**Win of Gilani and what it means for PTI**

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Gilani, supported by Opposition Alliance won the Senate seat from Islamabad with 169 votes against PTI backed Hafeez Sheikh who lost with 164 votes. Six votes were rejected on technical grounds, with decision remaining the same on recount. With support of 180 lawmakers when coming to power, Khan was asked to resign when he lost on this seat.

The win was not unpredictable. The writer of this piece had predicted it before and again early morning on the day of Senate elections that Sheikh will lose. Irrespective of the fact that stock market displayed a bullish trend in anticipation of Sheikh’s win, the writing was on the wall for the discerning eye.

There are lessons here for PTI if it wishes to learn. PM Khan has given too much beef to the unelected in the party. There has been serious anger in party’s elected members because of this that was ignored in the selection of Hafiz Sheikh for the senate seat as well. The anger went deep. MNAs make promises to get things done in their constituency. The elected members could not reach out to anyone senior within the party cadre to achieve anything for their constituency. There was no ‘bridge’ between them and PM Khan, particularly after Jehangir Tareen’s departure. The non-elected members by virtue of being non-elected just could not comprehend constituency pressures. They work in an island of peace. PM Khan, is not known to come to the parliament or interact with the elected members to be aware of their frustrations and grievances.

If the lukewarm support of ‘powers’ in election between Hafeez Sheikh and Yousuf Raza Gilani is anything to go by, anything can happen

Reports say, a subtle distancing between the ‘powers’ and the ruling party was felt in Sheikh’s elections. This was assessed by interaction at various levels. Left to its own, PTI failed to garner sufficient votes for Sheikh. ‘Yousuf Raza Gilani uttered his famous words about powerful quarters being neutral.’ [Quoted]

PTI had no one to cover its back in maneuvering with Jehangir Tareen out of the picture. It lost focus. It played its container politics not realizing that the nuances and tactics change on ground once in the driving seat. It focus was on releasing videos of Gilani, using social media to build the hype- how monies were being thrown around for barter completely forgetting that it had no bearing on the indirect modus operandi of Senate elections. The people were not the audience, the members of provincial assembles were. They should have been focused upon. PTI completely lost the plot here.

Gilani will now be contesting for Chairman Senate. If past performance of PTI [or lack of it] is anything to go by, it can be a likely outcome.

Hafeez Sheikh can remain the Finance Minister till June of this year as per the Ordinance after which he has to vacate his seat for the new candidate. In face of IMF programme and an economy hit by both COVID 19 and badly thought out policies, coupled with no candidate on roll to efficiently handle the portfolio, PTI will be walking on burning coals.

Khan was asked to resign upon Sheikh’s losing his seat. He decided to go for a vote of confidence in parliament. The blow was hard because the loss is from lower house of Parliament that chooses the Prime Minister for the country.

An important point here was that PTI’s candidate Fozia Arshad won the women’s seat from Islamabad. This win shows, to some degree, that between male contestants for senate seat of Islamabad, it was the candidate of PTI that was rejected. This vibe is substantiated by the fact that PTI bagged 18 seats with PPP bagging 8. A substantial difference between the first largest and second largest contender.

Interestingly another party making inroads was BAP [Baluchistan Awami Party] an ally of PTI. BAP garnered 6 seats as against 3 of its retiring senators.

At a press conference within hours of PTI’s Sheikh losing the crucial wicket to Gilani, Shah Mehmood Qureshi announced that Khan will go to Parliament for vote of confidence. PTI will need 172 votes to stay in power.

If the lukewarm support of ‘powers’ in election between Hafeez Sheikh and Yousuf Raza Gilani is anything to go by, anything can happen. Used to playing container politics, the blame game [which has wearied the people at large, all but PTI itself], PTI is just not understanding that once in government the game rules must change to delivering not accusing- PTI may well lose.

‘The call by the PM to take a confidence vote could also end up in his ouster. If he survives, he will be weaker than he currently is. And that’s with or without the support of the establishment. Imran Khan is now playing on a sticky wicket.’ [The Print 4 March, 2021]

Unconfirmed news state Nawaz Sharif’s passport was renewed. The COAS tenure is also up for ending next year. PDM will play on front foot from now on. The problems for PTI will increase- will there be announcement of mid-term elections? Is PTI losing support of powers there are? This will not be surprising in face of PTI’s lack of efficient governance. At the lowest benchmark, it is not even mediocre.

Whatever the outcome, exciting days ahead for Pakistan’s political landscape!

What the outcome of senate seat contested by Gilani and Sheikh has shown us is explained in a pithy line by The Print, ‘that the winds of tabdeeli have started blowing from the other end.’

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