

Quarterly Round Up

Mr. Usama Bin Ashraf *

Caspian Sea's Legal status

Dragged on for decades, the dispute of the Caspian Sea witnessed its logical conclusion when, on Sunday, August 12, 2018, a breakthrough was made by Iran and four former Soviet states including Russia. All the states agreed in principle to distribute equally the potentially huge resources of the Caspian Sea except delimitation of the seabed disputed since the fall of Soviet Union in 1991. All the countries have now agreed to give the Caspian Sea 'Special legal status' making it neither a lake nor a Sea. Previously, owing to its bleak legal status, several derailed and many new projects of regional pipeline aimed at supplying energy from Central Asian Republics into Europe will now be utilizing an estimated 48 billion barrels of oils and 8.7 trillion cubic meters of natural gas with the consensus of all the five states. This will potentially result in a drop in energy prices and more investment. However, on the Iranian side, there is a sign of disappointment seen on social media by its masses on having the smallest amount of the Caspian Sea coastline of all five states as compared to earlier when its 50% was used by Iran before the fall of Soviet Union.

Eritrea-Ethiopia Strife Ends

Eritrea-Ethiopia peace summit of July 9, 2018, ends the 2-decade long conflict. Triggered by the unsettled border issues, after Eritrea was liberated in 1993 as a result of the 3-decade long struggle, the two countries went to war in May 1998. Both countries have now agreed to implement boundary decisions. Desperately needed peace between the two countries will be a good omen for a new beginning. Most importantly, it will allow two countries to use their resource efficiently on the social well-being of the common masses of the two countries.

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The 2018 Kivu Ebola Outbreak

Ebola virus disease (EVD) previously termed as Ebola haemorrhagic fever is a seldom found but severe, often deadly illness in humans if left untreated. Its transmission is via wild animals and from person to person. On August 1, 2019, the ministry of health of the Democratic Republic of Congo declared a new outbreak of Ebola virus disease in North Kivu province, in the eastern part of the country. As of August 7, 2018, forty-four Ebola virus disease cases with 17 confirmed ones and 27 suspected also 36 deaths have been reported in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. The Ministry of Health and World Health Organization have developed rapid response teams for affected health zones to start response activities including 30 technical and logistics specialists.

NASA's First Mission to the Sun

NASA launched humanities' first mission to explore the Sun. Parker Solar Probe of worth \$1.5 billion, according to the NASA, is the first mission of its kind which is going not only to study the atmosphere of the Sun but also touch the surface of the Sun. NASA launched Parker Probe from Cape Canaveral, Florida. Before the launch of the satellite, a young scientist of the NASA said that although we are studying the Sun for decades, now we are finally going to go where the action is happening for years.

General Elections in Pakistan

On Wednesday, July 25, 2018, the general elections were held in Pakistan. Big political parties such as Pakistan Thereek-e-Insaaf, Pakistan Muslim League-N, and Pakistan Peoples Party with various small parties competed for 342 seats of the National Assembly of Pakistan. For any political party, to form a government, it is pertinent to win at least 172 seats. In the general elections of 2018, the PTI won both in the form of the popular vote as well as seats. Similarly, at the provincial level, the PTI remains the largest party of the KPK. In Sindh and Baluchistan, Baluchistan Awami Party and Pakistan Peoples Party remained the winner. In Punjab, the PMLN won the majority of seats but after the inclusion of independent MPAs, the PTI became the largest

party in Punjab. Importantly, the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) declared the July 25 elections free of rigging and appreciated the efforts of the Election Commission of Pakistan. However, voters turnout reduced from 55.2 per cent in 2013 elections to 51.7 per cent in 2018 elections. Opposition parties alleged rigging in the elections and indicated the protests if their reservations are not addressed.

Avenfield Verdict

The accountability court announced the verdict on Friday, July 2018 in the corruption reference of the Avenfield properties. In this verdict, Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sentenced 10 years imprisonment for illegally owning the Avenfield apartments. Moreover, his daughter, Maryam Safdar also got 7 years punishment for abetting her father in purchasing of the properties. Reportedly she provided false trust deed in court that added 1-year prison for not cooperating with the investigation authorities. On the other hand, the PMLN rejected the verdict and linked it with conspiracy for upcoming elections. Representation of the PMLN said that it is a worse form of the verdict which is aimed at taking advantage in coming elections.

Death of Begum Kulsoom Nawaz and Parole of Sharifs

The former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Safdar, and Captain Safdar were released on parole to attend the funeral of Begum Kulsum Nawaz Sharif. In the dictionary of criminal law, the meaning of the parole is the temporary or permanent release of a prisoner before the expiry of a sentence or on the promise of good behaviour.