and party members protested the raid by chanting slogans. Aerial firing also ensued outside Nine Zero as the activists attempted to break Rangers' cordon. A large number of female activists had also protested the raid by chanting "*Go Rangers Go*". Soon after the news of the search operation broke, MQM leaders and activists started to gather outside the HQ but were not allowed to enter its premises.

MQM observed a day of peaceful protest against the search operation next morning and the transport services remained suspended throughout the day in all areas of Karachi. Petrol pumps and private schools in several are-

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as of Karachi were shut down as activists in large numbers protested against the Rangers. Examinations in Karachi University were also postponed as citizens' feared violence. Business centres and gas stations in Hyderabad, Nawabshah, Jamshoro and Mirpur Khas were also shut down.

Might be a coincidence; the incident emerged on a day when PM Nawaz Sharif himself was due to visit the metropolitan city. In Islamabad, Senator Raja Zafarul Haq of PML[N], categorically stated that the ruling party had no contention with the MQM. He denied speculation that the raid on Nine Zero was carried out in retaliation to the MQM's support to the PPP during the elections of the Chairman Senate which led to Raza Rabbani of the PPP to take hold of the prestigious office.

A press release was issued by Rangers after the raid on MQM's HQ. It said:

*'Pakistan Rangers Sindh has conducted a series of targeted raids at surrounding areas of Nine Zero including Khursheed Memorial Hall today. During the above mentioned action, some hard core criminals have been arrested including Faisal Mota, Farhan Shabbir aka Mullah, Amir Khan, Nadir Shah (convicted earlier and sentenced for 13 years by the competent court) and Ubaid K- 2.*

*Faisal Mota had been awarded the death sentence in absentia on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2014 by an Anti-Terrorism Court in the murder case of Wali Khan Babar, a Geo TV reporter.*

*.....And that the paramilitary force had information that Nine-Zero has become a no-go area. We also knew that the criminals were present on the premises. .... that the raid was carried out on the orders of the Supreme Court and under the powers granted to Rangers by the federal government.'*

According to Rangers spokesperson Col Tahir, ammunition stolen from NATO containers was also seized during the search operation at Nine Zero. Next day about 27 suspects were presented before an Anti-Terrorism Court [ATC]. The Rangers detained 26 suspects on a 90 days preventive detention while a joint interrogation team (JIT) was later announced for further investigation.

MQM Chief Altaf Hussain held a telephonic conversation with PPP's Asif Ali Zardari, during which the former president was briefed over the Rangers' raid conducted at the MQM HQ Nine Zero and residence of Altaf's sister. He also informed Zardari about the arrest of MQM activists and the killing of Waqas Ali Shah, who died of gunshot wounds during the raid. Hussain add-

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ed that the nature of the raid at the MQM HQ was condemnable. The former president expressed sorrow over the incident.

In July 2015; the Rangers' JIT had pointed at the MQM in the Baldia Town factory inferno fire that claimed the lives of at least 258 factory workers, a charge the party vehemently denied. The JIT report contained several other disclosures about the involvement of MQM workers in several criminal cases as well rigging in the 2013 general elections.

Next day, at least 27 suspects were presented before an Anti-Terrorism Court [ATC] - 26 were placed on a 90 days preventive detention while a joint interrogation team [JIT] was likely to be formed for further investigation. Rangers claimed that they apprehended nearly a dozen target killers – including the aforementioned six convicts.

Later that day, Rangers handed over three MQM workers, to Azizabad police after no evidence of criminal activities was found against them during initial investigations. On the third day [on Friday morning], 19 more detainees were released, including Ghulam Subhani, Pervez Alam, Khurram and Azeem who were members of MQM's information department.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015; Preedy Police Station's Station House Officer [SHO] was gunned down in Akhtar Colony. SHO Aijaz Khawaja was in his car when he was severely injured after gunmen fired at him. He was rushed to Jinnah hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

*MQM WON GABOL'S SEAT BACK:*

On 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015; MQM candidate Kunwar Naveed Jamil was the winner of the by-election held in Karachi's NA-246 constituency.

Kunwar Naveed Jamil bagged 95,644 votes followed by PTI's Imran Ismail with 24,821 votes; *Jamaat e Islami* [JI]'s Rashid Naseem grabbed the third spot with 9,056 votes; a total of 131,418 votes were cast in the constituency by-poll out of which 1,129 votes were rejected - the total turnover was at 36.72pc.

By-election was held in NA-246 on that day after the seat fell vacant when MQM's Nabeel Gabol resigned from the National Assembly a few months ago. The involvement of MQM chief Altaf Hussain, PTI Chairman Imran Khan and JI chief Sirajul Haq had turned what was just a simple by-election for one seat into an electoral battlefield of national importance.

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Imran Ismail accepted the outcome of that day's by-elections while saying that the prevention of election-day rigging was a great leap forward, and that in the future, pre-election rigging through presiding officers and by means of lists were also be stopped.

MQM supporters gathered at Jinnah Ground to celebrate the *win of MQM's Kanwar Naveed Jameel* of the NA-246 constituency, after being summoned by party chief Altaf Hussain.

There were reports of clash between the supporters of rival political parties at Karimabad, where PTI's central election office was located. PTI Karachi president Ali Zaidi denounced the hooliganism of MQM workers who had attacked PTI camp office there, hurled stones and set the PTI flag on fire. However, a statement issued from PTI Media Cell said:

*".....MQM welcomes PTI on one hand, while on the other hand, it sends party activists to attack the PTI office and workers. Our peacefulness shouldn't be considered as our weakness. We don't want to spoil the peace of Karachi."*

Imran Ismail told the media PTI was satisfied with the said election adding: *"We haven't yet received complaints about rigging. The party's reservations with the ECP, however, still stand."*

Speaking to media personnel, PTI chief Imran Khan said:

*".....today's by-election would not have been possible without the deployment of Rangers during the polling considering the sense of fear that has been created in the constituency."*

*I think MQM is already making excuses because they know they will not manage 140,000 votes this time. It was a positive development for Karachi that finally true elections were taking place there."*

213 polling stations were set up with 769 polling booths housed in 55 buildings, for 357,861 registered voters. Around 2,556 policemen provided security in the constituency, whereas Rangers personnel were also deployed at almost all polling stations.

Although 14 candidates were in the run, but the by-poll was largely a three-way contest between Kanwar Naveed Jameel of MQM, Imran Ismail of PTI and Rashid Naseem of JI.

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The constituency is considered to be an MQM bastion because its headquarters Nine Zero is located there and the party had emerged victorious in all three previous general elections in 2002, 2008 and 2013 and in a by-election in May 2004. It comprised Federal B. Area, Federal Capital Area and parts of Liaquatabad.

Cantonment Board Elections:

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015; in Cantonment Board Elections in Karachi, the polling opened at 8am and continued till 5pm without break, under the watchful gaze of soldiers deployed in and around the polling stations. The military was given magisterial powers to supervise the polling process. Voters were not allowed to carry mobile phones to the polling stations.

*[Overall in Pakistan: PML[N] triumphed over its rivals, winning 68 of the 199 seats up for grabs; the PTI emerged as the second biggest winner with 42 seats followed by the MQM, which clinched 19 seats. The PPP, which used to be a federal party, performed dismally, winning only seven seats; the politico-religious Jamaat e Islami clinched six seats and the ANP of Asfandiyar Wali could muster only two seats.]*

Most people reportedly stayed within the confines of their homes because of the high temperature. At some polling stations though, the turnout crossed the 60pc mark.

- In Faisal cantonment, the MQM won eight seats while the PML[N] won two seats. There were a total of ten wards in this cantonment.
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- In Clifton cantonment – which also had ten wards – the PTI won four seats, the PPP won three seats, while the MQM won two seats and the JI picked up one seat.
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- In Korangi Cantonment, the election was held only in one of its two seats, which was won by the PML[N] candidate.
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- In Karachi cantonment, which had five wards, the MQM won three seats while two independent candidates also succeeded in getting elected.
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- In Malir Cantonment, the MQM won two seats and the PML[N] managed to bag one seat.
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- In Manora cantonment, two independent candidates were declared winners; this cantonment had two wards.

During the LG polls in Karachi, questions were raised over the transparency of polls as the board's officials did not allow independent observers and media to enter the premises of polling stations. A lot of eligible voters did not even know that the elections were taking place in their areas, as the political parties paid little attention to the contest. The turnout in all cantonment areas of Karachi was from 15 to 20 percent.

On 26<sup>th</sup> April 2015; while feeling ashamed of results of those cantonment polls and cursing their service and governance in Karachi, the ruling PPP's Co-Chairperson Mr Zardari announced uplift package as PPP wanted to stage show of strength in Lyari. He announced development schemes worth one billion rupees for the underprivileged Lyari and vowed to return peace to the troubled neighbourhood.

In Lyari's Kakri Ground, PPP demonstrated a show of strength in the metropolis in a bid to dispel the impression that the party had lost its vote-bank in earlier day's cantonment elections. Zardari announced making of Bilawal Bhutto Engineering College for uplift of the educational status of the area. He also vowed to resolve the issue of water scarcity in Lyari 'within three months'.

In addition to announcing flats scheme for Lyari, he also announced regularisation of contractual employees while roaring that *"PPP will fight for the rights of the masses."*

Asking PPP workers to begin preparation for the polls that were two and a half years away, the co-chairman took that day as the commencement of their campaigning and vowed to go to Punjab, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and organise rallies there with the same spirits.

Despite all the tall claims by Mr Zardari, no development was, however, seen during the CM Qaim Ali Shah's tenure at least; not a brick was moved, nor an inch for water or sewerage was laid down – all the announcements remained confined to the press clippings at the most.

On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015; senior analyst Najam Sethi opined in his live program on *'the GEO – Aapis ki Baat'* that the revelations of one Saulat [later hanged to death on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015] were true and had damaged MQM while benefiting the law enforcement agencies. The JIT interrogating Saulat Mirza said he had no evidence to prove his assertions against the MQM – but how he could prove the atrocities of twenty years back.

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Sethi expressed his views that the federal or the Sindh government did not own the Karachi operation and Zardari developed differences with Bilawal also over the action against MQM. The PPP feared becoming the next target after the MQM because the army would take action against every criminal, whether belonging to MQM or the PPP.

In fact, the army was carrying out the operation in Karachi on the basis of intelligence information but the political parties had political objectives. That's the reason the PPP did not own the operation. Had the federal government and the PEMRA taken action on Altaf Hussain's speeches, the army would not have to react. The army was acting in national interest but the Sindh government was not assisting - even the Nawaz Sharif's response not being up to the mark.

The fact remained that Sindh Governor Isratul Ebad had lost the confidence of both the army and the MQM. Three former army chiefs – Gen Ziaul Haq, Gen Aslam Beg and Gen Musharraf - supported MQM which always enjoyed good relations with the political Generals. However, Gen Raheel Sharif had no political ambitions.

Every now and then, MQM Chief Altaf praised the army, the objective was that they would support the military, if martial law was imposed, but the army too would have to back them. This time, however, Altaf Hussain was unhappy after the army started to cleanse Karachi without playing politics – the army wanted peace and security with no gimmicks.

*RANGERS' ANOTHER RAID ON 90:*

Earlier, after the Rangers' raid on Nine Zero [on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015]; just a day after raid, the Rangers handed over three MQM workers, to Azizabad police after no evidence of criminal activities was found against them during investigations. Those workers were identified as Pervez Alam, Khurram and Azeem and were members of MQM's Information Cell.

Next day, 19 more detainees were released, including one Ghulam Subhani, Nine Zero's cook. Business activities resumed in Karachi as normal just a day after; albeit the petrol stations, markets and education institutions including Karachi University remained closed the whole day when the news about raid spread in the early morning; unidentified men had also set a bus on fire in Korangi No 5. Trade union announced to keep the trade centres open.

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Till at least three months after the pre-dawn raid by the Rangers on the MQM HQ at Nine Zero, political prospects of the party continuously went bleak with the powers as its London-based chief kept on raising loud voices against the Generals.

Contrary to the common perception that the Rangers - led operation against the MQM would end, following its electoral triumph in the 23<sup>rd</sup> April by-election on NA-246, almost all local offices of the MQM remained closed for months, its workers were picked up by the law-enforcement agencies on daily basis and even its elected representatives — MNAs, MPAs and senators — were thoroughly checked and sometimes harshly questioned at the airports, no matter whether they were going abroad or travelling within the country. Some leaders were told not to leave the city being under investigation.

Weeks after, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority [PEMRA] placed ban on live telecast of speeches of MQM Chief Altaf Hussain from London because in their opinion the Chief was openly accusing the Pak-Army on Rangers activism in Karachi. Though there was no situation of 'direct conflict' with the Rangers or the Army [*the MQM knew that it was not in their interest*] but the leadership continued issuing statements to condemn '*arbitrary arrests*' of MQM activists.

The MQM's local leadership had rightly evaluated that the Pak-Army and the Nawaz Sharif's kitchen cabinet did not want Mr Hussain, being a British citizen too, to lead the party while sitting in his London abode, but the establishment was not having a clear-cut plan to have him replaced.

Referring to the '*Dawn*' Karachi dated 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015:

*'Many people believed that former Karachi Nazim Syed Mustafa Kamal, who practically left the MQM without making a formal announcement; or Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ebad Khan could be the likely replacements of Mr Hussain. However, the MQM Chief had the governor discredited when the MQM Coordination Committee last month demanded that Dr Ebad should resign the office and come back to the MQM fold as a 'worker'.*

*And a campaign against Mr Kamal has been going on for months in which workers were constantly brain washed that whatever development he carried out in Karachi during his Nazimiat days was actually the collective vision of the MQM.'*



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The fact remained that the Rangers' persistent action in Karachi and the on-going investigations in London forced Altaf Hussain to seriously draw workable conclusions about his own future. Publicly, he told his followers that he would never quit the party leadership but behind closed doors, he always kept a hand-picked team comprising about a dozen London and Karachi based trustees to run the party in case of any eventuality.

Though the MQM always enjoyed both open and tacit support of the Pakistan People's Party [PPP] in Sindh, however, no state institution ever planned to crush it as a political party. The MQM leadership left no stone unturned to make the people believe that:

*'Some powerful individuals are against us and labelling us as a criminal, extortionist, terrorist and anti-state group but we are not. Those individuals should tolerate MQM for the continuity of the current democratic dispensation.'*

The above contention was manifested by the MQM through their victory in the NA-246 by-election as well as in the Cantonment Boards local government elections. Several MQM leaders were not sure whether they would be allowed to freely contest the upcoming local government election in the province. MQM was not allowed to collect *Zakat & Fitrana* for their '*Khidmat e Khalq Foundation*' and certain arrests were also made in this connection on the charges of contravention.

For the MQM it was a tougher phase and the only available option with them was to wait and let the wave pass over. The workers and the leadership maintained that '*...they had faced such atrocities from 1992 till 1996 and they were confident this time, too*'.

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015: MQM's Senator Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif condemned the arrests of party leaders during that day's raid at Nine Zero; it was another raid after 11<sup>th</sup> March one. MQM's press conference a couple of hours after Rangers raid told that the forces had arrested former and incumbent Coordination Committee in-charges i.e. Qamar Mansoor and Kaiful Wara respectively, amongst others. On social media, Bar Saif embarked:

- *We won't be silenced by guns – Stop victimizing MQM.*
- 
- *The state terrorism against MQM needs to stop.*
- 
- *They have even registered FIRs against our women.*
- 
- *All this taking place in an era of so-called democratic government.*

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- 
- *A political movement cannot be uprooted by use of force.*
- 
- *Rangers raided Nine Zero without accompanying any warrant.*
- 
- *All arrested workers should be released forthwith.*
- 
- *The MQM's woman leaders are being incriminated in multiple cases and put on ECL - the system based on injustice cannot persist.*
- 
- *The arrests and handcuffs cannot prevent the MQM from its struggle for truth.*

Addressing the media, MQM leader Tahir Mashadi said:

- *The workers of a party that love Pakistan were arrested tonight.*
- 
- *They are victimizing the most liberal and patriotic party of Pakistan.*
- *This is not an operation against criminals; this is Ethnic Cleansing of Mohajirs.*
- 
- *We are being treated with discrimination. It is our turn today. But, it will be anyone else tomorrow.*

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Farooq Sattar expressed resolve to stand by the party Chief Altaf Hussain despite all aggression and requested all the members of civil society and human rights organizations to stand up with the MQM against atrocities. *"We are as much patriots as anybody else in the country,"* he added.

During the Ranger's 2<sup>nd</sup> raid of 17<sup>th</sup> July 2015, MQM leaders Qamar Mansoor, Sufian Yousuf, Azeem Farooqui and MQM Rabita Committee In-charge Kaiful Wara were arrested from Nine-Zero while six other workers were arrested in Korangi and Malir as well. Eight Rangers vehicles were used in the search 2<sup>nd</sup> operation at Nine Zero. The paramilitary personnel entered the Nine-Zero office and Khusheed Begum Memorial Hall after surrounding the area in Karachi's Azizabad. Azeem Farooqui and Sufian Yousuf were released after a brief interrogation.

However, Mansoor and Wara were taken to an undisclosed location for further interrogation; MQM's central leadership alleged that the raid was carried out without a search warrant.

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The paramilitary personnel also launched a raid in Bagh e Korangi that day and arrested Joint Unit In-charge Shakeel Kabootar and three other party activists - Kabootar was shifted to an undisclosed location for interrogations. Two MQM workers were arrested in Malir on charges of delivering hate speeches the same day. DG Rangers Maj Gen Bilal Akbar told that those detained from Nine Zero *"have been arranging and facilitating hate speeches against peace of Karachi"*.

Following those arrests, MQM's Chief Altaf Hussain criticised the security forces for raiding party HQ and urged the party workers and supporters to stay united and peaceful *"despite being targeted"*. Hussain expressed a resolve that raids, arrests and suppression would not defeat their spirits. *"Movement and struggle would continue until last breath,"* he added.

Moreover, Altaf Hussain alleged that:

*'PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has done deal with the army. I supported Asif Zardari in tough times when leaders of his own PPP had ditched him. In return he [Zardari] has deceived me.'*

Rampant violence had terrorised Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city and economic heartbeat, in recent years; a recent security crackdown seemed to have brought a lull in the bloodshed but the killings remained the hallmark even though.

SAULAT MIRZA HANGED:

*On 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015;* convicted murderer Saulat Mirza was hanged to death in the early hours in Balochistan's Machh Jail. Mirza's body was shifted from Machh Jail to the Edhi morgue in Quetta. His body was flown to Karachi, where it was buried later that day in the Gulshan e Maymar neighbourhood.

Mirza had been on death row for nearly 16 years. Sentenced to death in 1999, Mirza was initially scheduled to be executed on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2015 after Pakistan lifted its moratorium on capital punishment in the wake of the Peshawar school massacre of December 2014.

But in a dramatic turn of events, video footage of Mirza hurling grave allegations at Altaf Hussain and other MQM leaders of complicity in crime was aired on television channels just few hours before his execution that day.

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The president immediately stayed his hanging for three days after the convict sought more time to give information regarding target killers and their alleged patrons.

[Saulat Mirza, in a video statement aired on Pakistan's TV channels, hurled startling allegations on MQM and its top leadership, just a few hours before his execution was scheduled to take place on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 5:30AM; but then delayed for 72 hours.

Mirza said he was an MQM worker and received direct orders from MQM leader Babar Ghauri to assassinate KESC chief Shahid Hamid. *"I was summoned at Babar Ghauri's house where I took Altaf Hussain's orders via telephone. Altaf Hussain would usually pass on instructions through Babar Ghauri,"* alleged Saulat Mirza.

However, Altaf Hussain termed the allegations a conspiracy against MQM. Babar Ghauri dismissed Mirza's statement as a "fable" and denied having given any order for a murder. *"This is a made up story, we are not allowed to call workers to our houses and deal with them there,"* Ghauri said.

Saulat Mirza maintained that *"...when he [Mirza] was in North Nazimabad, I met him then as an MPA. Then he was removed from the party and I kept no communication or relationship with him."*

Mirza, however, said workers like him were used as "tissue papers" by MQM, and were disposed off when there was no use left for the party. *"Other workers should take a lesson from my ending,"* said Mirza. *"Criminals in the party could get protection under Governor Sindh,"* he claimed.

Saulat went on to say that workers in the MQM who gained popularity among the public were eventually sidelined. *"Mustafa Kamal was humiliated and then sidelined from the party because he had grown popular and Azeem Tariq was murdered for the same reason,"* Mirza said.

Mirza was found guilty of murdering the then Managing Director [MD] of Karachi Electric Supply Corporation [KESC], Malik Shahid Hamid, his driver Ashraf Brohi, and his guard Khan Akbar outside Hamid's residence in DHA on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1997.

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After his intermediate education, Saulat Mirza became active in student politics and joined the All Pakistan Mohajir Students Organisation [APMSO], the students' wing of MQM, and then an acronym for MQM.

Mirza's name first appeared on intelligence and security agencies' radar in 1994, after the killing of two US diplomats at a traffic signal on Karachi's *Shahrah e Faisal* and murder of four workers of an American oil company, Union Texas (an American oil company), near PIDC Bridge. He was arrested from Karachi airport after his arrival back from Bangkok; *on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1998*.

During a press conference on the same day, in the presence of the then Karachi DIG, Ameen Qureshi, Saulat Mirza made revelations about his involvement in the murder of scores of innocent people, including several high-profile personalities.

Mirza was initially detained by FIA immigration officials for travelling on a fake identity but subsequently was handed over to the local police of Gulbahar police station.]

A few days later, Mirza's hanging was put off again as authorities wished to interrogate him for crucial details in relation to his confession.

A 10-member joint-investigation team later questioned Mirza over his confession and eventually concluded that his disclosures did not constitute any 'actionable intelligence or cogent evidence' that could help the judicial process. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, the trial court issued Mirza's black warrant for a third time, scheduling his hanging for 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

*"It is just a formality"*; Mirza, the convict in a triple-murder case reacted as a judge of a Karachi anti-terrorism court [ATC] read out his death sentence on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1999.

Almost 16 years later, the same court – ATC 5 – then presided over by Judge M Javed Alam – ordered on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015 the manifestation of its 1999 order, issuing Mirza's death warrant, scheduling his execution by hanging in Balochistan's Machh Jail on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

Civil and military intelligence agencies in several reports during the mid and late 1990s described Saulat as a man who had been operating from South Africa, organising subversive activities in Karachi – from where he fled following army's operations in 1992.

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According to the then DIG Karachi, Ameen Qureshi, Saulat had confessed to the murders of Maj (rtd) Shahnawaz Toor, who was in charge of the American Drug Enforcement Agency in Pakistan; two US diplomats; four Union Texas workers; KESC MD Shahid Hamid, his guard and driver; sub-Divisional Magistrate Nawaz Khushk, a Rangers personnel who was a Lance Naik of the Pakistan Army, and five relatives of Superintendent of Police Khawar Nisar.

Although the First Information Report [FIR] of Shahid Hamid's murder was initially registered by DHA SHO Farhan Zaman against unknown assailants, following Saulat's arrest the investigation of the case was assigned to Choudhry Aslam— who had been tasked by former Sindh IG Rana Maqbool to investigate all cases against Saulat Mirza.

*Saulat Mirza was identified as Shahid Hamid's murderer – 582 days after the criminal act – by the wife of the deceased, Shahnaz.* The motive behind the murder, cited by police, was a departmental inquiry into some officers of the KESC.

The officers had been under the protection of MQM, and the party wanted the KESC MD to halt the inquiry and prevent the forwarding of the cases to the National Accountability Bureau – then called the Ehtesab Bureau.

On 21<sup>st</sup> January 2000; the Sindh High Court rejected Saulat's appeal against his conviction, while the Supreme Court [SC] dismissed his appeal on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2001, upholding his sentence. His review petition was also dismissed by the SC on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

As a last-ditch effort, after the rejection of his mercy petition by the presidency, Mirza filed a second review through Advocate Sardar Latif Khosa, pinpointing a contradiction in Shahnaz's statement. But on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015, the SC registrar's office returned the second review petition, saying that another review petition could not be filed under the law.

Latif Khosa then filed an application against the return of the second review petition, which was also dismissed by Chief Justice Nasirul Mulk after a hearing in his chamber on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015, leaving no remedy for Mirza.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015; one Nighat Mirza, the wife of condemned prisoner Saulat Mirza claimed during a media conference that her husband was in constant touch with party Chief Altaf Hussain and the senior leadership prior to his arrest in December 1998. She, however, admitted that senior MQM leader Farooq Sattar had informed her during her last visit to the par-

ty's Nine Zero HQ in February 2015 that the party's role in connection with Mirza's case was over.

She termed the MQM's severing of what she called their once strong ties "*a brutal joke*" and added that "*since then we were not even allowed to move beyond Mukka Chowk* [— decorated with the coal-black sculpture of a clenched fist that rests atop an inverted funnel on the roundabout, lies about half a kilometre from MQM HQ Nine Zero]."

Mirza's wife said her husband would not have made any revelations had the MQM not disowned him. She said her husband was shocked by the party's move and regretted his association with MQM because Saulat's family had misbehaved with senior party members.

*[The fact remains that Saulat's sister had once slapped a member of the MQM Rabita Committee when the mercy appeal of the condemned prisoner was rejected in January 2015.]*

Nighat Mirza said Saulat's statement, which had not been given under any pressure, needed to be probed and investigated - given only to warn others from treading the same path as he did. She said there were four people involved in this case but others were not being apprehended, elaborating:

*"Why aren't they being brought before the court? Why is it that the individual from whom the order (for assassination of the MD KESC) came is not being taken to task?*

*Why is the case being wrapped up with punishment for my husband only? My husband had no quarrel with the former KESC MD, why have those people who had exchanged harsh words with Shahid Hamid not been charged.*

*After the rejection of Saulat's mercy appeal, a meeting was also held with Governor Sindh Ishratul Ebad Khan at Governor House. During the meeting it was decided that the party would bear the expenses of Advocate Sardar Latif Khosa, who is Mirza's counsel.*

*..... that the records of the mobile phone provided to the former MQM activist in jail could be obtained and it would help prove who had remained in contact with the convict.*

*.... that a meeting was also arranged between her and Chief of the PML[Q] Ch Shujaat Hussain during the latter's visit to Nine Zero."*

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Saulat Mirza's wife was able to show *photographs of MQM leaders including Sindh Governor Ishratul Ebad Khan, Babar Ghauri, Haider Abbas Rizvi, Dr Sagheer Ahmed and Abdul Rashid Godil etc inside the Karachi Central Jail premises.*

Speaking about photos of Mirza in which he was accompanying other prisoners on the occasions of MQM's founding day and birthday of party Chief Altaf Hussain, the senior MQM Farooq Sattar commented: *"There is nothing extraordinary about these photos."*

The key question remains:

*.....if there is any good tradition of fearlessness and impartiality while going through due process of investigation and judicial decisions in Pakistan.*