In the beginning of twentieth Century, some eminent Punjabi Muslims like Justice Shah Din had been thinking in terms of creating a "Central political Organization for the Muslims". In February 1906, Mian Fazl-i-Husain established a Muslim association by the name of Muslim League. Sheikh Umar Baksh and Fazl-i-Husain were its president and secretary, respectively. Another eminent Punjabi Muslim, Sir Muhammad Shafi was also active in the same direction; he got into touch with Nawab Vigar-ul-Mulk and succeeded in creating a provincial Muslim League. From its start the Punjab Muslim League (PML) declared that it would do its best to protect and safeguard the Muslim rights. And the League created by Sir Shafi was recognized by the Central Muslim League as a branch of the All India Muslim League created in December 1906.

It may be mentioned that the PML at that time had two groups; the Shafi group was described as "Conservatives" and Mian Fazl-i-Husain's group was known as "Progressives". Each group was supported by a leading Muslim daily - The Paisa Akhbar favored the Shafi faction whereas the Zamindar supported Fazl-i-Husain group. However, both factions of the PML represented the Muslim opinion in the Punjab. In 1907, the Government of India wished to know the opinion of various parties on the subject of further reforms. The PML backed the Muslim demands put forward by the historic Simla
Deputation (Oct. 1906); it forcefully pleaded the Muslim case for the introduction of separate electorates, also citing various mal-practices under the existing system of the joint electorates.\textsuperscript{7}

The PML also demanded 50\% share of the Punjab's legislature for the Muslims. Later these demands - and some more - were raised from various other Muslim Organizations. The PML leader, Mian Muhammad Shafi also used his personal connections with the Viceroy's private secretary, Col. Dunlop Smith to have a sympathetic hearing from the Government.\textsuperscript{8} And it was due to these hectic efforts that the Government had to concede the Muslim right to separate electorates in the (Minto-Morley Reforms) Act of 1909. However, separate electorates were not made a part of the reforms in the Punjab; secondly the elective system was introduced but its proportion was lower than other major Indian provinces. The PML, therefore, continued its campaign for the acceptance of their demands. However, in the meantime, some factors at all-India level demanded that the Muslim should try to have a settlement with the Congress party; differences with the Hindus had to be resolved so as to get substantial reforms. The Government, it was noticed, were in no mood to support the Muslim claims unless it came under a tremendous political pressure. The Government had in fact annoyed the Muslim community by revoking the partition of Bengal in 1911, by refusing to establish a Muslim University, and by acquiescing in conflict in the Balkan Wars against Turkey.

The PML's progressive group Fazl-i-Husain, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Pir Taj-ud-din and Khalifa Shaja-ud-din under the circumstances supported an understanding and good working relationship with the Congress party.\textsuperscript{9} This group led by Congress-League therefore worked for rapprochement anticipating that the result would be that two parties would start the anti-British movement leading to
the independence of India; they were also supported by the Punjab's aristocracy - the title holders of the Government.

Whether Mian Muhammad Shafi liked it or not, both the Congress and the Muslim League were able to compose their differences which led to the conclusion of historic Lucknow Pact of 1916. The Congress readily accepted the system of separate electorates not only where they already existed but also their extension into the Punjab and the C.P. But in the Punjab and Bengal the Muslims had to forgo a certain number of seats (allotted 50% and 40% respectively) in order to give a special position to the Muslims in their minority provinces of U.P. Bihar, Bombay and Madras. Mian Shafi was opposed to this kind of arrangements "described as give and take". But the PML generally supported the Lucknow Pact as an amicable settlement of the Hindu-Muslim disputes. Soon the opponents of the Lucknow pact were relegated to the background by the PML; this was done in national interests and for the growth of Muslim Movement in the Punjab. However, Sir Shafi later continued his opposition using the plea that the PML no longer represented the Muslim opinion in the Punjab since the Muslims were not given 56% representation in the Punjab's legislature; that the Lucknow pact was only concluded with the intention to launch an anti-British movement. His daughter, Begam Jaha Ara Shahnawaz has also mentioned this point in details.

On the other hand, the PML under Sir Fazl-i-Husain had complete faith in the Lucknow pact as the best possible arrangement for the Punjab Muslims under the given circumstances. As a matter of fact at one time Sir Shafi was quite willing to accept 50% representation for Muslims in the Punjab Assembly. Sir Shafi was therefore removed from the vice-presidency of the Muslim League and his group in the Punjab was also disaffiliated, and its place was taken by Sir
Fazl-i-Husain's group without any difficulty creating the Punjab Provincial League. Sir Shafi little later established another organization under the name of Punjab Muslim Association; he was appointed as member of the Viceroy's Council, a prestigious office. However, the Government knew too well that Sir Shafi no longer represented his community.\footnote{15} The Punjab Government however, kept Mian Shafi in the limelight and he was kept close to Government circles.

**PML and the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms**

The greatest success of the Lucknow Pact was that the reforms of 1919 (The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms) were shaped keeping in view the historic understanding between the two principal political parties of India, the Congress and the Muslim League, Fazl-i-Husain was appointed a minister in-charge of the Punjab and continued to hold this portfolio for five years.\footnote{16} Sir Fazl-i-Husain's achievements during this period were highly commendable. The Punjab Muslims, who had to lag behind other communities, were able to make substantial gains in the departments of education and local self-government. The cooperation between the PML and Fazl-i-Husain gave Muslims a dominating role in the Punjab politics.\footnote{17} But unfortunately the Punjab's Hindu community was threatened due to Fazl-i-Husain's reforms which were structured to improve his community's position; this policy was indirectly an invasion on the Hindu community's long-held position of superiority in education, local government and administration. The result was that politics in the Punjab had been divided on purely communal lines; the Hindu members of the Punjab legislature set aside their class and caste differences and in a highly organized fashion began a movement to oust Sir Fazl-i-Husain, proving to be a great benefactor of the Muslim community.
The communal rivalries in the Punjab were so severe that the nationalist leaders had to make some conciliatory efforts. In March 1923, C.R. Des, Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Azad and Hakim Ajmal visited the Punjab in an effort to find an amicable solution to the existing communal problems in the province. Committees were formed, some paper work was done, and debates were arranged on the points of disagreement and on some trivial; but these efforts failed to produce any desired results. As the separate electorates were proving to be beneficial to the Hindu community, their retention was demanded. The Muslim leaders and the PML, on the other hand, argued against this on the plea that if separate electorates were abolished, even their extremely distinguished leaders like Fazl-i-Husain did not stand a chance to win in the elections of the Punjab council.

The PML and its sister organization like the Anjaman Himaite Islam passed resolutions reposing trust and confidence in Sir Fazl-i-Husain’s policies in the Punjab. Sir Abdul Qadir, Malik Barkat Ali, Khweja Dil Mohammad, Pir Tajuddin, Chaudhry Shahabuddin and Maulana Zafar Ali Khan were among those who forcefully supported the line taken by Sir Fazl-i-Husain. The Muslim press, especially. The Zamindar, the Paisa Akhbar and The Muslim Outlook consistently defended the Muslim point of view. Malik Barkat Ali, a prominent leader of the PML also wrote articles in The Civil and Military Gazette defending Sir Fazl-i-Husain’s policies and answering Hindu-Sikh criticism against the Muslim minister.

We can safely conclude that it was probably due to the support of PML and other Muslim leaders of the Punjab and their press that Fazl-i-Husain was re-appointed by the Punjab Governor, despite a great deal of opposition by the combined Hindu-Sikh resources. The Hindu-dominated press published editorials and articles against Sir Fazl-i-Husain’s reappointment. On the other hand, the Muslims were jubilant in their support for Sir Fazl-i-Husain. The net result was that the communal antagonisms and rivalries
remained much the same for several years to come. The two great communities (Muslims and the Hindus) were so hostile to each other that the Punjab Hindus ignored the death of a Muslim nationalist leader, Moulana Mohammad Ali and in response the Muslims took no notice of the death of Pandit Motilal Nehru and other great Indian Leaders.  

**Constitutional Advance**

The communal antagonism was also noticed when discussions began for further constitutional advances for India. At all India level Quaid-i-Azam and some Congress Party leaders had been pressuring the Government of India to introduce more reforms - and their efforts paved the way for the appointment of the Reforms Inquiry Committee. The Unionist Party (the ruling party in the Punjab), therefore, renewed its contacts with the Muslim League in order to put up a comprehensive plan to benefit the Muslims. Jinnah would have liked to take this opportunity to put a new life in the Punjab Muslim League, hitherto not very active. The League leader therefore, decided to hold the League's discontinued session (March - April 1923) in Lahore, the Punjab's capital. As anticipated by Jinnah, this session led to the revival of great fervor and enthusiasm, attracting a good number of delegates including the Khilafatist Muslims attending in large numbers. As expected, the Muslim League session among other things orchestrated the demands put forward by the Unionist party's leadership from time to time. Jinnah went so far as to put his message across to the Hindu community that there would be little constitutional advance in India in case the Hindus and Muslims failed to resolve their communal disputes.

On the other hand, the Government of India had been doing its business by getting in touch with its provincial Governments on the subject of further reforms in India. And on 4 August 1924, the Muddiman Committee met in Simla. The understanding between the Muslim League and the Union Party
was proved to be a good omen for the revival of the PML. Malik Barkat Ali, a prominent leader of the PML, gave evidence to the Mudiman Committee and also presented a detailed memorandum based on the recommendations of the PML session Lahore (1924) supporting the Unionists' claims for further reforms. The Mudiman Committee published its report in December 1924. If we care to analyze the detailed recommendations of the Committee, we would be able to draw the conclusions that: (a) that on balance the Mudiman Committee's recommendations were in no way injurious from the Muslim point of view; (b) that Muslim control over the affairs of the Punjab was not affected or for that another weakened. This situation, the status quo, again disturbed the Punjab's Hindu Community, for the Muslim League's resolutions (1924) had successfully countered the Hindu-Sikh propaganda against the Muslims. Some extremist leaders of the Hindu Community were deeply frustrated. Lala Lajpat Rai went so far as to suggest the partition of the Punjab; other Hindu leaders and their press also rehearsed their demands against the Muslims.

But this sad situation did not deter the Muslim League; the 17th session of the Muslim League (1925) once again endorsed the major demands of the Unionist Party such as the creation of the Muslim majority in the Punjab Assembly and the retention of separate electorates; and the Muslim League also demanded that the Government should appoint a Royal Commission to suggest the introduction of self-government in India. In the year 1926, the Governor of Punjab, Sir Malcolm Hailey, due to his understanding with the Punjab's Hindu leadership excluded the Muslims from his cabinet. The Muslim League therefore deeply protested; speeches were made on this issue by leaders like Sir Abdul Qadir emphasizing the need to have at least one Muslim in the Punjab Cabinet, especially when Fazl-i-Husain was appointed as the Revenue member in the Punjab Government. Similarly, delegates from other provinces
also supported the Muslim case; Sir Abdul Rahim from Bengal and Sir Shafat Ahmed Khan from the United Provinces registered their protests and favored the demand to include the appointment of another Muslim representative in the Punjab Cabinet. A resolution was also passed by the Muslim League to this effect. Although, there is no evidence, the Government of Punjab took notice of this protest and addressed it properly by appointing another Muslim in the Punjab Cabinet.

It may be pointed out that the understanding between the Muslim League and the Unionist party was very much in the best interests of Indian Muslims as a whole; it was anticipated that such a coordination and cooperation would continue in the future. But the reverse, however, happened. What happened was that the leaders of the two great communities of India, the Muslims and the Hindus, had been thinking for a long time to resolve their differences in view of upcoming appointment of Royal Statutory Commission. The Congress party leaders had a meeting on 17 March 1927; and on the same day some Muslims leaders met at Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari's house. Although little progress was made, as a follow-up on 20 March 1927, an influential group of Muslim leaders including Jinnah also had a meeting, discussing the possibility of getting rid of separate electorates which was painted as the greatest obstacle to Hindu-Muslim Unity. A set of proposals, the Delhi proposal, was evolved.

The Muslims of Jinnah group were ready to make a provisional offer to give up their right to separate electorates but only under certain conditions after safeguarding their interests. These proposals were published on 20 March, 1927. It is extremely interesting to know that Sir Mohammad Shafi fully agreed with the idea evolved in Delhi but reaching Lahore and probably after having a meeting with the Governor of the Punjab changed his stance. Although there is no evidence to substantiate, it looks probable that the Governor of the Punjab, Sir Malcolm Hailey, due to his
extraordinary good relations with the Punjab Mahasbha leaders and the Sikh leadership might have worked to sabotage the Dehli initiative of Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah's group. This speculation is based on the premise that the Viceroy, Lord Irwin did not wish to see the Hindu-Muslim unity against the Government as seen earlier on two occasions — Lucknow Pact (1916) and the Khilafat movement.

The Mahasbha leaders also rejected the Dehli Proposals which indirectly gave plenty of ammunition to Sir Mohammad Shafi to work against the legal and constitutional authority of Jinnah.\(^31\) From May 1927 onwards, Sir Shafi was able to hijack the Punjab Muslim League, Allama Iqbal, Sir Abdul Qadir and Sir Feroz Khan Noon also supported Shafi; and Sir Zafrullah Khan and Sir Shafat Ahmad Khan were sent to London by Unionist leaders so as to give the impression to the British Government\(^32\) that (a) the Muslims were opposed to the Dehli proposals; (b) that the Muslims no longer reposed confidence in Jinnah's leadership and his politics. Thus before the Royal statutory Commission was appointed, the All India Muslim League was already broken into pieces.

Meanwhile, the appointment of Simon Commission was a great shock to the nationalist Indian leaders, for it was all white Commission and no Indian was included in its composition. However Hailey due to his great administrative ability was able to secure the cooperation\(^33\) of some principal parties and the rebellious Punjab Muslim League, thanks to Sir Mohammad Shafi, F.K. Noon, Sir Zafrullah and Fazl-i-Husain. However, there were a few Muslims who fully understood the politics played by Sir Shafi and his crafty plans to appease the Government. Malik Barkat Ali, Moulana Zafar Ali Khan, Dr. Safiuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Mohammad Alam were opposed to the anti-League moves of Sir Shafi and his associates. The Government, however, did not give any importance to these "dissidents" and continued to protect and project the Shafi group.
by accepting it as a truly representative body of Muslims. The Shafi-Noon group, therefore, were able to have their way remaining solid in their support for the Simon Commission even if it meant top to bottom disintegration in the Muslim League’s ranks. They tried their best to convene the League’s upcoming session at Lahore so as to secure the support of the Muslim League organization34 in favor of cooperation with the Simon Commission. It may be mentioned that the Government wished to see the rebellious Punjab assuming the leadership of the Muslims. However, some other League leaders such as Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Dr. Kitchlew and Raja Sahib Mehmoodabad, who did not trust Sir Shafi tried to save the Muslim League from what he called “the reactionary elements” meaning the Shafi group.35

Jinnah, under these circumstances, decided to call a special meeting of the League’s Council on 11 December 1927 to reconsider the situation related to the Royal Statutory Commission. It may be mentioned that the Government did not wish to see the Muslim League led by those Muslim leaders who were against co-operation with the Simon Commission. The result was that the Muslim League was divided into two clear groups one in favor of co-operation with the Royal Commission (the Punjab group) and the others stood for boycotting. As a result of this unfortunate situation, two separate sessions of the Muslim League were held one in Lahore as planned by the Shafi-Noon group and the other in Calcutta as decided by the ML Council, legally and constitutionally.

At the Calcutta session (30 Dec-Jan 1928), a resolution was passed, denouncing the Simon Commission and the Punjab group was also criticized for rebelling against the League leadership and creating the split in the Muslim Community; the Punjab League was disaffiliated and the Punjab Muslims were asked to constitute a Muslim League which was truly representative of Muslim opinion. On the other hand, proceedings
of the session at Lahore (31 Dec. 1927-Jan. 1928) were not as comfortable as the Punjab group would have liked. The Khilafatist Muslim group led by Choudhry Afzal Haq and Dr. Mohammad Alam gave some unkind and rude remarks against the Shafi group. It may also be mentioned that the Punjab League (as the Punjabi group was called) did not wish to have any rapprochement with its parent body. It was probably due to the fact that the Punjab wholeheartedly desired to cooperate with the Government benches, especially during the crucial period of constitutional advance in India and for the successful working of the All-White Simon Commission.

As a follow up, therefore, the Punjab's legislature formed a Committee to cooperate with the Simon Commission. There had been a difference of opinion as regards the membership of this committee but due to the intervention of the Punjab Governor the matter was amicably resolved. The Punjab, as the Government would have liked gave a lead to other provinces such as Bengal and Assam and now the Government was satisfied that the boycott movement against the Simon Commission would not have any significant effect so far as the Indian politics was concerned. The Government, therefore, paid rich tributes to the Unionist Party leadership for its cooperation with the Government of India, making the task of Simon Commission much easier.

The Nehru Report

At the time when the Royal Statutory Commission was making its preliminary investigations and the Punjab group was in the middle of electing its committee to help the Simon Commission, the all-India leaders who had decided to boycott the Simon Commission were making efforts to draft by themselves an agreeable constitution for India, as they had once done in 1916 by evolving an agreeable solution like the Lucknow Pact. But unfortunately the communal situation was so complex that it was extremely difficult to satisfy the three major communities of India (the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikh). The All Parties
The Nehru Report had completely failed to get Muslim support. The All-India Muslim League was facing perhaps one of the biggest threats, because its existence was threatened. Some Muslims leaders who had revolted against the Muslim League and due to their close connections with the Government they were able to established a parallel Muslim organization called All India Muslim Conference; the conference leaders did all they could to relegate the Muslim League to the background and almost succeeded in their efforts. On the other hand the Muslim League also rejected the Nehru Report, for the amendments proposed by its leader Jinnah were not accepted by the Hindu-Sikh leadership. A careful analysis of the situation suggests that at this moment the Hindu leadership was convinced that Jinnah did not represent the Muslim community and therefore his views did not deserve any serious consideration by the authors of the Nehru constitution. This situation therefore greatly damaged the credibility of the Muslim League as a political party. The Punjab group and some of their new supporters who had switched their loyalties to the newly established Muslim Conference, which was quite a common phenomenon in Muslim politics, were able to carry the day with the intention that the Muslim League would not be able to regain its lost popularity and support for quite some time.
The Round Table Conference

The Muslim League suffered more setbacks due to the fact that the Government gave almost a free hand to the Punjab group at the time of nomination of representative for the upcoming Round Table Conference (RTC) in London with the purpose of determining the future constitutional advance for India. The first session of the RTC was held from 12 Nov. 1930 to 19 Jan, 1931. The main purpose was to have an agreeable settlement for the Punjab's and Bengali's communal and political issues like separate electorates, seats in the legislatures - etc. The first session failed due to the reason that all the three major political and communal claims that they had been advancing from time to time after the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms came into effect in the 1921.

Similarly, the second session of the RTC (Sept. 1931) also failed to achieve anything. Several schemes for the partition of Punjab were also presented with a view to solving the contentious claims of the three communities - but were rejected. When little success was anticipated, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, made it plain that the Government would settle the main issues by itself. On 4 August 1932, therefore the Prime Minister announced the Government's decision described as the Communal Award. As the Award did not cancel the much-hated and the most controversial system of separate electorates from the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikhs point of view - kept on protesting against the MacDonald's Award - but could do little to get rid of it, for an agreed solution to the communal problems seemed impossible.

In September 1932, the Viceroy announced the summoning of the third session of the RTC; the last session was held from Nov. 17 - Dec. 24 in order to prepare blue prints of the new Indian Constitution. The Hindu-Sikh demands to cancel the recommendations of the Communal Award were turned down; a white paper was published in March 1933 and later the matter
was taken up by the Joint Select Committee headed by Lord Linlithgow. In the meantime, some efforts were made in the Punjab to settle their disputes through negotiations but the results were much the same—back to square one. It may be mentioned that the Punjab League leaders like Malik Barkat Ali and Pir Tajuddin could not play any significant role due to the weakness of the party they represented; the Unionists Muslim leaders such as Sir Fazl-i-Husain, Sir Zafrullah Khan and Choudhry Shahabuddin were helped by the pro-government Muslim Conference and other Muslim leaders like the Aga Khan and Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan and were in full control so far as the Punjab politics was concerned.

**Provincial Autonomy and the Punjab League**

As there was no agreed solution, therefore the Communal Award has become a permanent feature of the new Indian Constitution, the Government of India act of 1935. The Punjab Muslims were led by the Unionists and there were no complaints that their interests were not looked after properly. The New Act (1935) was definitely a somewhat better arrangement for them. Soon the reorganization of the Unionist Party began; the All India Muslim League had also started to re-organize itself under the dynamic leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. And the hitherto moribund Punjab League also began to breathe, looking for a fresh air and starting its efforts for its revival. The issue of Shahidgang Mosque gave a chance to Jinnah and the Punjab League to improve their position.

It may be briefly mentioned that there had been an old dispute between the Punjab Muslims and the Sikh over the ownership of this Mosque. It had been in the possession of the Sikh community ever since the days of Sikh rule in the Punjab. But until 1935, no serious trouble arose due to the fact that the Sikh fully respected the sanctity of the Mosque. But suddenly in that year the Sikhs took a fatal step of demolishing the Mosque which led to an extremely serious situation and a civil war was imminent. Jinnah
was requested by the Unionist Muslim leaders and other leading Punjab Muslims to intervene in the situation so as to avoid any possible civil war or bloodbath. The Quaid-i-Azam succeeded in creating a better atmosphere by defusing tension between the Sikhs and the Muslims. 47

The League leader also realized that some concrete steps must be taken to revive the Punjab Muslim League. The Quaid would have also thought that the re-organization and revival of the League in the Punjab was not possible without having close contacts with the well-entrenched Unionist Party. However, Jinnah was much careful and cautious to make any advances in that direction; he would have remembered the Unionists close contacts with the Government, which had earlier proved quite harmful for the Muslim League. A slow approach was, therefore, pursued. As a start, the League leader suggested to Fazl-i-Husain to preside over the upcoming session of the Muslim League; the offer was refused by the Unionist leader. Fazl-i-Husain being an extremely shrewd politician must have calculated the risks involved in his association with the Muslim League. The Unionist Party claimed to be a non-communal organization whereas the Muslim League was thought to be a purely communal political Party. If one analyses the political situation one would draw the conclusion that the Muslim League was in need of an alliance as a shortcut to its revival, but the Unionist party did not need to have such an association, for they were hoping to come into power anyway. Jinnah, however, made another attempt in April to look into the possibilities of any alliances with the Unionist for the upcoming elections. But again the Unionist leaders refused to have any collaboration between the two political parties for fighting the elections.

The Punjab Muslim League, although disappointed, went ahead with its re-organization; 48 even though refused by the Unionist Party, it was able to win the support of some small groups such as the Ahrars and the Majlis-e-Ittehad-e-Millat. Its
urban Muslim leaders like Allama Iqbal, Malik Barkat Ali, Shah Nawaz, Pir Tajuddin, Mian Abdul Aziz, Shujauddin and Malik Din Mohammad took the charge of its activities. In May 1936, the membership of the Central Parliamentary Board of the Muslim League was announced; of fifty six members, eleven belonged to the Punjab (Allama Iqbal, Chaudhry Afzal Haq, Main Abdul Aziz, Syed Zainal Abideen, Raja Gazanfar Ali Khan, Ghulam Husain and Chaudhry Asiz). The Muslim League was also able to improve its financial position; the Parliamentary Board held several meetings, taking some important decisions regarding the forthcoming elections in the Punjab. A little late, the Muslim League’s working Committee and the Central Board also held their meetings in the Punjab following by the inauguration of a fully fledged election campaign in the Punjab, although not anticipating any significant gains due to the fact that the Muslim League had just begun its re-organization whereas its competitors like the Punjab Congress and the Unionist Party were much more organized and were already well-entrenched in Punjabi politics.

On the other hand, the Unionist, with a great deal of confidence also started their election campaign in the Punjab; but sadly their leader Sir Fazl-i-Husain died. Before his sad demise there had been a race for the party leadership - more specifically for the upcoming premiership of the Punjab. Sir Sikandar was a clear winner but due to pressures from his party colleagues had accepted Sir Fazl-i-Husain as his leader. After Sir Fazl-i-Husain’s sad demise, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan became the leader of the Unionist party; the elections were fought and as expected the Unionists won almost 90% of the Muslim seats, along with a good number of the Hindu rural seats. The Muslim parties such as the Muslim League, the Ahrars and the Ittehade Millat fared very badly - each won only two seats.

Further setback for the Punjab Muslim League was that just after the results of the elections of 1937 were announced, the Muslim League lost half of its parliamentary strength; its
successful candidate, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, was bribed by the Unionist party by offering him a Parliamentary Secretaryship. Raja Sahib was delighted to accept his new assignment and felt obliged to desert the Muslim League. After some preliminary arrangements were made, the Governor of the Punjab asked Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan to form a ministry; Sir Sikandar with Governor's blessings took Khizer Hayat Khan Tiwana, Sir Manohar Lai, Sir Sunder Singh Mijithia, Sir Chottu Ram and Abdul Haye as his ministerial colleagues. Due to his political skills and shrewdness, Sir Sikandar was able to secure the support of 120 out of 175 members of the Punjab's legislature, laying the foundation of the strongest pro-government ministry in the Punjab. However, as the time went by some efforts were made by the opposition (ranging between 50-55) to disturb Sir Sikandar's peaceful mind; the Punjab Congress, the Ahrars and the Ittehade Millat and the Akali Sikhs had pooled their resources to challenge the newly installed ministry. It may be mentioned that the all India Congress Party was able to form ministries in eight of the eleven provinces had decided to attract Muslims by inaugurating its mass-contact movement; in the Punjab the aim was to get rid of the Unionist Party for good; for that matter a huge sum of thirty thousand rupees was allotted and the Punjab's "nationalist Muslims" were appointed in-charge of the Congress campaign against Sir Sikandar's ministry, and Muslims from other provinces had also been deputed to help so to topple the Punjab's pro-government ministry at the earliest.

Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was well aware of the Congress theatre of operations and some other factors, which could have created enormous difficulties for his ministry had he not taken some measures to counter this. On one hand, therefore, Sir Sikandar and his associates gave statements against the Congress but on the other looked towards the All India Muslim League to come to their rescue. The Punjab Premier calculated that although the Muslim League had not been as successful in the elections as it would have liked the League and especially its
leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah, possessed tremendous ability, political acumen and shrewdness to withstand the Congress’s anti-Muslim campaign. Even though the Punjab League leaders like Allama Iqbal and Malik Barkat Ali were thought to be Sir Sikander’s political opponents, there could be reconciliation to make the common cause with Sir Sikander being a Muslim on communal issues. The Punjab premier knew it too well that Moulana Zafar Ali Khan and Malik Barkat Ali had been pressing the Muslim League to fight the Congress’s Mass-Contact movement in the Punjab. On the other hand, a new relationship with the Unionist party was almost essential for the Punjab Muslim League to gear up its activities and to pick up the momentum, especially after an extremely poor show during and after the elections of 1937. The All India Muslim League also liked to increase its strength even through alliances with the regional Muslim groups in power. It may be pointed out that the Congress had been constantly taunting the Muslim League saying that its credentials were fake since it did not represent the Muslim opinion. The League leader also desired to have close links with the predominantly Muslim provinces, especially the Punjab; have not forgotten that it was due to the Punjab’s Muslim leaders that the Muslim League was relegated to the background for quite some time.

The Unionist-League co-operation eventually materialized in October 1937 during the Lucknow session of the Muslim League. The Unionist Muslim attended the session with a great deal of enthusiasm and were full of complaints against the Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru. There had been anti-Congress speeches in the session but the most important achievement was the conclusion of the Sikander-Jinnah Pact, the Unionist party agreed to be led by the Muslim League on all-India matters and the League gave a free hand to the Unionist party in provincial matters. Sir Sikander also agreed, to advise all those members of the Muslim League to join it and thus become the subjects of League’s discipline. However, after his return to Punjab and after
discussing the undertaking he had given to the Muslim League with his Governor, Sir Sikandar realized the implications of the innocent-looking alliance with the Muslim League. As it is a common phenomenon for politicians to interpret their statements according to their convenience, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan also had second thoughts on the Sikander-Jinnah pact declaring that this pact was not meant to upset the status quo in the Punjab. It may be pointed out the Governor of Punjab and some leading Unionist politicians like Sir Chottu Ram had clearly warned the Punjab premier that by concluding an alliance with the Muslim League Sir Sikandar had made a political mistake. 56 Their estimates proved correct, for Sir Sikandar had come under a barrage of criticism, especially from his non-Muslim supporters in the Punjab.

On the other hand, the Muslim political pundits in the Punjab who were jubilant to hear about the Sikander - Jinnah Pact also criticized Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan when he changed his position; the Punjab Muslim League's leaders like Allama Iqbal and Malik Barakat Ali wished their Muslim colleagues in the Unionist fold to fully cooperate with the reorganization of the PML. The PML leaders, therefore, gave statements against Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and also wrote letters to the Quaid-i-Azam full of complaints against the Punjab premier's attitude towards the PML's reorganization campaign; 57 they also gave statements to the effect that PML's growth had been hindered due to the policies pursued by the Non-Muslim of the Unionist party. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan was also in touch with the Quaid-i-Azam and was trying to giving the impression that he was doing all he could for the growth of PML; and that even loose links with him would be useful - if not now, perhaps in the future for the growth of the PML in the Punjab.

The Quaid's strategy at this time was to give a free hand to Sir Sikandar Hayat and therefore he did not wish to entertain any complaints against the Punjab premier. Allama Iqbal died in 1938
and Sir Shahnawaz Mamdot was appointed president of the PML. Sir Shahnawaz Mamdot being a big landlord like Sir Sikandar had close links with the Governor of the Punjab; the two also had personal relationship. Malik Barkat Ali informed the Quaid-i-Azam about the latest situation and about the lack of interest these two, Mamdot and Sikandar Hayat Khan, were taking for the growth of the PML. The Quaid was probably waiting for a better time and did not wish to take any action against Sir Sikandar unless he was pretty sure that it would produce the desired effects; the League leader might have thought that breaking links with Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan would bring more harm than any good; and that by taking the kind of action suggested by Allama Iqbal and Malik Barkat Ali - expulsion of Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan from the Muslim League - would bring his efforts to a naught. The Quaid, therefore, did not disturb the Punjab premier and instead advised Malik Barkat Ali and his associates to utilize the available resources to organize district Muslim Leagues for challenging the Unionist machinery in fact the Punjab Government's authority, under these circumstances would have been an extremely ill-advised move. The PML due to the advice of its parent body, maintained links with Sir Sikandar's ministry and from time to time supported the Punjab premier's policies. The Shahidgang Mosque dispute (as mentioned earlier) was still a major issue for the Punjab ministry's survival. The High Court's decision had gone against the Muslims; the Ahrars, the Ittehad-e-Millat were making preparations to launch an agitation.

The Punjab Muslims were also planning to use their strength in the Punjab Assembly to obtain a legislative measure to override the court's decision. Such a situation could have brought enormous difficulties for Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan - possibly leading to a civil war in the Punjab. Sir Sikandar was much embarrassed and issued a statement in the Assembly that he would not allow the Assembly to be used to veto the Court's decision and that he was against such a move on the part of his Muslim colleagues and friends to re-open the settled affairs. Much
depended on the attitude of the Punjab Muslim League; once again the All-India Muslim League gave its fullest support to Sir Sikandar Hayat in his handling of the Shahidgang dispute. Sir Sikandar's opponents had been warned by the Muslim League, and the League's Council fully endorsed the Punjab premier's stand on this issue. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan also appreciated the Muslim League's cooperation and felt much obliged; he now declared that the Muslim Unionist had joined the Muslim League party in the Punjab Assembly.60

The working relationship between the PML and the Unionist party further developed when the Muslim League gave its fullest support to the Unionist party's agrarian reforms; most surprisingly Malik Barkat Ali also approved of these reforms and sided with the Unionist party. In 1938, the ruling party in the Punjab introduced four Agrarian Bills61 to benefit the bulk of rural population in the Punjab; Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan intended to initiate these bills much earlier but due to the Mosque controversy the matter was delayed. Sikandar Hayat Khan and his top aides like Sir Chottu Ram, Ahmad Yar Daultana and Abdul Haye put in great efforts to popularize these Agrarian Bills. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan had been in a very difficult situation, had he not sorted out his differences with the Punjab League he would have been in great trouble.

The fact of the matter was that the introduction of these Bills in the Assembly had led to a great deal of resentment on the part of representatives of the non-agriculturist classes, mainly urban Hindus; the Congress party and the Hindu Mahasabha were pressured to do their utmost to hinder the passage of these Bills. But due to its socialist programme to benefit the poor classes, the Congress was not in a position to oppose the Bills. The Bills were, therefore passed by the Assembly without much opposition; the Hindu Mahasabha however made some trouble by withdrawing its support from the Unionist party - one of its leaders, Raja Narendra Nath resigned his seat in the Assembly in
protest against these "Black Bills". The Muslim League also supported Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan in suppressing a revolt within his Unionist party. What happened was that a dissident group of at least one dozen members, due to some personal reasons, wished to make trouble for Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan and his close associates such as Ahmed Yar Daultana; the dissidents showed their political strength when they defeated a ministerial candidate in a bye-election.

Sir Sikandar Hayat's opponents were ready to support the dissident group in the Punjab Assembly; some dissidents had deserted their party and some had joined the Congress ranks. The Congress party leaders were jubilant and began to give treats to topple the ministry, claiming that they had the support of at least sixty-one members. The Punjab Muslim League's support, once again, was very important to keep the Muslim opposition to a minimum. It may be mentioned that Malik Barkat Ali wished to join Sir Sikandar's opponents but the Muslim League had not allowed him to do so. The League leadership was discouraging every step which could reduce Sir Sikandar's popularity; Jinnah had advised Malik Barkat Ali to work under Sir Sikandar's leadership in the Punjab. The Muslim League's attitude considerably helped the Punjab premier and also discouraged Muslim dissidents and opposition against their efforts to embarrass Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. The premier was now in a much better position to deal with his political opponents; when it come to crunch in the Punjab Assembly on a motion engineered by the ruling party, the number of opposition was only fifty three; this, command performance gave a great deal of satisfaction and jubilation to the Unionist party and more specifically to its leader, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan.

The Punjab premier also responded positively by supporting the Muslim League in its campaign against the Congress party. In October 1938, the Sindh Muslim League held its session in Karachi. Sir Sikandar during his speech regretted that the Sindh
and the Frontier provinces had not yet fulfilled the expectations of the Muslim League by extending their fullest co-operation to the Muslim cause; he also criticized the anti-Muslim policies of the Congress party and applauded to Sindh Muslim to bury their differences and rally around the Muslim League for the prestige of Islam in India. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan also repeated his criticism of the Congress party when a few months later the Muslim League held its session at Patna. Similarly at the Bombay Muslim League's Conference (May 1939) Sir Sikandar once again criticized the Congress party during his presidential speech; he also took all his Muslim colleagues and parliamentary secretaries with him to attend the session. Sikandar Hayat Khan declared that the Muslims were not going to be dictated by the Congress party.

However, there had been some difference of opinion between the Muslim League and Sir Sikandar Hayat on several issues. For instance, Sir Sikandar passionately supported the British war efforts and also tried hard to get the Muslim League to commit itself without preconditions to support the British. Some leaders of the Punjab Muslim League criticized Sir Sikandar's statements and his role favoring the British war efforts. But the League leadership was in no mood to antagonize the Punjab premier on this trivial issue; he was allowed to issue statements but it was made clear that his view on the subject of war did not represent the views of the Muslim League. The Second World War was declared on 3 September 1939 and on the same day the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow declared India's participation in the war. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan continued his policy of fullest support to the British war effort.

The Punjab Congress was the only big hurdle for Sir Sikandar and his coalition partners; its parent body had demanded that the Government must declare its war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism, and how these aims were going to affect the Indian people. Lord Linlithgow made a statement, but it was
rejected by the Congress, describing it as a reiteration of the old imperialist policy. In protest the Congress ministries, therefore, resigned; the Punjab Congress had opposed this decision for it would leave the way open for the Punjab Muslim League and the Unionist Party to sit together in the driving seat.

The Punjab League and its supporters on the other hand were jubilant at the Congress resignations, for they were terrified due to its leadership was discouraging every step which could reduce Sir Sikandar's popularity; Jinnah had advised Barkat Ali to work under Sir Sikandar's leadership in the Punjab. The Muslim League's attitude considerably helped the Punjab premier and also discouraged Muslim dissidents and opposition against their efforts to embarrass Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. The premier was now in much better position to deal with his political opponents when it come to crunch in the Punjab Assembly on a motion engineered by the ruling party, the number of opposition was only fifty three; this command performance gave a great deal of satisfaction and jubilation to the Unionist party and more specifically to its leader, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan.

The political scenario changed dramatically after the Congress was out of power in eight out of the eleven India Provinces; the Muslim League and especially its leader Jinnah was trying hard to take fullest advantage of the situation, being a politician of the highest class, the newest situation was perhaps the best time for Jinnah during his political career to benefit the Muslim League organization. The League, therefore, raised its price demanding a veto power over constitutional advance in India, an equal share in the future Government and also that the Muslim League must be recognized as the sole representative of the Indian Muslim. The Viceroy, as the chief administrator, could not afford to estrange the Muslim League that was the second largest political organization; Linlithgow was thus obliged to accept these demands. The Muslim League picked up a great deal of momentum under these circumstances. Soon the Congress
realized its mistakes and tried to get Jinnah's support for its anti-Government drive. But when the talks were held between Jinnah and the Congress leaders, Jinnah was in no mood to allow the Congress to rectify its mistakes; a major demand Jinnah raised was that the Congress must accept him as the sole spokesman; and Jinnah declared that 22 December 1939 should be the day of deliverance and thanksgiving as a sign of relief that the Congress rule and had practically come to an end.

The next biggest move by the League leader was the passage of Lahore resolution (March 1940) later known as the Pakistan Resolution. This historic resolution entailed the dismemberment of the Punjab and the division of India into Hindu and Muslim states. Therefore, the Punjab League diverted its activities (although with minimum resources and the Unionist being non-cooperative) to do everything possible to popularize its Pakistan Scheme in the Punjab. In the meantime, Hindu and Sikh leaders were also awfully busy issuing lengthy statements against the Pakistan scheme; they also appreciated the stand taken by the Congress party leaders against the League's Pakistan scheme of partitioning India.

Similarly, conferences and meetings were also held in which the Pakistan scheme came under fierce attacks. The Punjab Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikh leaders were also, making arrangements to show their militancy to the Muslims; the Sikhs had started the purchase of arm and ammunition in case they had to show their military muscle. It may be mentioned that this anti-Muslim and especially anti-Pakistan movement picked up more ementum as the time went by. What happened was that there had been a great deal of pressure on the Viceroy and the British Government in London to denounce the Pakistan Scheme, but due to the exigencies of war neither Lord Linlithgow nor the British Prime Minister (Churchill) and his Cabinet, especially the secretary of state, were in a position to estrange the Muslim League, the second largest party representing ninety million
Indian Muslims. As mentioned earlier, the Punjab premier had been supporting the Muslim League against Congress, but it became difficult for him to support the Pakistan Scheme; he had been under tremendous pressure from his coalition partners and also from within the Unionist party to come out clearly against the Pakistan Scheme. Sir Sikandar was therefore obliged to play a role which was not fully appreciated by any quarter.

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