

Pak Politics &amp; International Affairs

# Imtiaz Sheikh affair

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A few days ago, I had a chance to meet Imtiaz Sheikh, who is much in the news these days. He has been painted by his Chief Minister Arbab Rahim as a corrupt person and 'dismissed' from his cabinet post for corruption in a midnight drama when the action was taken.

Well these days corruption has become such a great issue that one feels elated if any dramatic action is taken to eradicate it. I was therefore reluctant to meet Imtiaz Sheikh having not heard his story, and looked at him through the publicity of his dismissal. Of course if someone is tainted with the most heinous charge, corruption, nowadays not a personal misdeed but a crime against nation, one becomes prejudiced against the accused. However, one has to ask is the charge true or an attempt to bring a name in the mud?

After talking to him for some time, I was in a mood to be open minded towards him. He is a young man, on the borderline of forty, open minded, transparent and not given to the game of prevarication, or trying to be too smart. On the contrary he gave straight answers to the difficult but searching questions I asked him. During my long ambassadorship, I have known that the impressions one gets of a person after meeting a person is a better guide to understanding him than knowing him through hearsay or from the cold prints in reports.

Before coming to politics, he joined

CSP through the 1982 CSS Competitive Examinations and comes from Shikarpur, interior of Sindh. In CSP he had been Deputy Commissioner in some districts. Obviously there was a great divide between Arbab and him. He had known rules and regulations and was trained as a regular administrator. It is difficult for any properly trained administrator to understand the workings of the mind of *waderas* and their style of administration which can be purely whimsical and based on personal considerations.

It was natural for me to begin my conversation with him about the charges of corruption levelled against him by Arbab Rahim, Chief Minister Sindh. He said it is surprising that he was 'dismissed' from the ministerial office of a sudden. He came to know of this charge through the announcement in the media. Strange that he had not the slightest inkling of what the Chief Minister had in his mind—in fact up his sleeve. The CM never mentioned any such thing to him nor ever asked my explanation on whatever he had in his mind or was coming.

Nominations are ever publicly accused by his CM unless charges had been

would be personally motivated against him. He said before Arbab became the Chief Minister, there had been some talk of making him (Imtiaz Sheikh) the Chief Minister and now Arbab had started to grow afraid of him as a possible contender to the Chief Ministership. All he had been asking from his leadership in Islamabad is to communicate to him formally the charges to let him reply to them. Nothing more than this is his request to get a fair chance to prove that he is innocent and no more. He accused Arbab of being a typical *wadera*. Imtiaz Sheikh said that he is a middle class non-*wadera* and there is a class hatred against him among the *waderas* who consider him as a challenge to their hold on political power.

Imtiaz Sheikh's demand is justified by all canons of fairness and good governance. This is also on all fours in rules and principles of fairness. He said that the enquiry should not be made through the provincial government since his accuser, Arbab Rahim is the Chief Minister.

If this kind of governance prevails in the country where one is found guilty without knowing what the charges on him are and without being

given an opportunity to clear himself, then one can be hanged even on a murder charge without a trial. This can be *wadera shahi* justice or administration but not administration of modern age. There are quite a few questions, which arise in examining this entire episode. Why was the person kept in the dark about the accusations and he was dismissed in a midnight operation? What was such a great hurry?

This makes the entire action suspect and its motives questionable. Anything done without following the normal procedures is counted illegal. In this case the whole operation is surrounded with unexplainable mystery. A senior journalist, Sardar Murad Ali Khan of an Urdu daily told me that there is a segment of public opinion in Lahore who thinks that since Imtiaz Sheikh belongs to the middle class, and has come up to the present position through struggle in public life some unknown powers do not want to see him rise any further. Give a dog a bad name and hang him is the motive.

If Imtiaz Sheikh represents rise of a non *wadera* in power in Sindh, common man would be interested in his fate and he is to be given a fair chance to prove the facts. Now that both sides have accused each other of corruption, the central leadership and not the provincial government should investigate the matter fairly so that politics in Sindh returns to even keel.