
Feb 1990 Violent anti-government demonstrations organized by the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM, a movement of Urdu-speaking Muslim immigrants who left India in 1947) in Karachi, the capital of Sindh and the largest city of Pakistan, left at least 60 people dead and over 100 injured. A curfew was imposed and troops were called in to restore order. The demonstrations were called by the MQM to protest against the alleged abduction of MQM members by supporters of the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Qaim A. Shah resigned as Sindh Chief Minister and was replaced by another PPP member, Aftab S. Mirani. A swap of 76 rival political activists followed army-sponsored talks in Karachi to end days of political violence between supporters of the MQM and the Jey Sindh, which demands autonomy for Sindh, the home province of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

May 1990 A curfew was imposed in Hyderabad, the second largest city of Sindh, following machine-gun battles between the Mohajirs (Muslim immigrants) and the native Sindhis. The situation deteriorated after the arrest of Qadir Magsi, a Sindhi nationalist leader. The death toll in the city reached over 80. Ethnic violence in Karachi left 13 dead including a senior MQM leader. The army was deployed in Sindh to help civilian authorities restore law and order. There were repeated allegations, which were difficult to verify, that law enforcement agencies favored the PPP followers and caused the deaths of innocents while attempting to bring the violence under control or by standing by and refusing to intervene. (State Dept. Dispatch, 02/91). The PPP denied the allegations.

Aug 1990 President Ghulam Khan, pursuant to his constitutional powers, dismissed the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) government of Bhutto and dissolved the national and provincial assemblies. Elections were called for respectively on October 24 and 27. A state of emergency was declared to enable the President to act in absence of the assemblies.

Nov 1990 Nawaz Sharif, the leader of the Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA), has been sworn in as Prime Minister, after his right-wing coalition defeated the PPP-led opposition.

Jan 1991 The Hyderabad Press Club held its annual elections. Sindhi journalists boycotted it and there are now two press clubs. The government has agreed to allocate new flats in specific ethnic areas. Wounded victims of violence even attend hospitals divided along ethnic lines. During the last 5 years some 3,000 people have been killed in ethnic violence.

Feb 1991 14 people have been killed and 26 others wounded in ethnic violence. The clashes were among the worst since Nawaz Sharif took office last November.

May 1991 At least 5 people were killed and 16 wounded by gunmen in Hyderabad, as a faction of the Jaye Sindh called for a protest strike to mark the anniversary of the arrest of the faction's leader, Qadir Magsi. But most shops opened as usual in the city, which is dominated by Mohajir settlers.

Sep 1991 Three people were killed in bomb attacks during a strike in Hyderabad. Native Sindhis were protesting against the repatriation of Biharis, the so-called "stranded Pakistanis" from Bangladesh.

Oct 1991 Life was disrupted in parts of Sindh after a strike called by the progressive group of the Jaye Sindh Tehrik to protest the appointment of a caretaker Chief Minister, Tariq Javed, who is from the Mohajir community. Javed is replacing Jam Sadiq Ali pending his return from medical treatment in London. The MQM is a partner in the Sindh government. The strike call was not heeded in Karachi, which is dominated by the Mohajirs.

Jan 1992 Sindh separatist leader G.M. Syed has been put under house arrest, after his speech at a function held to celebrate his birthday challenged "the integrity of Pakistan." As the leader of the nationalist Jaye Sindh, he supports the secession of Sindh and its establishment as a separate entity to be known as Sindhudesh.

May 1992 Ties between neighbors Pakistan and India slumped further when Pakistani Interior Minister told Parliament that Indian intelligence was fuelling sabotage and terrorism in the restive province of Sindh. Opposition leader Bhutto said that an army operation in Sindh should be a part of a political package for the province. Speaking in a parliamentary debate, Bhutto demanded the allocation of job quotas in the federal and provincial governments and government-controlled corporations to natives of Sindh (Reuters, 05/26/92). President Ghulam Khan ordered the army to go into Sindh to "clean up the mess". This would be the country's biggest campaign to control ethnic violence, abductions and other crimes that have paralyzed life in the province.

Jun 1992 After the first anniversary of the founding of the Jaye Sindh Progressive Party on March 21, the party has launched the second phase of its struggle, with the ultimate objective of fighting for complete independence for the province. The Jaye Sindh says its people have been suffering all forms of discrimination and brutalities at the hands of the Punjabi-dominated center. (BBC cites All-India Radio, 06/04/92). The army has accepted the blame for the deaths of nine villagers in Sindh and removed three commanders from their posts. Bhutto, who challenges the legitimacy of the state's civilian government, said there will be no improvement in her home province until Sindhis are given their due rights (Reuters, 06/14/92). Y. Bakhtiar, the leader of the

opposition in the Senate, has demanded more powers for the army in the Sindh operation. Troops have raided the offices of the government-allied MQM and begun to disarm its militants. The army launched a cleanup operation last month hoping to apprehend some 7,000 "robbers" operating from the forests of interior Sindh. The opposition had initially criticized the army for capturing only native Sindhis while ignoring other ethnic groups.

Oct 1992 While reporting about human resource development in the defence industry, Economic Review reports the provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan have marginal representation in the defence forces. Representation from these provinces is essential for national integration. In order to attract Sindhis and Baluchis, a number of measures have been taken.

Jan 1993 Pakistan took back the first batch of 300 Bihari refugees, the stranded Pakistanis from Bangladesh, after a wait of about two decades. While the beginning partly fulfills a 1990 promise by the ruling IDA to repatriate all the refugees -- about 250,000 -- they are reported to be far from universally welcome. Native Sindhis, championed by the opposition PPP, see them as a part of a long-running conspiracy by the Punjabi-dominated Islamabad government to further swamp the southern province with outsiders. Already the native Sindhis are a minority in their own province, particularly in the major urban centers. Conscious of Sindhi sensibilities, the government has promised to house the refugees in the eastern province of Punjab. But few doubt that any fresh influx of Biharis, like their million-plus ethnic kinfolk who have illegally spirited their way into Karachi in the past five years, will eventually gravitate towards Sindh's urban centers (The Guardian, 01/11/93). Army troops were called in to patrol the streets of the southern Sindh cities of Karachi and Hyderabad, to avert a possible ethnic backlash in the wake of four bomb blasts that left 30 people dead and over 100 wounded in Hyderabad. Rival ethnic groups called for protests against the bombings. Political leaders including Mrs. Benazir Bhutto condemned the government's failure to maintain law and order. No one has claimed responsibility for the killings, but police suspect the Jaye Sindh, a nationalist group opposed to the immigration of Urdu-speaking Biharis from Bangladesh (AFP, 01/25/93).

Mar 1993 The Pakistan government has warned officials in all 4 provinces to take precautionary measures against possible terrorist attacks following a rash of explosions in Bombay that have killed nearly 300 and wounded more than 1,000 people. The government of Sindh, regarded as Pakistan's soft-belly because of its long border with India, declared Karachi and several other districts as "sensitive areas" and sent additional forces to

remain on alert. Pakistan and India regularly accuse each other of helping terrorists like Muslims in Kashmir against India, or nationalist forces in Sindh against Pakistan.

Apr 1993 The Federal Minister of Defence Production Mir Bijrani announced his resignation from the cabinet. In his resignation letter, he cited the indifference of the coalition Prime Minister Sharif towards issues like stemming ethnic violence in Sindh, the apprehension of the native Sindhis toward the repatriation of Biharis from Bangladesh, and under-representation of rural Sindhis in the federal services (Middle East Intelligence Report, 04/11/93). President Ghulam Khan dismissed the Sharif government and dissolved the Parliament in view of conflicts over power sharing between him and the Prime Minister.

May 1993 The MQM called for a boycott of the on-going provincial elections to protest the May 1 killing of an MQM leader. The party had long antagonized native Sindhis with its strong pro-Islamabad line. However, it broke away from the coalition government of Nawaz Sharif following an army crackdown on the MQM last June. The Supreme Court restored the Sharif government and the Parliament. However, the verdict did not end the crisis. The two sides instead have expanded their battle into a political control of the provinces.

Jul 1993 The President, Prime Minister and Army Chief held a meeting in a last-ditch effort to avoid using the army to solve the country's crippling political crisis. The opposition led by Mrs. Bhutto had asked the army to remove Sharif and arrange for new elections within 90 days. Bhutto cooperated last year when the army launched an operation against outlaws in her native Sindh. This helped the army improve its relations with the Sindhis, perceived as anti-army since 1979 when Bhutto's father, Z. A. Bhutto, a native Sindhi Prime Minister, was hung for his alleged involvement in a political murder.

Oct 1993 Benazir Bhutto has returned to power for the second time after three years in the political wilderness. Her PPP captured 86 seats in comparison to 72 by Sharif's party in the National Assembly of 207 seats. Ms. Bhutto also strengthened her hold on Punjab, the richest and most populous province, and with allies, formed provincial governments in Punjab and Sindh.

Dec 1993 Massive demonstrations organized by the Jaye Sindh Student Federation were held in several cities in Sindh in protest against the continued detention of M.G. Syed, the leader of the Sindh separatist organizations -- the Jaye Sindh Movement and the Sindh National Alliance. The Jaye Sindh Progressive Party Chairman Dr. K. Makhti has asked

Islamabad to stop the on-going anti-Sindhi operation launched by the army in the province (BBC cites All-India Radio, 12/17/93).

Jan 1994 Arrangements for a forthcoming census March 26 to April 7) have been finalized. The former Sharif government started the process in 1991, but abandoned it half-way when a controversy arose in Sindh about the exaggeration of household numbers. In Sindh two major ethnic communities -- Sindhis and Mohajirs -- are engaged in a battle of claims and counterclaims about their population ratios. Both reject the existing census figures as totally off the mark (Economic Review, Pakistan, 01/94).

Mar 1994 Leaders of the Indian community in Manila have urged the Philippine government to stop immigration officers from extorting money from Filipinos of Indian origin and other immigrants residing in the country. There are about 20,000 Indians in the Philippines -- most of whom are Sindhis, who fled from Pakistan after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947.

Jun 1994 A Pakistani court sentenced the entire leadership of the MQM to 27 years in prison each for kidnapping and torturing a military intelligence officer. The prosecution claimed that on the orders of MQM leader Altaf Hussain, his supporters kidnapped and severely beat up Major Kaleem and his 4 assistants in June 1991. Hussain went into exile in London more than two years ago. He is the leader of about 10 million Mohajirs who live in the major urban centers of Sindh.

Oct 1994 The leader of the MQM, Altaf Hussain, has asked his followers if they favor the division of Sindh and the creation of a separate Mohajir province. Hussain's statements from his exile in London, have angered Sindhis in the province. One Sindhi newspaper has accused the US of helping the MQM create another Hong Kong in the heartland of Pakistan. Sindhi nationalist parties have uniformly condemned Mr. Hussain as a traitor and an Indian agent bent on destroying the country. In rural Sindh, Sindhis have begun to arm themselves. In the 109 seat Sindh Provincial Assembly, the MQM has 27 urban seats which has deepened the urban-rural divide (Daily Telegraph, 10/07/94). A scheduled population census has been abruptly postponed by the Pakistani government in response to ethnic rivalries and hostility from provincial authorities. The census was scheduled to begin on October 23; however, the federal government has begun a nationwide enumeration of housing units in preparation for the census. The last official census was taken in Pakistan in 1981. Punjabis feel that the census would be unfair to them as they fear that other provinces might inflate their populations to obtain more federal funds (Punjab is estimated to hold 60% of the country's population). In Sindh, native-Sindhi speakers and the Mohajirs claim to

outnumber each other. The Baluchis felt the census should be postponed until the Afghan refugees are repatriated (Agence France Presse, 10/19/94).

Dec 1994 The withdrawal of the army from Karachi three weeks ago has led to an eruption of unprecedented violence. The army pullout ends a 29 month operation that had come under harsh criticism from human rights activists for its excesses against civilians. Police and paramilitary forces appear unable to stop the violence which has led to the deaths of over 90 officers and more than 750 civilians this year. Prime Minister Bhutto has agreed to open talks with the MQM. The violence involves four different conflicts between the Sindhis and Mohajirs, various factions of the Mohajirs, rival criminal gangs, and the Sunnis and Shias (Times Newspapers Ltd., 12/21/94; Financial Times, 12/28/94). The violence has also led to increased tensions between India and Pakistan. The Pakistani government alleges that the violence has been fomented by Indian agents. This has led to the closure of the Indian consulate in Karachi and the expulsion by both countries of two diplomats (Times Newspapers Ltd., 12/21/94; Financial Times, 12/28/94).

Jan 1995 The Sindh government is reported to have offered close to \$500,000 in "head money" for sixteen suspects, including eight MQM leaders who are accused of capital crimes. The move comes on the heels of the deployment of elite Pakistani army units in Karachi. Some 160 people were killed in Karachi last December due to battles among various groups (see above). Karachi's Mohajir community is embittered over alleged discrimination in employment and university admissions. There is only one Mohajir minister in the Sindhi-dominated provincial government. Native Sindhis are upset because they believe that the fruits of economic development policies are largely received by immigrant-dominated cities in the province (Asiaweek, 01/13/95).

Apr 1995 The head of the Jaye Sindh movement, G.M. Syed, has died. The Jaye Sindh has been seeking a separate "Sindudesh" homeland in the province. It has a strong following in rural areas and among the intelligentsia, but has not been able to gain enough support to win an election. Syed, who was 92, had been under house arrest for the past three years and was facing treason charges before a Karachi court. He died in a Karachi hospital after being in a coma for 39 days. Syed began his campaign for a separate Sindh state in the 1930s when he sought to divide Sindh from Bombay province (Reuters, 04/25/95).

Jun 1995 At least 17 people were killed in Karachi as violence erupted over the alleged gang rape of a Mohajir girl. The girl has identified her main attacker as a local leader of the Pakistan People's Party. For the past two months, Karachi has suffered from another wave of violence that daily results in the deaths of 5 to 10 people. The latest violence

follows the call for a protest by the MQM. It has spread to other Mohajir-dominated towns in the province. (UPI, 06/23/95).

Jul 1995 The federal government has issued 21 conditions in its talks with the MQM in response to the 18 points earlier put forward by the Mohajir movement. Among these points, the government has asked the MQM to give up what it calls a "policy of ethnic cleansing" and the targeting of other ethnic groups such as Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, and Baluchis. In the past, powerful Sindhi politicians have sabotaged talks between the government and the MQM. So far, over 1000 people have been killed in Karachi in battles between militants and police/paramilitary troops. 334 people were killed last month alone. It is unclear from reports how many of those killed are Sindhis (Daily Telegraph, 07/07/95 & 07/13/95).

Aug 1995 In Karachi on August 2, the bodies of 12 people were found in a mini-bus while six others were killed in attacks by unidentified gunmen. The twelve people in the bus were reported to be Punjabis and Sindhis. The police believe they were kidnapped and murdered by MQM activists who suspected they were police informants. On August 24, four Sindhis were reported dead in Karachi as a two-day strike called by the MQM turned violent (Reuters, 08/03/95; Reuters, 08/24/95).

Dec 1995 The consulates of Britain, France, Italy, and Saudi Arabia are closing their doors in Karachi after receiving violent threats from extremists. The consulates will be reopened in Lahore. Pakistani authorities indicate that the threats are part of an international network of terrorists who were also behind the recent bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad. (UPI, 12/19/95). It is estimated that about 2000 people were killed in Karachi in 1995 as a result of criminal and ethnic warfare. This makes 1995 the bloodiest year since 1988 when Karachi first became the site of large-scale violence between the Mohajirs and government forces/other ethnic groups. Meanwhile, talks continue between the Bhutto government and the MQM (Inter Press Service, 01/05/96).

Jan 1996 Nine people, including four activists of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) were killed in different parts of Karachi, leading some political observers to warn of possible ethnic riots in the Sindhi and Mohajir communities. Earlier that week, 17 people including two army captains and three other security officials were shot dead by unidentified militants. The victims, including the officers and other law enforcement personnel were kidnapped and killed by militants and their bodies placed in a stolen van found in Liaquatabad, a district of Karachi. Police believed the killers were

members of the Naim Sheri terrorist group of the MQM.. Most of the victims were Sindhis. (United Press International 1/2/96)

Feb 1996 The chairman of Jeay Sindh, Dr Qadir Magsi accused the government of siphoning off Sindhi wealth from oil, gas, granite, coal and the sea port and neglecting the industrial sector, while spending most of the development budget on defence forces. He also alleged that the Sindhis were excluded from all major institutions. He said Sindhis would demand the right of secession if their national and political rights were not recognized. (British Broadcasting Corporation 2/13/96). Four people including a police officer were killed in different parts of Karachi. A Mohajir Quami Movement, or MQM, activist was killed in a shootout with police, while another person was killed when an unidentified gunman opened fire on his car, and a passerby died after being caught in the crossfire between police and MQM gunmen. The government of Benazir Bhutto, a native Sindhi, repeatedly blamed the MQM for continued violent attacks in Karachi. But the group has denied fomenting violence, and says it has been the victim of assaults by the police and the paramilitary forces. (United Press International 2/19/96)

Apr 1996 A strike by the opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) to protest recent police killing of six militants paralysed Karachi. At the same time, a crowd of about 250 people staged a demonstration against the strike outside the MQM office in the party stronghold of Azizabad. The demonstrators held the banner of Sindh Ittehad Tehrik (SIT) and were heavily protected by police. Some 2,700 people have been killed in the political violence in the city during the past 15 months, 250 of them since the start of the new year. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 4/3/96)

Sep 1996 Murtaza Bhutto, brother of the Prime Minister, was murdered, prompting a violent rampage in Sindh province. The 10 party opposition alliance, which included the Pakistan Muslim League of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the powerful Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) believed that the government, rather than traditional ethnic rivalries, was responsible for his death. Leaders and supporters of Murtaza's faction of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), known as the PPP-Shaheed Bhutto group, announced a 10 day period of mourning. (Agence France Presse 9/25/96)

Oct 1996 An opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) deputy told a court she was "forced to change loyalty" when she defected to government ranks last month. Feroza Begum, the MQM's only woman deputy in the provincial Sindh assembly, took an oath as a

minister in the Sindh government on September 11, shortly after her son Osama Qadri was arrested on charges of terrorism. (Agence France Presse 10/24/96)

Nov 1996 Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was removed from office amid charges that her husband had been illegally profiting from government contracts and that she had failed to stop numerous killings throughout the country. The dismissal caused considerable celebration throughout the country, especially by the MQM in Karachi. (Agence France Presse 11/5/96)

Feb 1997 In national elections, Benazir Bhutto's PPP won only 17 seats in the Parliament, and not even a majority in Sindh province. Bhutto claimed the elections were fraudulent. She said the Supreme Court verdict upholding her dismissal delivered just four days before the polling was timed to influence the elections. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 2/4/97)

Jun 1997 Pir Mazharul Haq, a provincial deputy opposition leader and former minister of the PPP, was kidnapped near the city of Hyderabad. Chief minister Liaqat Jatio's government initially believed the kidnapping had been staged so that Haq could avoid corruption charges from his 1993-96 tenure as minister for law, parliamentary affairs and town planning in the PPP's Sindh provincial government. The government's initial reluctance to investigate the matter led PPP activists to demonstrate in Karachi. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 6/19/97)

Jul 1997 After the Karachi power corporation chief, Malik Shahid Hamid was shot dead, Karachi police arrested over 500 political activists, including members of the PPP and MQM. (Agence France Presse 7/7/97)

Aug 1997 Violence in Karachi killed the head of a hospital, a newspaper vendor, an activist from the MQM and one from Jeay Sindh Mahaz. (Agence France Presse 8/10/97)

Nov 1997 At least three people were killed in fierce gunbattles in eastern Karachi. Police linked the deaths to continuing rivalry between activists of Jeay Sindh, the Muttehid Qaumi Movement (MQM) of Urdu-speaking settlers and its splinter faction. (Agence France Presse 11/10/97)

Dec 1997 Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari resigned as president of Pakistan. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif appointed a Punjabi, Muhammad Rafiq Tarar, to replace him, leading Benazir Bhutto to claim that other provinces in Pakistan were being deprived and the federation was being weakened. Tarar was later denied the opportunity to run by the election commission. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 12/10/97 & 12/18/97)

Mar 1998 Pakistan completed its first census in 18 years. The census had been controversial. Among others, the Sindhis had resisted it, because they feared it would lead to a decrease in their political power in favor of the Mohajirs, who had grown due to immigration and population growth. (Inter Press Service 3/15/98)

Jun 1998 The ANP joined with the PPP and several other parties to protest the proposed construction of a hydroelectric dam in NWFP. The dam was expected to produce over 3,600 megawatts electricity by damming the river Indus, but the ANP said it would submerge vast areas within a hundred kilometer radius of the proposed site. The proposal had languished for thirty years due to fierce opposition, but Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had announced he would build it regardless of the protests. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 6/12/98). Major markets and shops were shut and public transport was off the roads in the cities of Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas and Nawabshah as part of a Sindhi-led strike to protest the proposed Kalabagh dam project. All the major Sindi parties opposed the project, which they said would deprive Sindh of irrigation water and damage its environment, and that the government was ignoring the needs of non-Punjabis. (Agence France Presse 6/17/97)

Sep 1998 Nine people were arrested on the charge of hoisting the Indian national flag on three buildings in Sindh and Hyderabad. (The Statesman (India) 9/9/98)

Oct 1998 A nationalist conference of Sindhis, Pashtuns, Balochs and Seraikis in Pakistan resolved to stand united against the domination of Punjabis and threatened that Pakistan might collapse if they were not given equal rights. The event marked the launch of the Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement (PONM). The conference issued a joint statement in which Pakistan was described as a "multinational country" comprising five nations of Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochs, Pashtuns and Seraikis and demanded that all of them should be autonomous and sovereign. (British Broadcasting Corporation 10/4/98). The Pakistani government suspended the provincial assembly in the troubled Sindh province and placed the region under direct federal rule. Prime Minister Sharif said in a televised speech that the decision had been taken to curb lawlessness and fight terrorism in Sindh. (Agence France Presse 10/30/98)

Nov 1998 Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif set up special military courts in Sindh province to try people accused of terrorism, murders and other serious crimes in an attempt to reduce the violence in Karachi, where over 1,000 people had been murdered in one year. The PPP and the MQM both condemned the move, which they said "marks the

complete erosion of civil authority and constitutional rule." (Agence France Presse 11/20/98)

Feb 1999 The PPP and MQM began their appeal in the Pakistani Supreme Court, charging that there was no justification for the creation of military courts in Sindh province. The Supreme court agreed, ruling that "military courts for the trial of civilians" were "unconstitutional, without lawful authority and of no legal effect." (Agence France Presse 2/1/99 and Financial Times (London) 2/18/99)

Apr 1999 A Karachi court found Benazir Bhutto guilty of corruption, prompting protests and a strike by her PPP, which claimed that she was the victim of a political conspiracy. The strike -banned under the direct federal rule of Sindh imposed in October 1998 - led to the arrest of 100 PPP members. While the strike continued across most of Sindh province, it was not noticeable in Karachi, where the Mohajirs made up the majority. (Agence France Presse 4/15/99 & 4/17/99)

May 1999 The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) appealed to the army and the judiciary to intervene on behalf of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her husband for alleged government persecution. Syed Khurshid Shah and Naveed Qamar, two leaders of PPP, rejected a police report that Bhutto's husband, Senator Asif Zardari, injured himself on neck and head while trying to commit suicide during police interrogation and that Zardari, still in police custody, had not been moved to a hospital as ordered by the Sindh High Court. Zardari was under investigation for two murders. Bhutto later alleged that her husband did not attempt suicide, but had been tortured in a secret security agency operated by Prime Minister Sharif. (Japan Economic Newswire 5/18/99 and Inter Press Service 5/19/99)

Aug 1999 Amid growing threats of a mass movement by the opposition, the government declared "internal disturbance" through "illegal" strikes, go-slows or lock-outs as "terrorist acts." An opposition leader alleged the government's latest move was part of its plan to crush the general strike called by Pakistan People's Party and Muttahida Qaumi Movement on 4 September in Sindh and Karachi and similar plans by other parties in the first week of next month. Authorities had launched a crackdown on the PPP and MQM by arresting hundreds of their leaders and workers in a bid to stall the proposed strike call against the recently-imposed 15 per cent general sales tax. The PPP claimed that 400 of its workers were taken into custody. (The Statesman [India] 8/28/99). Bhutto denounced a citizen's move to unseat a provincial high court judge on the grounds that he is a Hindu. Bhutto said she suspected the move against Justice Bhagwan Das of the Sindh High Court was aimed at precluding him from becoming chief justice of that court. She said Sharif's regime had never appointed a member of

a minority to the superior judiciary. (Deutsche Presse-Agentur 8/31/99). More than 1,000 Pakistani political activists from the PPP and MQM were detained in a week-long crackdown on anti-government protests in Karachi and Hyderabad. Police officials said the crackdown was part of "preventive" measures to maintain law and order. They added the planned strikes by the MQM and PPP for Sept. 4 were illegal. City police chief Farooq Amin Qureshi told AFP that 683 people, including 291 from the PPP and 179 from the MQM, had been detained in Karachi alone during the week. (Agence France Presse 9/1/99)

Sep 1999 Karachi and Hyderabad virtually shut down in response to strikes declared by the PPP and MQM against a sales tax imposed by the central government. (Agence France Presse 9/4/99). Police detained most of the leadership of the PPP and MQM after a public rally which was broken up by police using tear gas and batons. In response, the combined opposition (of 19 political parties) called a strike to protest the increasingly militaristic tactics of the Sharif government. That strike, in turn, generated another 50 arrests and a call for a hunger strike. (Agence France Presse 9/11/99 & 9/12/99)

Oct 1999 The Pakistani Army staged a bloodless coup, removing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and placing Gen. Pervez Musharraf in charge of the country.

Feb 2000 The World Sindhi Institute (WSI) issued a statement protesting U.S. President Clinton's decision to visit Pakistan. WSI appealed to him to address certain critical issues facing Pakistan, including the need for decentralization and the "colonization" of non-Punjabis. (U.S. Newswire 2/10/2000)

Apr 2000 The military government announced plans for the devolution of central government power to the local levels. The plan would include direct party-less elections at union (village) and district levels. Elected institutions at the two levels have special reserved seats for women, farmers and vulnerable groups. However, Sindhis and other groups remained skeptical for several reasons. Firstly, some said it reminded them of plans pushed under previous dictatorships which only served to increase centralization. Secondly, Sindhis feared it would overrule the autonomy given to Sindh province. Thirdly, many groups said they wanted a return to democracy before any other changes in government took place. (Inter Press Service 4/12/00). The BBC reported that the Pakistani government initiated steps to break up the foreign network of religious, regional, and ethnic organizations. According to sources, intelligence agencies all over Pakistan began collecting statistics about organizations involved in fanning regional prejudice, sparking ethnic riots, and carrying out terrorism acts and sabotage by inciting religious sentiments, including information about their funding. The sources note that in the past these organizations have sparked ethnic riots in

Karachi; created disturbances in Quetta and Peshawar on regional and linguistic grounds; and caused sectarian violence on the basis of religion in Punjab, Sindh, and NWFP [North-West Frontier Province]. (British Broadcasting Corporation 4/20/00).