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## Gender & Women Empowerment

### Women & Laws

#### **NICW Pats PEMRA for Ordering Compliance with Anti-Sexual Harassment Law**

The National Implementation Watch Committee (NIWC) has applauded the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) for issuing a notification to all media agencies to comply with anti-sexual harassment legislation 2010. In a meeting held on November 30, members of NIWC applauded the measures taken by Pemra to ensure a safe and dignified working environment for women working in different media organizations. NIWC was formed at the platform of National Commission on the Status of Women on May 10, 2010 on the instructions of Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani to facilitate and monitor the implementation of anti sexual harassment legislation. The committee includes members from the government, private sector, media and civil society.

[The News – December 03, 2010]

#### **Working Women Optimistic About Outcome of Anti-Harassment Law**

**Working women are optimistic about outcome of the anti-harassment law, saying wind of change has started blowing with growing awareness about their rights and the will to assert them.** Talking to Dawn after a session arranged for the delegates of the tenth Working Women Assembly by Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASHA), a coalition of NGOs, the participants said that though the full implementation of the law may take some time, there were tangible signs of improvement in the overall environment after the passage of landmark legislation.

[Dawn – December 23, 2010]

#### **Women's Protection Act 2006: Top Islamic Body May Examine the Law**

**It has been learnt that the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) may examine the Protection of Women Act 2006 after some of its clauses were struck down by the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) last week.** The CII, the top constitutional advisory body, will study and decide whether or not the law is in conformity with the Holy Quran and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The source said that the FSC had examined the constitutional aspect of the law and the CII will have to check it against Islamic principles. A CII official told *The Express Tribune*, requesting anonymity that deliberations on the act will be one of the items on the CII's agenda when it convenes sometime in the next two months. However, the agenda is yet to be approved by CII Chairman Maulana Muhammad Khan Sheerani. He said that he will decide whether or not the act should be discussed in the CII's next meeting. The CII is constitutionally-mandated to propose amendments to any law or its provisions, if found un-Islamic. The Hudood laws were drafted by the CII and promulgated through presidential ordinances by the then president General Ziaul Haq in 1979. Human rights bodies and civil society organisations have demanded its repeal, arguing that they were discriminatory against women.

[The Express Tribune – December 30, 2010]

#### **FSC Terms Some Clauses of WPA Against Islamic Sharia**

A three-member bench of the FSC, comprising Chief Justice Agha Raifq Ahmad, Justice Afzal Haider and Justice Shahzado Sheikh announced the judgement on December 22 said that the Federal Shariat Court has declared several sections of the Women's Protection Act 2006 in violation of Islamic sharia. According to the judgment, sections 11, 25, 28 and 29 of the Women's Protection Act 2006 are contradictory to Article 203DD of the constitution because these provisions annul the overriding effect of the Hudood Ordinance 1979. The court directed its Registrar Office to send copies of this judgment to the federal government, as well as provincial high courts, including the Islamabad High Court for information, necessary and compliance.

[Daily Times – December 23, 2010]

#### **NCSW Hands Over Resolutions to Provinces**

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has prepared and handed over the resolutions to provincial women development departments which if passed by only two Provincial Assemblies will give right to the National Assembly to legislate on the issue of Domestic Violence. After 18 Amendment, the women issues have become domain of the provinces and all legislation related to women will now be passed by the Provincial

Assemblies. The National Assembly gets the power to pass such legislation only if two or more than two provincial assemblies pass the resolution giving the legislative rights to the National Assembly on a particular issue. A source in NCSW told 'The News' that Commission has handed over the resolutions to the relevant departments in all provinces including the government of Gilgit-Baltistan. The sources said that no assembly has taken up these resolutions up till now but there are chances that these resolutions will soon be presented in the provincial assemblies. The Domestic Violence Bill seeks to prevent violence against women and children with a network of protection committees and protection officers and prompt criminal trials for suspected abusers. The bill defines domestic violence as including, though not being limited to, "all intentional acts of gender-based or other physical or psychological abuse committed by an accused against women, children or other vulnerable persons, with whom the accused person is or has been in a domestic relationship." The bill gives an aggrieved person the right to approach a first class magistrate's court personally with an application or through another authorized person and the court must fix a hearing within three days and give a decision within 30 days. The first breach of a protection order will be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year, but not less than six months, and a minimum fine of Rs100,000, which will be paid to the aggrieved person. But a violation for the second or third time, or more, will be punishable with up to two years' imprisonment and a fine of not less than 200,000 payable to the aggrieved person.

[The News – December 15, 2010]

### **Nepal Lifts Ban on Women Working in Gulf Countries**

The employment ministry said on December 08 that Nepal has lifted a ban on women travelling to Gulf countries to work and introduced new rules designed to protect them. Thousands of people leave impoverished Nepal every year to seek work abroad, mostly travelling to Malaysia and the Gulf to take up menial jobs in cleaning or construction. Women have officially been barred from going to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar since 1998, when the suicide of a Nepalese domestic worker who had been abused in Kuwait created a national scandal. But many do so anyway, usually travelling via neighboring India to avoid detection, and ministry spokesman Purnachandra Bhattarai said the government would instead introduce new measures intended to protect them. He said that before they can recruit workers, employers will have to assure us they will provide insurance, accommodation, security and a basic wage. The guarantees will be monitored by Nepalese embassies, who will be responsible for defining a minimum wage for each country, Bhattarai said that without specifying how they would police employers abroad. Thousands of poor women from South Asia and beyond are employed in wealthy Gulf countries, lured by the promise of better wages to help support their families back home.

[Daily Times – December 09, 2010]

## **Women's Empowerment**

### **PM Appoints Hilali as First Ombudswoman**

**Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, on December 22, announced the appointment of Musarrat Hilali, who hails from Malakand, as the first ombudswoman, in a major step towards putting in place a mechanism for addressing the grievances of the victims of sexual harassment.** Addressing the 10th Working Women's Assembly organised by the Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASHA) – a coalition of civil society organisations working to protect and promote women's rights, Gilani said Hilali's appointment as ombudswoman would provide a legal forum to women to lodge complaints about sexual harassment, under the law against harassment of women. The prime minister announced that December 22 would be observed every year as 'National Day of Working Women' and February 12 as 'National Women's Day'. He said the government will never put off the implementation of the law against harassment of women and will continue to monitor its status. He revealed that 38 out of 44 ministries had already implemented it and others were all set to follow suit. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Shahnaz Wazir Ali and founding member of AASHA, Dr Fauzia Saeed, also spoke on the occasion and termed the passage of the law against harassment of women at workplace a landmark development. The prime minister gave away awards to representatives of institutions which had taken steps for the implementation of the law.

[Daily Times – December 23, 2010]

## Women & Politics

### **PML-Q Moves to Get Kashmala Disqualified**

**NA sources told Dawn on December 25 that PML-Q President Chuadhry Shujaat Hussain has submitted an application to the Speaker of National Assembly, Dr Fehmida Mirza, seeking a certificate that a disgruntled leader of his party Kashmala Tariq, had voted against 19th Constitution Amendment.** The move of the Q-League chief is aimed at getting Ms Tariq disqualified for violating the party discipline and the 18th Constitution Amendment. Ms Tariq agreed that she had voted against 19th Constitution Amendment symbolically to oppose clause 174 and 63 of the Constitution that bestowed powers on party heads to disqualify any member without giving any solid reason.

[Dawn – December 26, 2010]

## Articles, Reports & Books on Gender

### **Handbook Titled ‘Through the Gender Lens’ Launched**

*Myra Imran*

To give students a step-by-step and broad understanding of gender issues and gender-based violence (GBV) in the Pakistani media landscape, the Uks Research and Publication Centre for Women and Media launched a handbook titled ‘Through the Gender Lens’ on December 10. The handbook ‘Through the Gender Lens: Motivating Youth to Analyze and Develop Gender-Sensitive Media Content on Gender Based Violence,’ is the final outcome of a year-long youth training project launched by the centre in collaboration with UNFPA. The project also included peer trainings held throughout Pakistan in the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. A total of 39 youth members participated in the training programme. The handbook mentions that those who could be the real harbinger of change, the youth, are bombarded with images of women as objects of pleasure or pity, powerless and dependent. These are the persuasive images and can lead into negative behaviours but there are no solutions being offered on how to improve the images of women from powerless to assertive beings nor is there any impact analysis on how these stereotypical images turn our youth into violent males. Keeping in mind these dynamics, the Uks took up the project that involved youth in media monitoring, review and analysis of current contents guiding them in production of their own gender sensitive messages to counter the negative impact of existing media contents.

[The News – December 12, 2010]

## HR Watch

### Women & HR

#### **UNDP Spends £2.98m for Reducing Violence against Women**

Under its Gender Justice Programme (GJP) (2007 to 2011), the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) has spent £2.98m for the sustainable reduction of Violence against Women (VAW) and to support national and international commitments of the Government of Pakistan to reduce VAW. The statistics were shared at the concluding session of 16 Days of Activisms against Gender Violence organized by the UNDP and DFID, the agency's key partners in this initiative. Federal Minister for Women development Firdous Aashiq Awan chaired the event. The participants were informed that at present, the GJP project is delivering in 93 districts, across the country through 41 implementing partners out of which nine are government agencies. The facets of VAW against which the project is working in different parts of the country are acid crimes, stove burning, domestic violence, women trafficking, exchange of women to settle disputes, honour killing, denial of education in conflict zone, denial of inheritance rights, denial of rights in marriage contract, discrimination against women prisoners, violation of minimum wage award vis-a-vis female farm workers, VAW in relation with substance abuse and sexual harassment at work place. The minister said that she is more interested for starting solid initiatives for the empowerment of rural women. She said that the ministry will always welcome public-private partnership for women development but will only work with genuine and committed partners. The Head of the Governance Group of DFID Peter Hawkins said that we are determined to work towards ending violence against women and will continue to play our part in supporting important initiatives such as the ones conducted through Gender Justice and Protection Project.

[The News – December 10, 2010]

#### **Domestic Violence: Political Lobbies Hindering Bill Passage**

**Political lobbies are creating hurdles in the way of approving the domestic violence bill in parliament while lack of interest on part of the government has also delayed its early passage.** This was stated by speakers at a seminar held in connection with the International Day of Human Rights on December 10. They said the role of men and the community was vital in combating violence against women, adding research work was also essential to identify modes for transformation of mindset at the grassroots level. The speakers stressed raising awareness about various facets of violence, and how community ownership and realization of problem at the grassroots level can set a solution. Representatives of NGOs working for women development called for measures for the early approval of the bill. They said that the domestic violence bill has been closely followed by the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and other civil society organisations, adding the parliamentary procedures, political elements in parliament and other government priorities had hampered its passage. The seminar was organized by Sustainable Development Institute (SDPI) and Action Aid Pakistan. Anis Haroon, the chairperson of NCSW, said provincial assemblies should be proactive in taking women-friendly legislations forward and should push for legislation on domestic violence. If the resolution is passed in any two provincial assemblies, we can table the bill in a joint session of National Assembly and Senate. She said all civil society organisations needed to join hands and take the task forward. Arifa Mazhar presented a case study in Hazara, where the local communities were mobilised for social transformation and more than 6,000 community organisations were formed that represented women.

[Dawn – December 11, 2010]

#### **Watta Satta: Police Raid Wedding Ceremony of 4-Year-Old Girl**

**An attempt to marry off a four-year-old girl was foiled on December 29, when police officials arrested the 22-year-old bridegroom and forced the wedding guests to leave the function.** According to police officials, Moza Rangpur Chowk Shahidan resident Hummera (4) had been wed to Muhammad Shahzad by nikah khwan Qazi Khalil Ahmed on December 28. The families of Hummera and Shahzad had arranged the match when the girl's father Zahoor Ahmed's Uncle Khanqah Sharif exchanged his son Ranjha's daughter Rubina for one of Shahzad's daughters. On December 29, Ranjha along with his 22-year-old son and a large number of wedding guests reached Moza Rangpur for the reception ceremony. Musafir Khana police came to know about the event and raided the house. Police officials from Musafir Khana and Sama Satta police stations raided the location and stalled the wedding.

[The Express Tribune – December 30, 2010]

## Child' Rights

### **New Bill Against Child Labour soon: Rubina**

National Assembly standing committee on Social Welfare and Special Education Chairperson Rubina Sadaat Qaimkhawani has said that a new bill to ban child labour will be presented in parliament in a few months. She stated this while addressing a conference titled "Provincial Consultation on Child Rights", jointly organized by the Social Welfare, Women Development and Baitul Maal Department and the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development on December 13. Rubina said that after three conferences held in three provinces; it was the fourth conference for preparation of a declaration against child rights. She added that a national moot is scheduled for January 2011, wherein all stakeholders, child commissions of the provinces will pass the declaration.

[Daily Times – December 14, 2010]

### **Call for End to Child Rights Violations**

A children's gathering held on December 21 called for measures to end violation of child rights in schools. **Members of the District Child Assembly, held under the auspices of Khpal Kor Foundation, unanimously passed nine resolutions, highlighting issues of disabled and street children, calling for protection of their rights, end to child labour and ensuring housing system in schools.** Initiated in 2009 and funded by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the assembly constitutes students from different schools of the picturesque district that was hit hard by militancy in recent past to address issues being faced by children in the region. Fatima Aziz of Swat Children Academy said that according to the Children's Rights Convention, physical and psychological punishment is banned in Pakistan. She demanded provision of a violence-free environment for children in schools as well as community places. At the end of the session, Rafiullah, while addressing the assembly, proposed formation of a district child rights monitoring committee for implementation of the resolutions. Formation of the District Child Assembly in Swat is a unique idea in which children will themselves elected their speakers and conduct regular session to address issues of child rights. Farman, a member of United Nations Children's Fund said that the objective of the assembly is to create awareness among the children regarding their rights and to prepare them for the better future of the country.

[The Express Tribune – December 22, 2010]

## Minorities' Rights

### **Efforts on to Provide 5pc Job Quota for Minorities**

The government had doubled the facilities for minorities and was making efforts to provide five per cent job quota to them in government departments. This was stated by Sindh Minister for Human Rights, Nadia Gabol, on December 25, while visiting various churches in the metropolis on Christmas. She also expressed harmony with Christians by participating in their festive ceremonies. She said that Founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his first speech to the Legislative Assembly had said that all minorities had equal rights in the country, which are the main and fundamental part of the Constitution and that is why minorities in the country are getting development and prosperity rights. The minister said that by following the wisdom and philosophy of MQM chief Altaf Hussain, MQM representatives in the parliament houses raise their voice for the achievement of the rights of minority people besides taking steps for their welfare.

[The News – December 26, 2010]

## Blasphemy Law

### **Govt has no Intention to Repeal Blasphemy Law: NA**

The government on December 29 issued a policy statement on the blasphemy law while Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Syed Khursheed Shah informed the National Assembly that the government had no intention to repeal the law. Speaking on the floor of the House, Shah presented the policy statement of the government on amendment in the blasphemy law. He said that on behalf of the government as taking the minorities into confidence, I state with full responsibility that the government has no intention to cancel it (Tahafooz-e-Namoos-e-Risalat). Shah also clarified that a bill by Sherry Rehman seeking amendment in the blasphemy law was a private member bill and the government would not support any such amendment. Shah said that it is the prime duty of the government to ensure Tahafooz-e-Namoos-e-Risalat. I also assure the minorities of the country that the law would not be used to target them. Responding on the policy statement of the government, Jamiat

Ulema-e-Islam Fazl's Maulana Attaur Rehman asked Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani to assure the House on the issue.

[Daily Times – December 30, 2010]

### **Punjab Government Against Changes, PA Told**

Amid token boycott of assembling proceedings by the Opposition over the issue of proposed changes in the blasphemy law, Punjab Minister for Law Rana Sana Ullah told Punjab Assembly that coalition government in Punjab was opposed to any amendment in the law which may provide protection to the blasphemers. Immediately after start of assembly proceedings, the Opposition led by Ch Zaheeruddin Ahmad left the House to express solidarity with religious parties and traders who organised country wide protest demonstrations against federal government's move to change the law. Responding to Opposition's token walk out on the issue, law Minister said no Muslim could think of supporting any amendment in the law that would provide cover to the blasphemers. He said all coalition partners in Punjab were of the unanimous view that there was no need for any change in the said law. He also said that the personality of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is most respectable to all and whosoever will commit blasphemy will be awarded the same punishments as have been prescribed in law. The Minister, however, shared the concerns of minorities that measures should be taken by the government to prevent misuse of the blasphemy law. He was of the view that so-called enlightened moderation policy of a dictator was responsible for encouraging the trend of blasphemy in the country. Rana also censured Ch Zaheeruddin for being among those who got a resolution passed from Punjab Assembly to elect a dictator in uniform for ten times.

[The Nation – January 01, 2011]

### **Countrywide Strike Against Change in Blasphemy Law**

A countrywide strike was observed on December 31 against any change in the country's blasphemy law. Religious parties called the strike to protest against what they believe are plans by the government to change the blasphemy law. But analysts say the strike had more to do with politics than religion. The prime minister has said publicly the government does not intend to abolish or change the law. Thousands of supporters of religious parties rallied in towns and cities across the country to support the law.

Critics say the law is used to persecute religious minorities, fan religious extremism and settle personal scores. "We will not allow the government to bring about any change in the blasphemy law. If it tried to do so, we will send it packing," Hafiz Hamdullah, a cleric and local leader of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), told supporters in Quetta. All major markets and business centres were closed in Islamabad as well as in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and Quetta.

[Daily Times – January 01, 2011]

### **Protest Held Against Blasphemy Law, FSC**

A protest was held in the federal capital on December 30 in front of the Parliament House against the country's blasphemy law and parallel judicial structures, especially the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) with regards to its recent judgement against the Women's Protection Act (WPA). Representatives of civil society, minorities and concerned citizens of Islamabad gathered under the auspices of the Insani Haqooq Ittehaad (IHI) to denounce the Federal Shariat Court's recent decision on the Women's Protection Act, and demanded the abolishment of the FSC and parallel judicial systems - Council of Islamic Ideology, Federal Shariat Court, jirgas, panchayets, and the repeal of all laws that were discriminatory to women and minorities, including the blasphemy law and Hudood laws. They also called for the immediate dismissal of Maulana Sherani as the chair of the Council of Islamic Ideology.

The protesters were a diverse mix of civil society organisations, women's rights groups, human rights activists, political workers, students' organisations and minority communities from Islamabad. They raised slogans for a secular and democratic Pakistan and insisted that the government must work towards the realisation of the democratic, secular, and peaceful vision of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Pakistan, a vision he clearly articulated in his speech on August 11, 1947 when he stated that religion would have no role to play in the business of the state.

The protesters chanted slogans and demanded repeal of laws that discriminate against women, such as Hudood laws and qisas and diyat laws. They also reminded the government that the state had a due diligence

duty to ensure protection for women, minorities and other vulnerable sections of society and should not bow down to political pressures and blackmailing by religious parties.

[Daily Times – December 31, 2010]

### Data on Blasphemy Laws

Blasphemy data from 1990 to 2010 based on available information.

Status	Year	Name	Accused of	Action	No. Of Persons affected	Death
Death Sentence	2010	Aasia Bibi	Blasphemy	Death Sentence	1	
Acquittal	2010	Zaibun Nisa	Defiling Quran.	High Court released her after 4 years in jail	1	
Acquittal	Faisalabad April 2009:	James Masih & Buta Masih	Defiling Quran.	High Court released them after 3 years in jail	2	
Accused	KASUR, Sept 5, 2009:	Six disciples of faith healer	Defiling a marble slab inscribed with Darood Sharif	Unknown	6	
Extra Judicial	SHEIKHUPURA/LAHORE, Aug 4, 2009:	Najeeb Zafar + worker	Defiling the verses of Holy Quran	Extra judicial murder	2	2
Acquittal	2009 – August 05: Sanghar	Akhtari Malkani	Defiling the Holy Quran	Arrested and later released as the accuser denied to lodge the complaint.	1	
Extra Judicial	2009 – July 31:Gojra	7 Christians	Defiling the Holy Quran	7 persons killed and houses burnt	7	7
Arrest	2009 – February: Layyah	1 Labor and 4 students of Ahmadi community	Blasphemous writing in the toilets of a mosque	Arrested without any evidence and witness. Investigation revealed it baseless.	5	

Status	Year	Name	Accused of	Action	No. Of Persons affected	Death
Arrest	2009 – January 28:	1 Labor and 4 students of Ahmadi community				
Arrest	2008 – May:	Robin Sardar a Christian physician,	Blasphemy charges from a street vendor	Arrested - Current status unknown	1	
Extra Judicial	2008 – April 08: Karachi	Jagdish Kumar	Blasphemy charges from co-workers	Extra judicial murder	1	1
Arrest	2008 – March 06: Khanewal	Altaf Hussain, 80 years old Ahmadi	Defiling the Holy Quran	Arrested. Current status unknown	1	
Arrest/Release	2007 – October 28: Faisalabad	Muhammad Imran	Defiling the Holy Quran	Released in April 2009 after one and half years.	1	
Job Loss	2007 – May 17: Islamabad	7 Nurses of PIMS	Jamia Hafsa students labelled charges of Blasphemy against them.	Current status unknown	7	
Attack	2007 – April 13: Kotri, Sindh	Sattar Masih	Blasphemous remarks	Attacked and arrested. Released in January 2009	1	
Arrest	2007 – April 01: Toba Tek Singh	Salamat Masih and 4 others	Desecration of Islamic posters	80 young Muslims ransacked the houses. Current status unknown	5	
Accused	2007 – January 22: Kot Nanak Singh, Kasur	Martha Bibi	Blasphemous remarks	Current status unknown	1	
Arrest/Release	2006 – September 21: Punjab	Shahid Masih, 17 years old	Ripping book pages of the Quran	Judge Muhammad Abdul Sattar acquitted him.	1	
Arrest	2006 – May 24: Karachi	Qamar David,	Blasphemous message through cell phone	Current status unknown	1	
Arrest	2005 – December 23: Lahore	5 followers of Riaz Gohar Shahi	Sentenced to five years imprisonment	Current status unknown	5	

Status	Year	Name	Accused of	Action	No. Of Persons affected	Death
Accused	2005 – November 12: Lahore	Pervez Azlam Choudhry, Lawyer for blasphemy cases	Flinging a burning matchstick on an Islamic school	Current status unknown	1	
Life Imprisonment	2005 – August 11:	Younus Shaikh	Defiling the Holy Quran	Life imprisonment. Current status unknown.	1	
Job Loss	2003 - November 20: Lahore	Anwar Masih	Blasphemous remarks	High Court acquitted him in December 2004. He went into hiding.	1	
Life Imprisonment	2003 – July 09: NWFP	Munawar Mohsin, Sub-Editor of Frontier Post	Blasphemy	Life imprisonment. Current status unknown.	1	
Extra Judicial	2003	Samuel Masih	Spitting on the wall of a mosque	Police officer killed him in jail	1	1
Death Sentence	2002 – July 18: Gawalmandi	Anwar Kenneth	Distributing a Gospel of Jesus	Death Sentence & Fine.	1	
Extra Judicial	2002 – June 11: Lahore	Mohamamed Yousaf Ali, 55 year old Muslim Cleric	Blasphemy	shot dead in prison by a co-prisoner	1	1
Imprisonment	2000	Naseem Ghani & Mohammed Shafiq	Defiling the Holy Quran	Seven years imprisonment	1	
Death Sentence	2000 – October:	Younus Shaikh, Medical Teacher	Blasphemy	Death sentence and fine. In Nov 2003, he was acquitted	1	
Suicide		John Joseph, Priest		Suicide		
Extra Judicial	1997 – October 19: Lahore	Judge Arif Iqbal Bhatti	Acquitted two blasphemy accused	Assassinated	1	1

Status	Year	Name	Accused of	Action	No. Of Persons affected	Death
Acquittal	1996 – October 14: Punjab	Ayub Masih, Bricklayer	Blasphemy	Death penalty was turned down by High Court in 2002	1	
Threat	1995 – July: Lahore	Catherin Shaheen, Teacher	Blasphemy	Denied her salaries and since then she has been living in hiding.	1	
Extra Judicial	21 April 1995, Gujranwala	Dr. Sajjad Farooq	Defiling the Holy Quran	Extra judicial murder	1	1
Arrest	1993 – November 21: Mianwali	Riaz Ahmad, his son, and two nephews (Ahmadi)	Blasphemous remarks	Supreme Court granted bail in Dec 1997	4	
Extra Judicial	1993 – May: Gujranwala	Salamat Masih, 12, Manzoor Masih 37, Rehmat Masih 42	Writing blasphemous remarks on a mosque	Manzoor Masih gunned down. Salamat and Rehmat were sentenced to death. High Court acquitted them.	3	1
Jailed	1993 – February: Samundri, Punjab	Anwar Masih	Blasphemy	Jailed. Current status unknown	1	
Extra Judicial	1992 - Lahore	Bantu Masih, 80 & Mukhtar Masih 50	Blasphemy	Tortured to death in police station.	2	2
Extra Judicial	1992 – January 06: Faisalabad	Niamat Ahmad, Teacher	Blasphemy	Butchered by a young member of a militant religious group	1	1
Acquittal	1991 – December 10: Faisalabad	Gul Masih	Blasphemy	Death Sentence. A year later acquitted. Went to Germany	1	
Acquittal	1991 – October 08: Karachi	Chand Barkat, Bangle vendor	Blasphemy	Acquitted by Session Court	1	

Status	Year	Name	Accused of	Action	No. Of Persons affected	Death
Extra Judicial	1990 – December 07: Lahore	Tahir Iqbal, a Christian convert	Blasphemy	Poisoned in police custody	1	1
				Total	80	21

According to the factual data that have been collected so far on the victims of false blasphemy cases, 80 persons were found as victims of this misuse of law. Out of these 80 victims:

22 persons were extra judicially murdered  
13 were acquitted by the court meaning that they were false cases  
08 were accused but no further information is available  
01 was attacked but escaped  
18 were arrested but some of them were released by the High court.

Category of Blasphemy cases	No. Of persons	Muslims	Christians	Ahmadis	Hindus	Remarks
Acquitted	13	8	5			Includes 2 Muslim women
Accused	8	7	1			
Attacked	1		1			
Arrested	18	5	8	5		
Job Loss	8		8			Includes 7 women. 1 man was acquitted from Hi Court
Life Imprisonment -	2	2				Current status unknown.
Extra Judicial	22	7	15		1	Muslims include Judge, Hafiz-e-Quran, and Governor
Death Sentence	3	1	2			
Imprisonment	2	2				Current status unknown.
Suicide	1		1			
Threat	1		1			
Jailed	1		1			
Total	80	32	43	5	1	

08 lost their jobs  
02 were sentenced for life imprisonment.  
03 were awarded death sentence  
02 were awarded imprisonment  
01 committed suicide in protest against the misuse of blasphemy law  
01 was threatened for life  
01 was jailed  
Of these 80 victims, 32 persons were Muslims, 43 were Christians, 5 were Ahmadis, and 1 was Hindu.

## Conflict Watch

### **Suicide Bomber Targets Police in Bannu, 6 Killed**

A suicide bomber targeted a police van in Bannu, killing six people including a policeman, on November 30. Police official Aurangzeb Khan said that a suicide bomber attacked Saddar Police Station van near Milad Chowk, It was the fourth suicide attack in the country this month and the first in Bannu since February 11 this year when eight policemen and seven civilians were killed in twin strikes by terrorists. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack. However, Bannu police suspects it must be the work of Taliban or banned sectarian outfits trying to disrupt peace during Muharram.

[Daily Times – December 01, 2010]

### **ANP Activist Among two Gunned Down**

Police said that an activist of Awami National Party (ANP) was killed and his elder brother got injured on December 05 when unidentified gunmen opened fire on their car on Abul Hassan Isphani Road. After the incident, tension engulfed Abul Hassan Isphani Road, Quaid Azam Colony and surrounding areas. Police said victim was the resident of Azeem Goth Quaid-e-Azam Colony, Gulshan Iqbal, and used to run a transport business, adding that after the incident heavy contingents of police and rangers were deployed in the areas to maintain law and order. Police said victim hailed from Waziristan and was an active member of ANP.

[The News – December 06, 2010]

### **Girls' School Bombed in Peshawar**

Police said that terrorists blew up another government school for girls in Peshawar on December 6 night, a Chamkani Police Station police official told Daily Times that Taliban terrorists blew up a government primary school in Jogian on the GT Road near Tarnab Farm. He said that the blast destroyed the whole building.

[Daily Times – December 08, 2010]

### **15 killed in Kohat Suicide Attack Against Shias**

Police officials said on December 08 that a suicide bomber blew himself up close to a minivan in Kohat, leaving 15 passengers, including women and children, dead and 24 others injured in a blatant attack on Shias. The packed minivan was ready to depart for Kalaya in Orakzai, west of Kohat, which is 65 kilometres south of Peshawar, when a 20-year-old terrorist detonated explosives coupled with lethal ball-bearings close to the passengers, Kohat District Police Officer Dilawar Bangash told reporters. The police official said that it was a suicide attack on a passenger van at the Tirah bus stand. He did not say which sect the casualties belonged to; however, local journalists said most of the victims were Shias.

[Daily Times – December 09, 2010]

### **One Killed, Five Injured as Bomb Destroys School Bus in Peshawar**

Police said that a bomb ripped through a school bus in the city on December 13 killing a 13-year-old boy and injuring five others, including two students and bus driver. Peshawar DCO Siraj Ahmed Khan confirmed the death of a boy in the roadside bomb blast that hit Sir Syed Islamic Model School's bus on Charkhana Road in the Bhana Mari police precincts. SSP (Operations) Ejaz Khan told Daily Times that the bus was hit in the Bhana Mari area, in which one boy was killed and five others injured. Police arrested two suspects from the crime scene and shifted them to an undisclosed location. Peshawar CCPO Liaquat Ali Khan said the bomb might have missed its intended target.

[Daily Times – December 14, 2010]

### **Woman Suicide Bomber Strikes at WFP Centre; 45 Killed**

**A woman suicide bomber blew herself up at a distribution centre of the World Food Programme, killing 45 people who had queued for aid and wounding 80 others. The dead included six Levies personnel. A number of Levies personnel were among the injured.** According to officials, most of the victims belonged to the Salarzai tribe, which had raised a lashkar against militants in Bajaur. The explosion took place when a large number of people were approaching the World Food Program distribution centre inside the Civil Colony housing offices of several government departments.

[Dawn – December 26, 2010]

## 10 Students Injured as Blast Rocks KU

A low-intensity bomb went off at the University of Karachi (KU) on December 28, injuring 10 students, two of them seriously. An official at a private hospital in Gulshan-e Iqbal said they had received eight to 10 students injured in the blast. The official said that two of those injured, Irfan Haider and Sajjad, were in a bad condition while the rest were released after first aid, the official said. Some of those injured were identified as activists of the Imamia Students Organisation (ISO). Police and eyewitnesses said that some students, including activists of the ISO, were offering Zohrain prayers near the university's Central Cafeteria at about 12:45pm when the explosion took place, injuring eight to 10 students.

[The News – December 29, 2010]

## Other HR Related Issues

### Govt to Fulfill Obligations on Human Rights: Zardari

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, in their separate messages on December 09, said that the government would accomplish its international obligations and was committed to protect and promote human rights in the country. Zardari said while addressing a gathering to celebrate the International Human Rights Day, which falls on December 10 that we have recently ratified the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and will undertake practical steps for the implementation of both the Conventions. The president said the PPP-led government would continue upholding basic human rights of all individuals regardless of caste, creed or any other consideration.

[Daily Times – December 10, 2010]

### Marking the Day Amid Rise in Killing, Murder, Suicide Cases

*By Mahtab Bashir*

With 13 percent raise in a number of incidents of violence against women in 2009, 16 days of activism against gender violence is being ended and International Human Rights Day is being celebrated all over the country on December 10. The day marks the anniversary of the General Assembly's adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Over the years, a whole network of human rights instruments and mechanisms has been developed to ensure the primacy of human rights and to confront human rights violations wherever they occur. The assembly declared three years later in its declaration that respect for human rights and human dignity is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. In 1950, all states and interested organizations were invited by the General Assembly to observe 10 December as a Human Rights Day (resolution 423(V)).

**Situation in Pakistan:** According to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) 2009 report, the cases of burnings, corporal punishment, death penalty, domestic violence, kidnapping, killings, sectarian violence, sexual harassment, and suicide considerably raised. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the security situation significantly worsened, with bombings and targeted killings becoming a daily fact of life even in the country's biggest cities. Report says, President Asif Ali Zardari's government, initially keen to promote human rights, made some headway but then lost momentum as it tried and largely failed to deal with these issues. According to Aurat Foundation report, as many as 8,548 incidents of violence against women were reported in 2009 compared to 7,571 incidents reported in 2008.

The report said that of these, 5,722 were reported to have occurred in Punjab, followed by 1,762 in Sindh, 655 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 237 in Balochistan. Similarly, 172 cases of violence against women were reported in Islamabad. Ministry of Human Rights in its report said that as many as 350 cases included murder cases, rape cases, burn/acid throwing cases, complaint against police, complaint against jail, land dispute, torture case, missing person, minorities related matter, sale of human organ, Karo Kari cases, forced marriage, protection of life, illegal detention case, family matters/ complaint against husband, kidnapping, working women complaint, human trafficking, political complaints, NGOs related matter, financial assistance cases, service reinstatement cases and drug trafficking cases were registered in the year 2009. Ministry of Human Rights on the other hand claimed that it had done a lot for the promulgation of the code regarding human rights violation but failed to implement on a larger scale since there were instances where the judiciary, government and state machinery itself did not uphold the law. **It is felt that though the Women Harassment Bill and Domestic Violence Bill has been passed for gender justice and most of its provision extended security to women but did not**

seem as equipped to deal with harassment of men. It also did not focus on other groups that could be vulnerable, such as minorities.

[Daily Times – December 10, 2010]

### **Current Year Saw Increase in Crime Rate**

Police in capital looking unable to decrease the crime rate as minister of interior accepted on the floor of National Assembly that crime rate has increased by 18.5 percent. According to press release, 138 cases of murder were registered in 2010 and the police recovered over 87 stolen vehicles. But it is a fact that only from the limits of Shalimar Police Station over 56 vehicles were stolen in current year and police high-ups sent the relevant SHO on Hajj rather punishing him. Release further reviles that “a total of 132 cases of attempt to murder were registered in 2010 while 391 persons were arrested for their alleged involvement in these cases”. But Supreme Court observed hinted that due to weak investigation of police, courts were helpless and they could not announce the decisions. This year, 340 cases of ‘accidental injuries’ were registered in the police stations of the capital and 895 accused were arrested. In 2010 at all police stations, 23 cases of kidnapping for ransom were registered while 39 persons were nabbed in these cases. A total of 824 persons were arrested for their alleged involvement in drug peddling this year. A total of 120 fatal road accidents, 107 cases of non-fatal road accidents occurred in 2010 while 113 fatal accidents and 101 non-fatal accidents were traced successfully. A total of 89 persons were arrested for their alleged involvement in dacoity, 265 for involvement in robbery, 114 for involvement in burglary, 113 accused for involvement in car theft, 24 accused for involvement in motorcycle theft and 249 persons for involvement in general theft were arrested during the year 2010.

[Daily Times – December 29, 2010]

### **Pakistan Called Most Dangerous Country for Journalists**

**Media rights group Reporters Without Borders said on December 30 that the most dangerous country for journalists in the year 2010 was Pakistan, where 11 journalists were killed.** Over the last decade, Pakistan, Iraq and Mexico have been the most violent countries for reporters, the group said, adding that a total of 57 journalists were killed while working in 2010, down from 76 last year. RWB said that but kidnapping of reporters surged in the year under review. The group said in a statement the passing years have brought no changes to Pakistan, with journalists continuing to be targeted by Islamist groups or to be the collateral victims of suicide bombings.

[Dawn – December 31, 2010]

### **Targeted Killings Rise by Over 100pc this Year**

**By S. Raza Hassan**

**The number of ‘targeted killings’ — a term redefined by a spate of random killings in recent years in the city (Karachi) — rose by well above 100 per cent this year compared to 2009, official data showed.**

According to police statistics, a total of 361 lives were lost to frequent targeted killings in different parts of the city (Karachi) till Dec 14, 2010, while the toll was around 160 last year. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement claimed that around 200 of its workers and sympathizers lost their lives to targeted killings from Jan 1, 2009 till date. While the Awami National Party said that its 177 workers and supporters were gunned down in the year 2010 alone. Defining the term ‘targeted killings’, SSP Investigation Niaz Ahmed Khosa said that every murder whose motive is not clear is being treated as a targeted killing. According to the official data, a total of 1,190 killings occurred this year till the first week of December, while 936 murders were reported in 2009. Speaking at a recent programme at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sindh Home Minister Dr Zulfikar Mirza had said that the police had arrested 60 armed suspects for their alleged involvement in targeted killings in Karachi and 26 of these suspects belonged to one political party. He added that the suspects belonging to other parties were also involved in the killings. However, there seems to be a contradiction between the figures quoted by the home minister and those reported by the capital city police officer before the Sindh High Court in November. In connection with a petition seeking inquiry into the incidents of targeted killings, CCPO Fayyaz Leghari had told the court that 32 suspects involved in the targeted killings had been arrested by police in 2010. The frequency of targeted killings decreased following the Shershah scrap market carnage where 12 shopkeepers were killed allegedly by the members of Lyari’s gangsters on October 19. Data suggests that around 90 people were gunned down in the subsequent spate of targeted killings.

[Dawn – December 28, 2010]

## **NA body Appeals to LEAs to Respect Human Rights**

The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Human Rights on December 10 appealed to the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to respect human rights. The committee, which met at the Parliament House under the chairmanship of MNA Riaz Fatyana, passed a resolution appealing to the law enforcement agencies not to violate human rights. Committee members MNA Fozia Habib, Rehana Baloch and Attiya Inayatullah differed with another committee member Sardar Mehtab Ahmed Khan over inclusion of the names of civil and military intelligence agencies, particularly Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Military Intelligence (MI) in the resolution introduced by the committee chairman. Sardar Mehtab was of the view that the spy agencies should also be obligated to respect civil liberties and basic human rights of any individual along with other law enforcement agencies as stipulated in the constitution. He strongly demanded inclusion of ISI and MI in the resolution; however, the committee passed it with a dissenting note from him.

[Daily Times – December 11, 2010]

## **Public, Government Collaboration Sought to Uphold Human Rights**

**By Mahtab Bashir**

Islam defends and advocates human rights and offers best solution for all human rights issues, said participants at the 10th annual national human rights conference at local hotel on December 20. 300 participants from government, civil society and media organisations attended the conference, which was organised by International Human Rights Observer (IHRO), working in collaboration with United Nations. The messages of President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on International Human Rights Day were read on the occasion. IHRO president Khalid Sulehri in his welcome address said that *Khutba-e-hujjatul Wida*, the last address of Holy Prophet (pbuh), is the basic charter of human rights. Parliamentarian Commission for Human Rights Director Shafique Chaudhry believed that Islam provided equal rights to all human beings. He observed that it was not only the duty government to defend human rights but each one of us is human rights defender. The role of United Nations also came under discussion in the conference. The theme of this year's conference was "Human Rights Defenders" to act to end discrimination. Chief Guest, Farzana Raja (MNA) Chairwoman of the Benazir Income Support Programme said that discrimination at any level increases disparity.

[Daily Times – December 21, 2010]

## **Taking on Discriminatory Laws Lawfully**

Most of the existing laws reflect postcolonial impacts on state institutions' framework and they are counterproductive for the poor of the country, particularly women. This was said by speakers on discussion titled '**social and legal justice through institutions to curb violence against women**,' organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Women's Organization for Rights and Development (WORD) at the first day of the 16 days of activism against gender violence. Harris Khaliq, a social activist, said at the occasion that most of the existing laws reflected postcolonial impacts on state institutions' framework adding there was a vast gap between the affluent and middle class, which needed to be bridged. He stressed upon effective institutional reforms and the equal deliverance of justice to all. National Commission on the Status of Women's (NCSW) Member Nasreen Azhar stressed upon the autonomy of NCSW so that it could implement laws in favor of marginalized communities. She said there was a need to repeal blasphemy law that is influenced by religious extremism and fanatics. She said the religious extremists were supported by the world economic powers and there were well-funded campaigns to choke the progressive movements to end all sorts of discriminations against marginalized communities. Dr Abid Sulehri, SDPI's executive director, reiterated the SDPI's commitment not to remove discrimination of women and violence against them. He said there should always be a room for promotion of independent research based advocacy and opinion. Women's Organization for Rights and Development's (WORD) Director Aqsa Khan said the violence against women should be dealt with effective institutional support to the victims seeking justice. She said that pressure should be exerted upon the government so that the discriminatory laws could be repealed.

[Daily Times – December 09, 2010]

## Governance Watch

### Political Governance

#### **Reform Initiative: Madrassas Bar Entry of Ministry Survey Teams**

The Express Tribune has learnt that the government is facing stiff resistance from religious clerics in registering madrassas across the country. The clerics have banned the entry of special teams of the interior ministry tasked to conduct a primary survey—the first step in introducing reforms in the seminaries' system. The interior ministry plans to bring reforms in madrassas by introducing contemporary subjects in their curriculum. The ministry held a meeting last month in this regard with all the stakeholders, including Ittehad Tanzeem-ul-Madaris – an umbrella organization under which religious schools work – and took them into confidence about the proposed reforms. Interior Minister Rehman Malik said that under this plan, once all the seminaries are registered, they will be put under the education ministry which will supervise introduction of modern subjects in the curricula of religious schools. A statement issued by Wafaq-ul-Madaris al-Arabia said that entry of men in uniform in madrassas will exacerbate the situation because it is an insult of Islamic values. Members of Ittehad Tanzeem-ul-Madaris told The Express Tribune that clerics belonging to Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, Tanzeem-ul-Madaris, Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Salfia, Wafaq-ul-Madaris Shia and Rabita-ul-Madaris are kicking off a campaign to resist the government's plan to introduce reforms which, according to one cleric, are meant to put the madrassas on the path to ultra-modernization.

[The Express Tribune – December 10, 2010]

#### **Sixth Census to be Held by Aug-Sept 2011**

*By Israr Khan*

Due to high security concerns in terrorism-hit areas where 'war on terror' is on, the government may skip them in its 'Sixth National Population Census' scheduled for end August-September 2011, whereas the Federal Statistics Division is determined to hold it under the supervision of Army. Federal Secretary Statistics Division, Asif Bajwa told 'The News' that we have started homework and are preparing first to start 'house listing' by end-March and start of April 2011 and complete it within five weeks. Then in end-August and start-September 2011, we would initiate the population census. This would approximately cost Rs5 billion. When this correspondent asked whether census would be possible in the Fata and Swat areas where Pakistan Military is involved in fighting against terrorists, Bajwa said that we have not yet decided the areas which may have to be excluded, however may be some areas could be skipped if it was not possible there to hold census due to immense security concerns. It is worth mentioning that population and housing censuses play a vital role in public administration, as their results are always used as a critical reference to ensure equity in the distribution of wealth, government services and funds distribution among various districts and regions. According to government's existing plan, it would be conducted in all the four provinces, Federally Administered Tribal Area [Fata] and Azad Kashmir.

[The Nation – December 11, 2010]

#### **Hajj Scam: Zardari Stops PM from Sacking Kazmi**

**President Zardari has turned down a proposal by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani to sack religious affairs minister Hamid Saeed Kazmi from the federal cabinet saying that such a move may have an adverse impact on the Hajj corruption case. The PM had proposed that Kazmi be asked to leave in the same manner as defence production minister Abdul Qayyum Jatoi was removed following controversial remarks that minister made in Quetta.** The Zardari snub came when Prime Minister Gilani called the president after Supreme Court judges summoned two federal ministers – Azam Swati and Hamid Saeed Kazmi, in court in the Hajj scam. Both ministers had earlier exchanged allegations of corruption once the scam was highlighted in the media. Gilani is said to have been in a flux after the exchange of accusations between the two ministers. The PM was advised by his close aides to ask his religious affairs minister to resign, as it would improve his own government's image in the media and in the public.

As Gilani was convinced with the logic of this move, he had contacted the president to get the presidential seal of approval. Gilani is understood to have told the president that he wanted to ask Hamid Saeed Kazmi to stay out of the cabinet till his name was cleared. However, well placed sources said that the president did not appreciate this out of the box approach of asking a cabinet minister to resign when the case was being heard in the Supreme Court and all sorts of stories were being published against the minister in the media. Zardari told

the PM not to take any such step as it would demoralize his own minister, particularly when Kazmi was fighting a crucial battle in the apex court. Gilani was of the view that as the religious affairs minister was confident that he did not do anything wrong in the process of leasing of buildings in Saudi Arabia, it should not be a problem for him to first get a clean bill from the courts before resuming his job as the minister. But, sources said, President Zardari was of the opinion that it would show weakness of his government before the media and a hostile judiciary.

[The Express Tribune – December 13, 2010]

### **SC Directs FIA to Complete Hajj Scam Probe by January 06**

The Supreme Court on December 13 directed the FIA director general to complete the investigation regarding the irregularities in Hajj arrangements by January 06. The court also ordered the religious affairs secretary to return 1,000 Saudi riyals to each pilgrim who had not been provided adequate facilities during performance of Hajj. A seven-member special bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhary, was hearing a suo moto case regarding the alleged corruption in Hajj arrangements. FIA DG Waseem Ahmed informed the apex court that a team headed by Hussain Asghar, the Interpol Pakistan director, was going to Saudi Arabia to probe the irregularities in Hajj arrangements. Religious Affairs Secretary Sarwar Qazalbash told the court that the acting Hajj DG had taken back 1,000 Saudi riyals taken from pilgrims and the same would be paid to the affected pilgrims. The court directed the secretary to submit before the court a certificate in this regard on the next date of hearing. Azam Swati, the minister for science and technology, submitted before the court proofs of the Hajj scandal and a written statement against Religious Affairs Minister Hamid Saeed Kazmi. He contended that the religious affairs secretary had made a statement on December 09 at his residence that the minister was involved in the Hajj scandal.

[Daily Times – December 14, 2010]

## **Legislative Business**

### **Senate Unanimously Approves 19th Amendment Bill**

Showing unanimity over the 19th Amendment, the Senate on December 30 passed the 19th Amendment Constitutional Bill with 80 votes in favor after the bill had earlier been approved by Lower House of parliament. The constitutional reforms committee had unanimously drafted the bill in the light of directions by the Supreme Court and amendments had been recommended in six clauses of the constitution. Senator Babar Awan informed the House that the appointment of judges in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) would be completed by January next year. Two amendments were proposed by Senators Hafiz Rashid, Muhammad Idrees and Haroon Akhtar in Section 1 and Clause 246 of the 19th Amendment; however both amendments were rejected by the House. Rashid and Idrees proposed amendments in Clause 246 and said that 25 villages of Charsadda and Peshawar should be included in Tribal Areas. Haroon said that taxes should be imposed on the agricultural sector, however, Rabbani said that since the Concurrent List had been abolished under the 18th Amendment, therefore it was a provincial subject. The 19th Amendment mainly deals with appointment of judges, addition of four-member senior judges in the judicial commission and addition of the Islamabad High Court in the list of higher judiciary. The bill is set to become part of the constitution after getting approval from President Asif Ali Zardari.

[Daily Times – December 31, 2010]

### **Cabinet Okays Amendment Bills**

**The Punjab cabinet on December 22 approved the first batch of eight amendment bills of various departments that will enable them to run the affairs of federal ministries being transferred to the provinces under the 18th Amendment.** The cabinet meeting was presided over by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif who also constituted a committee for making recommendations for eliminating corruption in the province. The recommendations will be submitted to the cabinet at its next meeting and later to the assembly for legislation. It had so far finalised drafts of 18 such laws out of which eight laws pertaining to the Board of Revenue, health, labour and Auqaf departments were approved by the cabinet. **The laws are: Trust Act, 1882; Transfer of Property Act, 1882 and Partition Act, 1908 (Board of Revenue); Punjab Epidemic Disease Act, 2010 and Injured Persons (Medical Aid) Act, 2004 (Health Department); Employment of Children Act, 1991 and Employment (Record of Services) Act, 1951 (Labour Department); and Punjab Publication of Holy Quran (Elimination of Printing and Recording Errors) Act, 2010 (Auqaf Department).**

[Dawn – December 23, 2010]

## **Zardari Signs Employees Reinstatement Bill into Law**

President Asif Ali Zardari signed into law the Sacked Employees (Reinstatement) Bill 2010 during a special ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on December 06. The signing ceremony was attended among others by federal ministers, members of parliament, federal secretaries and representatives of reinstated employees. The bill was passed by National Assembly on October 07 and Senate on 10 November. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, President Zardari said that he is pleased to have signed the bill and congratulated all the workers who have thus been reinstated in their jobs through an act of the parliament. He also felicitated parliament for passing the law and also the Minister for Labour and Manpower and all those who made it possible. The president said that it is an auspicious day for all of us as we have fulfilled yet another promise and commitment made by our Shaheed leader and the government with the workers.

[The News – December 07, 2010]

## **PA Passes Industrial Relations Bill**

*By Ch Aamer Waqas*

**As part of the virtually only legislation of the 21st session, the Punjab Assembly on December 08 passed the Punjab Industrial Relations Bill 2010 with the majority of voice votes.** The Opposition moved 12 amendments, and it did not press ten of them, while perhaps through a consensus, its two amendments were carried. However, the Opposition opposed the Bill and didn't endorse any clause of the Bill. Earlier, Punjab govt had initially promulgated an Ordinance in the name of Industrial Relations Ordinance on June 13 as all the labour matters were a federal subject before passage of the 18th Amendment. Now the labour ministry was devolved to the provinces. As the ordinance was promulgated by the Punjab govt and it could not be re-promulgated so there was necessary to get the nod of the assembly. The Bill was moved by Law Minister Rana Sanaullah, who informed the House the Standing Committee of the Assembly had consulted and taken into the confidence all stakeholders. After the passage of the Industrial Relation Bill, workers of an establishment employing not less than 50 workers can establish and join a union or association. **However, a worker shall not be entitled to be a member of more than one trade union at any one time and no joining another trade. A person who has been convicted of any offence under the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) shall be disqualified from being elected office bearer of the trade union.** Under the new laws, no office bearer of a trade union shall be transferred or dismissed during the pending of an application for registration of the trade union. It envisages cancellation of a trade union's registration upon getting less than 15 per cent votes now in two referendums to be held seeking the status of a collective bargaining agent.

[The Express Tribune – December 09, 2010]

## **ECP & Election Related News**

### **EC Stopped from Allotting Reserved Seat**

A division bench of Lahore High Court stopped on December 07 the Election Commission from completing the process of allocating a reserved seat for women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to a candidate belonging to Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl. Justice Sagheer Ahmed Qadri and Justice Ijaz Ahmed of the LHC's Rawalpindi bench suspended their earlier order and directed the commission not to proceed with allotting a seat in the KP assembly to the JUI-F till the final outcome of the case. MPA Farhat Begum of the PPP had moved an application that she was not heard while passing the Oct 27 order about allocation of seat to the JUI-F candidate. Through her lawyer Wasim Sajjad, she said that she was one of the parties in the petition filed by Maulana Fazlur Rehman and his party candidate Naeema Kishwar and the court decided the matter in favour of the petitioners without hearing her response. In its earlier decision, the court had directed the EC to allocate one seat reserved for women in KP to the JUI-F according to the general seats the party holds in the assembly. Accepting the petition of the JUI-F, the bench had asked the EC to give away one reserved seat for women to the party in accordance with the results of 35 general seats in 2008 elections and decide the matter within one month.

[Dawn – December 08, 2010]

### **Bogus Degrees: Election Commission Begins Criminal Proceedings**

**The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has started criminal proceedings against fake degree holders by forwarding three cases to respective district police officers on December 09.** Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Retd) Hamid Ali Mirza sent cases of Punjab Assembly members Farah Deeba and Shoukat Aziz Bhatti, and former Balochistan Assembly member Zahoor Hussain Khosa. The ECP has asked the

police to register criminal cases for involvement in corrupt practices under Section 78(3) (d) of the Representation of the People Act, 1976. Deeba's degree was declared bogus by the University of the Punjab, while Khosa's degree was declared fake by the Supreme Court on August 30.

[The Express Tribune – December 10, 2010]

### **ECP Orders Criminal Cases Against Three More MPs**

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on December 23 referred three legislators' cases to the concerned police officers for initiation of criminal proceedings against them for they possessed counterfeit graduation degrees. Chief Election Commissioner Justice (ret'd) Hamid Ali Mirza referred the cases of Syed Salman Mohsin (NA-165), Muhammad Khan Toor (PB-16) and Mir Bacha Khan Qaisrani (PP-240) to the relevant DPOs for registration of FIR against them and legal proceedings on this count. An official said the referral of three cases brought the number of lawmakers' cases referred to police to nine and more referrals were expected within next week. Two legislators, whose cases have been referred to the police, are MNAs. Asked would the ECP be disposing of fake degree cases by end of December, he said it was being desired, the process might continue for another month or so.

[The Nation – December 24, 2010]

### **Degrees of Four More MPAs Found Fake**

The Election Commission of Pakistan on December 13 found two more MPAs, Ms Seemal Kamran, MPA (PP-Reserved) and Sardar Ali, member Khyber Puktoonkhwa assembly, having fake degrees. The hearing regarding fake/invalid degrees of twelve Senators, MNAs and MPAs was held on December 14 under the chairmanship of Muhammad Afzal Khan, the nominated officer of Election Commission of Pakistan under the direction of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The representative/focal person of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Rahim Bux Channa, was also present. A junior of Khanzada Mukarrum Khan Advocate appeared in the case of Ms Seemal Kamran, MPA (PP-Reserved) and sought adjournment but the committee informed him that both the degrees submitted by Ms Seemal Kamran have been declared bogus by the University of Punjab and Shah Abdul Latif University, Jacobabad respectively. On the request of the counsel, December 28 was fixed as the next date of hearing. The committee informed the representative of Mr. Sardar Ali, MPA (PK-34) that the second degree submitted by him has also been declared bogus by the University of Peshawar. The representative requested for issuance of notice to the Controller of Examination of the University of Peshawar to produce the record before the committee. The committee decided to ask the Controller of Examination to produce record on December 28, 2010 and advised Mr. Sardar Ali to appear before the committee in person on the same date.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on December 20 declared the degrees of two MPAs Haji Nasir Mehmood of the Punjab Assembly and Bashir Ahmed Khan of the Sindh Assembly fake and recommended lodging cases against them. During the hearing of cases against 17 parliamentarians, the ECP committee asked the two lawmakers, Ghulam Dastagir Rajar of the National Assembly and Mukesh Kumar of the Sindh Assembly, to submit their final statements on the objections raised by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). It is pertinent to mention that the hearing regarding the fake/invalid degrees of senators, MNAs and MPAs was held on December 20 under the chairmanship of the nominated officer of the ECP, Muhammad Afzal Khan, under the direction of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The representative/focal person of the HEC, Rahim Bux Channa, was also present. Sources in the ECP told Daily Times that although the committees had declared the degree of Haji Nasir Mahmood fake during the hearing, later on his counsel came to the ECP and requested for more time. They said that the ECP committee had accepted his plea and his case would not be sent to the CEC for proceeding against him. The sources added that the ECP committee would likely end the hearing of all fake degree holders-cases in the month of December. The sources also said that ECP still has not asked the Law Ministry for deputing law officers, who would start proceedings against the fake degree holders before the session courts.

[The Information has been taken from different Pakistani Newspapers]

### **More Lawmakers Fail to Defend Degrees**

An election commission panel holding initial hearing into the cases of fake or invalid degrees of public representatives has closed the cases of MPA Seemal Kamran (PP-Reserved) and MPA Samina Khawar Hayat (PP-Reserved). The cases have been forwarded to the chief election commissioner for further action. **So far, the committee has closed 13 such cases and forwarded them to the election commission.** The cases of lawmakers who failed to prove the committee on genuineness of their educational certificates will

be sent to the courts for criminal proceedings. Meanwhile, MNA Mazhar Hayat (NA-138), MNA Hayatullah Khan Tareen (NA-155), MNA Molvi Haji Roziuddin (NA-262), MNA Mir Humayun Aziz Kurd (NA-267), MPA Abdul Samad Akhonzada (PB-7), MPA Yar Muhammad (PB-31), MPA Sardar Ali (KP-34), MPA Safina Saima Khar (PB-Reserved), MPA Afshan Farooq (PP-Reserved) and MPA Nasim Nasir Khawaja (PP-Reserved) appeared before the committee in person, or through their legal representatives, and submitted their records. The committee advised lawmakers and their counsels to submit a written reply and further evidence before adjourning the cases. Dr Badshah Munir Bukhari, additional controller of examinations of the University of Peshawar, appeared before the committee and declared that the degrees of Sardar Ali and Safina Saima Khar were bogus. The counsels for MNA Mir Ahmedan Khan (NA-265) and MPA Khalifa Abdul Qayum Khan (KP-64) pleaded that their clients' degrees from madrassahs are not fake, even if the institutions are not recognised by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). They asked the committee to finalise the case in light of the documents presented. Meanwhile, representatives for Mir Muhabbat Khan Marri and MNA Syed Muhammad Salman Mohsin (NA-165) appeared before the court and submitted their degrees to the committee for verification by the HEC.

[The Express Tribune – December 29, 2010]

### **Govt, Opposition Put ECP Names in Cold Storage**

The government and opposition have virtually entered a marriage of convenience and have placed the appointment of provincial representatives in Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the cold storage. The ECP with four provincial members, to be inducted through a 12-member Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), is not only a constitutional requirement but also an impediment to speedily penalize the parliamentarians who submitted forged documents in the last general election. The NA and Senate Secretariats' mandarins told The News on December 27 that the JPC has yet to be constituted with none other than both treasury and opposition equally responsible for a persistent delay thus blocking the way to induct the ECP members. The 18th Constitutional amendment transferred mostly sweeping powers of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) to the ECP, as a whole, in the decisions rather than maintaining status quo. National Assembly Speaker Dr. Fehmida Mirza had written to parliamentary party leaders both in NA and Senate last November 26, (2010) for their respective nominees, 8 MNAs and 4 senators, for the committee constitutionally tasked to put in place the ECP. The officials said that as Senate parties acted accordingly and forwarded their nominees, no one of the NA parliamentary party leaders has given their respective MNA names to be part of the JPC enabling it to fill the election body. Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, Opposition Leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali and PML-Q's Chaudhry Pervez Ellahi are to notify 8 MNAs in accordance with their respective party strength in the NA.

The speaker's office also issued a reminder to them (NA leaders) two weeks back but to no effect. The Senate treasury has nominated Islamuddin and Haji Adeel for the JPC, whereas PML-N named Raja Zafarul Haq and PML-Q notified two senators, Haroon Akhter and JI's Prof. Khurshid. Depending on the speaker's determination, Khurshid could be a member only if Q gets two or PML-N senator member is dropped from the JPC. The non-appointment of the HCs retired judges in place of previously serving ones is among the key reasons behind extremely slowed process of taking bogus degree holder MPs to the task despite passage of six months to the Supreme Court's clear order for punishing culprits. It is a constitutional requirement in light with 18th amendment to take four retired HC judges through the JPC, having equal members from the government and opposition. The ECP, in absence of its provincial members, has so far forwarded just a few MPs' cases to district and sessions judges despite the fact that the SC had ordered on June 24, 2010 to punish dishonest MPs who won 2008 election on the basis of counterfeit degrees.

[The News – December 29, 2010]

## **Political Parties News**

### **JUI-F Quits Coalition**

The PPP-led government suffered another setback as it plunged to another crisis December 14 when JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman announced December 14 that his party had decided to quit the coalition government. The latest twist in the country's politics came after Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani earlier in the day sacked Minister for Religious Affairs Hamid Saeed Kazmi and Minister for Science and Technology Azam Swati from their offices. It is worth mentioning that Swati was one of the three JUI-F's ministers who were inducted in the cabinet. As soon a high-level meeting of JUI-F made the decision, the remaining two ministers also sent their resignations to the prime minister. They include Federal Minister Housing and Works Minister

Rehmat Ullah Kakar and Federal Minister for Tourism Atta-ur-Rehman. After the announcement, President Zardari and Premier Gilani telephoned Fazlur Rehman but he refused to talk. He said the government's one-sided decision compelled them to quit the coalition government, adding that they were not taken into confidence over issue.

[The Nation – December 15, 2010]

### **MQM Quits Federal Cabinet**

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) decided on December 27 to part ways with the federal cabinet. The decision was taken in the Coordination Committee meeting of the MQM held simultaneously in London and Karachi. Earlier, the decision was taken at a meeting of the Rabita Committee, held simultaneously in Karachi and London. The statement added that the Rabita Committee reviewed the attitude of the coalition partners during the last three years and the cold shoulder response of the government to the MQM and its ministers. The statement added, The Rabita Committee reviewed the attitude of the coalition partners during the last three years and the cold shoulder response of the government to the MQM and its ministers. The suggestions and recommendations given by the Rabita Committee to the government were ignored repeatedly. The committee observed patience during the period and advised its ministers also to remain calm and not to lose patience. Hence, the committee arrived to a conclusion that the federal ministers with no powers to resolve the problems of the people were of no use.

[The News – December 28, 2010]

### **Concerted Move to Upset the Apple Cart**

**The political landscape got murkier on December 28 when JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman came out with a strong demand for removal of Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and his replacement with another nominee of the PPP and the MQM fired a broadside on the ruling PPP and also on the opposition PML-N.** MQM's chief Altaf Hussain, in a pre-dawn telephonic address to hundreds of supporters gathered outside the party headquarters in Karachi, asked the PPP leadership to improve governance and curb corruption and, at the same time, challenged PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif to a live debate on national issues. Speaking soon after the announcement of MQM's decision to quit the federal cabinet, he complained that his party had never been consulted on decisions taken by the PPP on major national issues. He urged the PPP leadership to mend its ways and threatened that otherwise his party would take no time to decide to sit on the opposition benches — a situation that can create a serious problem for Mr Gilani in maintaining his position as the Leader of the House. The PPP did not respond to the allegations of corruption and bad governance, but the Pakistan Muslim League-N hit back at Mr Hussain and asked him to first return to the country and then have a debate with Mr Sharif. According to sources, several PPP legislators have also complained to the president that the prime minister and his team have failed to deliver leading to resentment in the party's lower cadres.

[Dawn – December 29, 2010]

### **Govt Yet to Accept Resignations of JUI-F Ministers**

**The government has yet to accept the resignations of two federal ministers of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (F) perhaps in the hope that it will succeed in persuading Maulana Fazlur Rehman not to leave the PPP-led coalition at the centre.** Talking to Dawn, Cabinet Division Secretary Abdul Rauf Choudhary said his office had not received a directive from the Prime Minister's Secretariat so far to de-notify any federal minister. Maulana Fazl had announced quitting the federal government after Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani sacked the Minister for Science and Technology, Azam Khan Swati, who belonged to the JUI-F. Later, the two other JUI-F ministers — Maulana Attaur Rehman, federal minister for tourism, and Rehmatullah Kakar, federal minister for housing and works — had submitted their resignations. Sources in the PPP said that they were not only hopeful but sure to have the JUI-F back in the federal government sooner than later. They said negotiations with the JUI-F were moving in the right direction. In yet another sign that the government is pretty much sure of getting the JUI-F back to the government, National Assembly Speaker Dr Fehmida Mirza has also not accepted its request to allot opposition benches to its eight MNAs. Sources in the PM Secretariat said the resignations of MQM ministers Dr Farooq Sattar and Babar Khan Ghauri had not been received. A senior member of the PPP's central executive committee said currently Mr Ghauri was accompanying the Prime Minister on his visit to Oman.

[Dawn – December 29, 2010]

### **MQM Minister Sends Resignation to President**

The breach between two main coalition partners — Pakistan People's Party and Muttahida Qaumi Movement — widened further after the Minister for Overseas Pakistanis, Farooq Sattar of the MQM, sent his 'symbolic' resignation to President Asif Ali Zardari on December 28 indicating his party's intention to part ways with the government. Presidential spokesman Farhatullah Babar neither confirmed nor denied that the presidency had received the resignation, but said that efforts were under way to appease the "annoyed partner" and added that we will soon overcome the misunderstanding between the PPP and MQM.

[Dawn – December 29, 2010]

### **PPP Will Remove All Reservations of MQM, JUI-F: Malik**

Interior Minister Rehman Malik said on December 30 that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) would remove all the reservations of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), but it was the responsibility of all political parties to take part in the progress and prosperity of the country. Talking to journalists outside the Parliament House, Malik said that the government had taken various steps for providing relief to the people. He said that there was no threat to the present government and it would complete its five-year tenure. Malik added that all allies would jointly work for the development of the country.

[Daily Times – December 31, 2010]

### **PML-N Will not Support Any In-House Change**

Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaulah says that his party will not support any move to topple the coalition government headed by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani. The provincial law minister was replying to reporters' queries before the start of the Punjab Assembly session at committee room in the assembly secretariat on December 30. He said demands of an in-house change could damage democracy. He categorically said replacement of the prime minister was not a good option at this stage so the PML-N would not support or launch any such move against him in the present scenario. About the differences and recent war of words between the PML-N and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the law minister said, although his leadership has stopped him from giving any harsh statement against the opponents, it was a fact that the MQM, as a party, believed in extortion, so it has no comparison with the PML-N, which has totally political and democratic beliefs.

[Daily Times – December 31, 2010]

## **Judiciary Updates**

### **PBC Receives 113 Nomination Papers for its December 22 Election**

The returning officer for elections of the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) has received 113 nomination papers until November 30 which was the last date to receive the letters of proposals. The names of 60 candidates have been proposed for 22 seats of the PBC. The members of the provincial bar councils, who are voters in the PBC election, will elect 22 members of the PBC from their respective provinces, one from Balochistan, four from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 11 from Punjab and six from Sindh. The scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held in office of the returning officer on December 11. The polling will be held on December 22 in all the four provincial capitals and the official results would be announced on December 31.

[Daily Times – December 01, 2010]

### **Ejaz Chaudhry Takes Oath as LHC CJ**

The oath-taking ceremony of new Lahore High Court Chief Justice Ejaz Ahmad Chaudhry held at Governor House on December 10 was marked by cold and distant manners, as Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer and Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif faced each other with cold eyes on the occasion. For obvious reasons, the ceremony was orchestrated in a manner which gave little time to chief executive of the province and its constitutional head to interact with each other. Justice Ejaz Ahmad Ch was sworn in as new chief justice of Lahore High Court at a simple but impressive ceremony held at Governor House. Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer administered the oath.

[Daily Times – December 10, 2010]

## Local Governance

### No Decision on LG Cases Even After Over a Year

At least a dozen cases challenging the repeal of the Local Government Ordinance 2001 remain pending with the higher judiciary for the last one and a half years. The holdup in judgments is indirectly causing a delay in the local body polls, which were constantly being postponed by provincial governments for some reason or the other. All the cases had been filed by the former local government representatives under Article 199. It may be mentioned that according to the National Judicial Policy 2009, the cases filed under Article 199 should be disposed of as soon as possible. On November 05, the Punjab Local Council Association had filed a writ petition in the Lahore High Court (LHC) against Punjab through the chief secretary and the chief election commissioner, challenging the Punjab Local Government (Amendment) Act 2010 (Impugned Act). The applicant, Syed Ali Gilani, pleaded before the court that extending the date for holding the LG polls and appointments of administrators instead of nazims were contrary to Article 140A of the constitution. The court, on November 30, issued notices to the Punjab government and adjourned the hearing until December 09.

[Daily Times – December 08, 2010]

### Commissionerate System: Local Govt Draft Sent to Coalition

The final draft on restoring the commissionerate system has been handed over to coalition partners, including the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Awami National Party (ANP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Functional before it will be brought up in the Sindh Assembly during the upcoming session to be held on January 07. Talking to *The Express Tribune*, Sardar Ahmed, parliamentary leader of the MQM in the Sindh Assembly, confirmed that they have received a draft of the bill and would submit their feedback on January 05. He said that currently, Farooq Sattar, deputy convener of our party, is out of the country. When he returns, we will hold a meeting to decide the fate of the commissionerate system. Sources privy to the draft legislation said that the government has agreed to create five zones instead of districts in Karachi and is waiting for the final approval from the MQM. Talking to *The Express Tribune*, Labour Minister Ameer Nawab (ANP) said that his party has also received the draft and is willing to restore the commissionerate system. Jam Madad Ali, leader of the opposition in the Sindh Assembly, said that they had already expressed their support for the commissioner system but “some friends” were opposing it.

[The Express Tribune – December 28, 2010]

## Economic Governance

### Facts & Figures on Economy

#### Development Expenditures Drop by 50pc: Revenue Declines by 6.3pc

Amid fresh government efforts to boost revenue mobilization, the country's overall revenue has declined by over 6.3 per cent (Rs27 billion) to Rs400 billion in the first three months of the current fiscal year when compared to Rs427.3 billion in the corresponding period last year. According to quarterly data on provisional consolidated budgetary operations, the country's development expenditure narrowed down by a massive 50 per cent, defence expenditure crossed its quarterly limits by almost the same proportion and tax revenue remained short of target. The data released by the ministry of finance suggests the total revenue collection has significantly dropped to 2.3 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) in the first three months (July- September) of the current year against 2.9 per cent of the GDP during the same period last year. The data, released by the ministry of finance, reveal that total tax revenue, although higher by about Rs18 billion in absolute terms, declined to 1.9 per cent of GDP during first quarter this year against two per cent of GDP last year. The non-tax revenue collection experienced a major setback this year, declining by a massive 36 per cent (Rs46 billion) to Rs82 billion when compared with Rs128.5 billion of the same period last year. **The non-tax revenue also fell to 0.5 per cent of GDP this year from 0.9 per cent of the first three months of last year.** The overall defence expenditure in the first quarter of the year stood at about Rs132 billion, higher by Rs46 billion against the first quarter authorized limit of about Rs89 billion. **It was, however, Rs14 billion lower than last year's same period expenditure of about Rs146 billion when the government launched military operations against militants in Malakand and Waziristan regions.** Likewise, the provincial PSDPs were contained at about Rs16 billion against Rs39.4 billion during the same period last year, showing a massive drop of 59 per cent. This

suggests that development programme has been drastically cut to contain fiscal deficit, which rose at a fast pace because of higher security expenditure and lower revenue collection.

[Dawn – December 01, 2010]

## **100 Amendments to RGST to Agrees**

*By Khaleeq Kiani*

Federal and provincial finance secretaries agreed on December 08 to make about 100 amendments to the proposed Reformed General Sales Tax, but major issue relating to inter-provincial tax collection and the rate of tax remained unresolved. **Informed sources said that finance secretaries would meet again on December 17 to complete the synchronization of provincial RGST laws with the federal law and achieve uniformity in federal and provincial laws before the new legislation was tabled in the National Assembly in its forthcoming session.** Meanwhile, the Federal Board of Revenue has been directed to address the practical aspects about its powers in the administration of federal and provincial tax laws and tax collection. On December 08, provincial governments wanted to know whether the federal government could get the RGST law passed in the National Assembly. The federal government assured provincial secretaries that the government had made arrangements for enough votes in the National Assembly. Informed sources said that the federal and provincial secretaries had not been able to resolve their differences over tax collection and sharing on inter-provincial services. The sources said that the secretaries also agreed on a uniform tax rate on several sectors across the country, but decided not to make it public until the law was introduced in parliament after incorporating the suggestions of the NA's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue.

[Dawn – December 09, 2010]

## **RGST Debate: Opposition Leader Denied Out-of-Turn Resolution**

The issue of reformed general sales tax reverberates in the Punjab Assembly on December 08 when the leader of the opposition insisted that his anti-RGST resolution should be taken up out of turn. Taking the floor on a point of order, Chaudhry Zaheeruddin said that the law minister had assured him that his "resolution would come under discussion on December 07. As it could not be discussed (on December 07) because of other issues, it was high time the resolution was taken up now. He further said that if the government does not want the PML-Q to take the credit, it can do it by itself. He said that the PML-Q was committed to opposing the RGST. Law Minister Rana Sanaullah claimed that a resolution could only be taken up out of turn if the three major parties (PML-N, PPP and PML-Q) agree on it as decided by the Business Committee. He said that the government stands neutral. He said that if the PML-Q and the PPP agree, we will have no objection. However, the PML-Q must understand that the RGST was a federal matter and the party had representation both in the Senate and the National Assembly. Taking cue from the PML-N, Senior Minister Raja Riaz (the PPP parliamentary leader) stuck to the same line that instead of insisting on it in the provincial assembly, the PML-Q should deal with it at the federal level. Later, the Punjab Assembly passed amended Punjab Industrial Relations Bill of 2010. The opposition had moved a lot of amendments to the bill and wanted to circulate it among different stakeholders to elicit support and suggestions.

[Dawn – December 09, 2010]

## **Fourth Deadline for RGST May be Missed**

*By Khaleeq Kiani*

**A senior government official told Dawn on December 22 that the government is set to miss its fourth deadline for introduction of reformed general sales tax (RGST) in a few days, and along with it other taxation measures, like additional surcharge on income tax and increase in duties on luxury imports, are also in limbo.** He said that as a result, the fiscal deficit is estimated to rise up to 7.4 per cent of the GDP against a revised target of 4.7 per cent agreed to with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) if taxation package was not implemented from January 02. He said the president and the prime minister have repeatedly been informed about the devastating effect of non-implementation of macroeconomic adjustment, including expenditure control and additional tax measures. He said the technocrats and bureaucrats were waiting for a final message from the leadership to start considering alternative options which would have to be discussed and agreed to with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the extension period in the completion of \$11.3 billion standby arrangement. The official said that the government and the IMF had agreed on a revised fiscal deficit target of 4.7 per cent from original budgeted target of 4 per cent of GDP on the basis of additional taxation measures. The government would have to make extra efforts through more expenditure cuts and tough revenue measures to once again work out a fiscal deficit target acceptable to the IMF.

[Dawn – December 23, 2010]

## **Economic Revival not Possible Without Change in System**

Former Naval Chief and Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee Admiral (R) Iftikhar Ahmad Sarohey said that without bringing change in the system, the economic revival of the country is not possible. Chairing monthly meeting of Hamdard Thinkers Forum on December 01, he said that it is the right time to launch a national movement to realize the rulers to reduce their luxurious expenditures by putting the tax system on the right track and retreating indirect taxes. Sarohey said that the nation should make consensus on one point agenda that corrupt political leaders and bureaucrats should bring all their money back to Pakistan from foreign countries.

[Daily Times – December 02, 2010]

## **Govt to Amend Laws to Limit SBP Borrowing**

*By Sajid Chaudhry*

Official sources said on December 25 that the federal government is set to amend the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation (FR&DL) Act to put a limit on the government's State Bank of Pakistan borrowing at a maximum 10 percent of the last year's revenues that presently stands at 68 percent. This amendment has become necessary keeping in view the proposed State Bank of Pakistan Act, 2010, which has proposed limiting the government's SBP borrowing after five years to a maximum limit of 10 percent of the last year's tax and non-tax revenues. The sources added that making both legislations in accordance with national needs, both acts will bind the government not to cross the maximum limit of SBP borrowing of 10 percent that at present stands at 68 percent of the last year's tax and non-tax revenues. At present, the government's SBP borrowing stands at 68 percent of the last year's tax and non-tax revenues, which is believed as unsustainable and one of the main causes of high inflation in the country. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance has already approved the proposed SBT Act 2010 and now it will be presented before the Senate body on finance for formal approval so as to complete its parliamentary approval process in January 2011.

[Daily Times – December 26, 2010]

## **Poor Governance Responsible for Slow Economic Growth**

Participants at Pakistan Society of Development Economist (PSDE) on December 28 were informed that internationally available indicators such as "Competitiveness", "Investment Climate", "Enterprise Surveys", all point to weaknesses in governance as major constraints to economic growth in Pakistan. Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Dr Nadeem-ul-Haq said without sustainable growth, continued fiscal crises, a bloated public sector that places pressure on the budget and lowers productivity and growth, welfare indicators such as poverty and the MDGs are not showing improvement. He said that a large percentage of population remains clustered around the poverty line and rise of the growth rates. Haq said that reforms of governance and markets need to be very seriously mainstreamed for addressing both the macro and the growth problems. Ijaz kakakhel said that these reforms must seek to modernise our outmoded systems of incentives, management, human capital, procedures and technology in the running of government.

[Daily Times – December 29, 2010]

## **Foreign Assistance & Pakistan's Economy**

### **11.3 bn SBA IMF Gives Pakistan Nine-Month Extension**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has granted a nine-month extension to Pakistan under the Standby Arrangement (SBA) programme of \$11.3 billion till September 30, 2011. The Executive Board of the IMF on December 27 approved — on a lapse-of-time basis — a nine-month extension of time to the government to complete the reform of the General Sales Tax, implement measures to correct the course of fiscal policy, and amend the legislative framework for the financial sector. The IMF staff is continuing its dialogue with the Pakistani authorities on the programme's fifth review.

[The News – December 28, 2010]

## **BISP Updates**

### **PPP Committed to Serve People: BISP Chairperson**

Federal Minister and Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson Farzana Raja said on November 30 that the Founding Day of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is an occasion to reaffirm the party's commitment to serve the poor masses of the country. Addressing at a ceremony organized by PPP Rawalpindi City to celebrate 44th Founding Day of the party, she said November 30 was not only Founding Day of PPP but it was also a day

when the programme of provincial harmony and prosperity of the provinces was announced. The BISP chairperson said that it was a matter of pride and honor that the people's government had been fulfilling the commitment to serve the people of Pakistan, which was made by Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. She added that the real patriotism is serving the people and our politics is based on service to masses of the country. She said that BISP was delivering the right of the people at their doorstep and it was highly instrumental in empowering women economically. The government would serve the people for the period of five years and would seek the support of the people on the basis of its performance. She said Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had made the commitment to the people of Pakistan and (Nov 30) his party had been doing its best to fulfill this historic commitment.

[Daily Times – December 01, 2010]

**Plan approved: Eunuchs to Receive BISP Cash Handouts**

**The Express Tribune has reliably learnt that the government has decided to treat the transsexual community just like any other segment of the society and include them among beneficiaries of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).** The law ministry has given a go-ahead signal to the BISP top brass which sought the former's legal opinion on the matter. The BISP, operating under the Prime Minister's Secretariat, has been paying Rs1,000 a month to families living below the poverty line. Simultaneously, another programme –Waseela-e-Haq – was started to provide loans of Rs300,000 per poor family to enable them to start a small business.

[The Express Tribune – December 31, 2010]

## Regional Politics

### Pakistan Foreign' Relation

#### **PM Urges Turkish Businessmen to Invest in Pakistan**

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on December 08 asked Turkish businessmen to invest in Pakistan's agriculture, housing, energy and infrastructure development. While addressing a luncheon meeting with the Turkish business community, Gilani said Pak-Turk ties were unique in nature and the two nations were cooperating in all areas, including trade, economy and defence. He said the commissioning of the High Level Cooperation Council would enable the leaders of the two countries to take important decisions to boost ties in all areas. The prime minister told the attendants that Pakistan would give a 30-day visa to all Turkish nationals who possessed valid US, UK or Schengen visas. He said Pakistan offered many attractive opportunities for investments in energy, textile, infrastructure development, agro-based industry, oil and gas, mining and many other areas. He said that we have undertaken wide-ranging reforms to improve the investment climate in Pakistan and to put in place a level playing field for both the local and foreign investors.

[Daily Times – December 09, 2010]

#### **President Stresses Stronger Pak-Bahrain Cooperation**

National Guards of Bahrain Commander Lt Gen Sheikh Mohammad Bin Isa Bin Salman al Khalifa on December 02 called on President Asif Ali Zardari at the presidency. Matters relating to Pak-Bahrain bilateral relations, especially the shared perceptions on host of issues of peace, development and regional security were discussed along with the need to enhance trade relations. Zardari, lauding the leadership of King Sheikh Hamad ibn Isa al Khalifa, appreciated the social and economic development of Bahrain under his able leadership. He emphasized upon further enhancing trade relations and extending mutual cooperation in the realm of defence, labour and manpower. He noted that the Pakistani community in Bahrain was contributing positively towards the socio-economic development of the country. Salman al Khalifa thanked Zardari for the meeting and expressed the hope that the existing brotherly relations between the two countries would continue to gain strength with every passing day.

[Daily Times – December 03, 2010]

#### **A New Dawn in Pak-Lanka Ties**

*By Sharmila Faruqi*

The relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka date back to formative years of the two countries that laid the foundation of their friendship in 1948 when then Sri Lankan prime minister DS Senanayake visited Pakistan. The two countries have continued to maintain strong, robust and reliable relations through increased interaction at the highest political level and people-to-people contact. Their bilateral relations, under the overarching umbrella of SAARC, help promote a brighter and integrated future for the people of South Asia. The recent visit by President Asif Ali Zardari is a watershed in Pak-Sri Lanka relations. Zardari made it clear that with the continued commitment of the Sri Lankan political leadership and with the dawn of the Pakistani government, the people and the government of Pakistan stand with the Sri Lankan government and people in their march towards a future of progress and prosperity. Zardari and Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse agreed to expand mutual ties beyond political and defence paradigm to "overall comprehensive engagement", including trade, joint investments and cooperation in new areas. A number of agreements were signed between the two countries. On the economic front, Sri Lanka has welcomed Pakistan's \$200 million buyers' facility and offered it to make the payment either on barter or in local currency to ease pressure on their foreign exchange reserves. Zardari suggested that Pakistan and Sri Lanka should carry out barter trade in natural resources.

[Daily Times – December 06, 2010]

#### **\$5 bn Pak-Afghan Trade Target to be Achieved by 2015**

Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism for peace and stability in the region and intensifying trade and economic cooperation to achieve \$5 billion target of bilateral trade by 2015. The two countries expressed commitment to develop a joint approach to further strengthen economic, educational, transit-trade and investment cooperation between the two countries including through the existing bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral and regional cooperation frameworks. The

declaration stressed upon focusing on infrastructure development particularly rail and road connectivity between the two countries such as Peshawar-Jalalabad rail link; Quetta-Kandahar rail link; modern facilities at Landi Kotal-Torkhem and Chaman-Spinboldak. The two leaders agreed to prioritize economic cooperation and integration through, among other means, full and seamless implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) as of January 2011. **The two leaders agreed to work jointly to achieve the target of \$5 billion bilateral trade by 2015**, by inter-alia pursuing closer customs and tariff harmonization and facilitating greater interaction among the private sectors of the two countries.

[The News – December 06, 2010]

### **Pak-Russia Trade Ties Need to be Strengthened**

Ambassador of Russia in Pakistan, Andrey Badnik in the inauguration ceremony of Pakistan Russia Business Forum stated that the Russian government and private sector see Pakistan as a land of opportunity for business and joint venture in different potential sectors of both countries. He said that the Russian government is looking for strengthening ties with the government and private sectors of Pakistan through mutual trade of goods and technologies. Tariq Puri, Chairman Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) said Pakistan could be a strong trade partner of Russia as it has potential to export various goods and services. He added that TDAP efforts to promote Pakistani goods in Russia would reap satisfactory results, as single-country exhibition has played an important part to bridge the gap between the traders of the two countries. He said Pakistan has simplified the visa procedures for Russian traders to help them understanding the made-ups and potential sectors of the country. Abdul Rauf Tabani, President Pakistan-Russia Business Forum, said the diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Russia are successfully developing at regional and international levels, both cordially and constructively.

[Daily Times – December 11, 2010]

### **Pakistan, China Agreed to Launch New FYDP**

Pakistan and China on December 02 agreed to launch a new Five Year Development Plan (FYDP) besides approving proposals for 36 projects worth \$13,285 million in various fields to further boost bilateral economic cooperation between both countries. The Pak-China Joint Committee on Economic, Trade, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (JEC) held its 14th session under the co-chairmanship of Finance Minister Hafiz Shaikh and visiting China International Trade Representative Gao Hucheng. The proposals of the projects that the JEC agreed upon are related to development of industry, water and energy, agriculture, fisheries and communication. Shaikh and Hucheng said while addressing a joint press conference after the session that the JEC also agreed to boost exports from Pakistan to China by providing tariff relaxation through the Free Trade Agreement.

[Daily Times – December 03, 2010]

### **Wen's Visit to Strengthen Pak- China Relations**

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's upcoming visit to Pakistan is intended to reassure Islamabad that the two countries' energy, military and economic ties will remain tight, despite Beijing's growing relations with New Delhi. China and Pakistan are set to deepen their strategic relationship. China wants to use Pakistan as a gateway to the Muslim world and as a new Silk Road for China's energy-hungry interior, as well as a balance against India's military rise. Pakistan, in turn, plans to further rely on China for the bulk of its weapon systems, as a major investor for its ports and roads, and as a counter-weight to American demands and conditions in the fight against terrorism. Key to the maintenance of this seemingly happy relationship is China's treatment of Pakistan as an equal to India. An independent analyst and former China-Pakistan expert at the Institute of Strategic Studies Hamayoun Khan said that China still looks at Pakistan and India through the same lens. According to a Pew survey of Pakistan's public opinion last year, 84 percent of respondents said they had a favorable view of China, and 16 percent had a favorable view of the US.

[Daily Times – December 14, 2010]

### **Pakistan, China Ink \$35bn Deals**

Pakistan and China inked 35 agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), worth \$35 billion, on cooperation in economy, energy, banking, security and technology as the Pak-China Business Cooperation Summit concluded on December 18. Of the 35 agreements, 13 will be implemented in the public sector and 22 in the private sector. They are expected to bring around \$25-\$30 billion of investment over the next five years. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani and his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao, who said that Beijing would never give up on Pakistan. Agreement and MoUs relating to investment

worth \$10 billion are to be implemented under the public-private partnership basis while \$5 billion investment is to be undertaken under the private sector to private sector investment initiatives. According to a list handed out to journalists, the biggest deal was worth \$6.5 billion to develop wind and solar power. Though not specifically mentioned, behind-the-scenes talks were expected on China building a one-giga watt nuclear power plant as part of Pakistani plans to produce 8,000 megawatts of nuclear electricity by 2025 to make up its energy shortfall.  
[Daily Times – December 19, 2010]

### **Ahmadinejad Assured of Help in Probe: Zardari Offers Trade Corridor to Region**

**President Asif Ali Zardari has said that Pakistan is well positioned to provide trade and communication corridor facilities, through its territory and ports, to its friends and partners.** Addressing the 11th ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation) summit, he said that we are ready to provide energy (by working) as a bridge and develop win-win scenarios. He said the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train service and ECO truck caravan were also commendable successes. "Pakistan remains deeply committed to the aims and objectives of ECO. ECO brings us together to renew our partnership for comprehensive regional development and prosperity. Mr Zardari said Pakistan had already signed the ECO Trade Agreement, adding that Pakistan and Turkey had agreed to operationalise this accord bilaterally and urged other member states to become parties to the agreement. He said the ECO Trade and Development Bank should be turned into a vibrant financial institution and a vehicle for project development. President Zardari said that Pakistan would extend all assistance and cooperation to Iran in its probe into the Chabahar bombing and efforts to deal with the menace of terrorism.  
[Dawn – December 24, 2010]

### **Crossing LoC: Pakistan, India Approve Triple Entry Permits**

**Pakistan and India have agreed to further facilitate travel between the two parts of disputed Jammu and Kashmir by providing triple entry permits to divided Kashmiri families to travel across the Line of Control (LoC).** Director General Cross LoC Trade and Travel Authority (TATA) Brigadier (retd) Muhammad Ismail said on December 22 that a decision has been taken by both governments and we have obtained permission for this by taking up the matter with the foreign office. Travelling on a triple entry permit will be valid for three visits in one year to either part of Kashmir through Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakot bus services. Both countries started bus services between the two Kashmirs in April 2005 and truck service in October 2008, for families to reunite. Meanwhile on December 22, Indian Kashmir trade authorities turned away 12 trucks from Indian Kashmir to Azad Kashmir terming them as exceeding the limit of weekly trade.  
[The Express Tribune – December 23, 2010]

### **Pak-Afghan Trade Deal, a Closely Guarded Secret**

**The signed copy of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) is under lock and key to avoid opposition to some provisions likely to be misinterpreted as being detrimental to the national interest.** The Express Tribune has learnt that an official requesting anonymity said that the government decided the agreement would be kept confidential for which special instructions were issued by the commerce minister. Kabul was therefore selected as the venue for signing the APTTA on October 28, this year. Both countries reached the understanding that Afghan trucks would be allowed to carry Indian goods to Afghanistan on their return from Wagah after delivering Afghan cargo, ostensibly the reason for keeping the agreement a secret. To make transportation economical, Afghan trucks will be allowed to carry goods from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Another part of the agreement that forced the government to avoid making the document public was that no part of the accord refers to Kabul reciprocating the gesture by permitting Pakistan to export its goods to Central Asia via Afghanistan. Pakistani goods make their way to Central Asia through Afghanistan without a formal agreement. Pakistan and Afghanistan had finalised the agreement on July 19 in the presence of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. The move invited a public outburst and critics said it was dictated by the US to benefit India.

[The Express Tribune – December 31, 2010]

### **Pakistan, Oman Vow to Boost Economic, Defence Relations**

Pakistan and Oman on December 27 agreed to pursue a more robust relationship with closer collaboration in defence, labour and manpower and between their private sectors. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani in an audience with Sultan Qaboos Bin Sa'id at his palace, discussed the regional situation and the measures taken by Pakistan to address its economic and security challenges in the wake of terrorism and extremism. The two leaders held an extensive discussion on bilateral issues and ways to explore new avenues of cooperation, during their meeting at the Bait al Baraka Palace, overlooking the Gulf of Oman. They agreed on early

implementation of the decisions taken by their joint ministerial commission in March this year and directed their foreign ministers to meet at an early date for their implementation through institutionalised mechanism. A senior official privy to the talks said that Gilani and Qaboos also agreed that the accords on defence cooperation, business sectors, labour and manpower, in their final stages needed to be brought to fruition.

[Daily Times – December 28, 2010]

## Afghan Parliamentary Issues

### Afghan MPs Demand New Parliament Launch

A group of about 100 Afghan members of parliament demanded on December 13 that President Hamid Karzai inaugurate the assembly by December 19, almost three weeks after final results of a fraud-marred election were declared. The MPs, calling themselves The Administrative Board of the Parliament, issued a three-point declaration after gathering at parliament to discuss their next move. The group said in a declaration given to Reuters by Fawzia Kufi, an outspoken member of parliament from the northeastern province of Badakhshan that we call on the president to inaugurate parliament. The parliamentarians' declaration also said neither the Supreme Court nor the attorney general's office had any authority 'to interfere in the election process. Afghanistan's political crisis has been simmering since the Sept 18 ballot, with tension rising on reports that the attorney general's office had asked for the vote to be annulled. Karzai has been critical of the poll, which is likely to have produced a parliament with a larger, more vocal and coherent opposition than the previous chamber.

[Daily times – December 14, 2010]

## Domestic Policies of India

### Indian Economy Grows 8.9 Percent on Yearly Basis

India's economy grew a forecast-beating 8.9 percent year-on-year in July-September, data showed November 30, underscoring the country's brisk recovery from the global financial crisis. The healthy numbers brought temporary cheer to the Congress-led government, buffeted by a string of scandals including a damaging telecom corruption scam which could have cost the public treasury up to 40 billion dollars. The robust growth, propelled by manufacturing, services and a revived farm sector, was significantly above market forecasts of 8.2 percent growth. The expansion came despite the rapid unwinding of massive fiscal and monetary stimulus steps taken in the last few years that helped shield the country of 1.2 billion people from the global slump. D.K. Joshi, chief economist at ratings agency Crisil, told AFP that these numbers are reassuring, especially with monetary and fiscal stimulus being withdrawn — it shows the resilience of this recovery. **Data from the Central Statistical Organisation showed. Adding to the good news for the government that first-quarter growth was revised upwards to 8.9 percent year-on-year from 8.8 percent. The South Asian country is the world's second fastest-growing major economy, behind regional rival China, which logged growth of 9.6 percent year-on-year in the same three-month period.**

[Daily Times – December 01, 2010]

### India Tests Nuclear-Capable Missile

An official said that India successfully tested a short-range, nuclear-capable missile with a range of 350 kilometres on December 22. The army twice fired the surface-to-surface missile, Prithvi II, from Chandipur in the eastern state of Orissa, said SP Dash, a senior official. He told the associated press that the test was successful. Dash said that the missile, which mainly would target military installations, can carry a warhead weighing up to 1,100 pounds (500 kilogrammes). The Indian launch came a day after Pakistan successfully test-fired a medium-range, nuclear-capable missile.

[Daily Times – December 23, 2010]

## Political Issues of Bangladesh

### Bangladesh Paralyzed by Opposition Strike

Bangladeshi police fired tear gas at protesters near the capital Dhaka on November 30 as a nationwide strike called by the main opposition party brought much of the country to a standstill. Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) activists attacked police as the strike shut schools, shops and brought crucial garment export shipments to a halt. Port secretary Farhad Uddin said that the nationwide strike halted garment exports, which account for over 80 percent of Bangladesh's total exports, with no trucks arriving at the port city of Chittagong on November

30. Thousands of riot police were deployed Dhaka, with some sealing off the BNP headquarters to prevent party leaders from joining the protests. The BNP is protesting against the eviction of its leader and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia from her home two weeks ago, in a move they say was politically motivated. On November 13, police entered Zia's house in Dhaka, forcing the 65-year-old widow of former military dictator Ziaur Rahman to flee. Zia had lived in the home for nearly 40 years, but a string of court orders, culminating in a Supreme Court verdict on Monday, ruled her possession of the state-owned property was illegal.

[Daily Times – December 01, 2010]

## Political Scenario in Myanmar

### Junta Chief Hails Elections on Myanmar National Day

Myanmar's ruling strongman said on December 02 that the country's recent elections – condemned by the international community as rigged – were free and fair and a step toward handing power to the people. According to the state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper, Than Shwe said that the successful completion of "free and fair elections" left just two steps to complete in the junta's self-styled 'roadmap to democracy:' convening Parliament and building a modern developed democratic nation with a Head of State elected by Parliament. Government opponents and outside observers were critical of the November 07 polls, saying they were held under unfair conditions and that the results were manipulated to allow the military-backed party to win.

[Daily Times – December 02, 2010]

### Myanmar Junta Accuses Suu Kyi of Cheap Stunt

Myanmar's military rulers on December 08 dismissed plans by pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi to revive an agreement to give autonomy to ethnic groups as a 'cheap political stunt' that threatened peace. Commentaries carried by state newspapers did not refer to the recently released Suu Kyi by name, but they said a move to strike a deal with armed ethnic groups without the military's involvement was unconstitutional and suggested those behind it should not have boycotted the political process. **A commentary entitled "Don't rock the boat" carried in the New Light of Myanmar, one of the junta's mouthpieces, said Myanmar's political situation was "very sensitive and delicate" and if there was any attempt to pursue a new agreement "the whole boat will break into pieces and sink completely".** It said that if one really wants to engage in politics in order to serve the state's interest, one should act simply, legally and honestly within the framework of the constitution. Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party – which has been formally disbanded by the junta – have pledged to work towards a "second Pinlong Agreement", with the backing of ethnic groups that have long been in conflict with the regime. The Pinlong Agreement was drafted in 1947 and backed by Suu Kyi's late father, General Aung San, who was instrumental in securing the former Burma's independence from Britain a year later. It prescribed regional autonomy for three ethnic groups within a federal republic. The agreement was never put into effect. The NLD and most ethnic political organizations refused to take part in a November 07 election and are regarded as "unlawful associations" by the government. The election was won by a landslide by an army-backed party. Many analysts say the regime is unlikely to make peace with the armed ethnic groups and expect the army to launch a series of offensives to try to take full control of the country for the first time in its five-decade rule. Such a scenario would trouble neighbors Thailand and China, Myanmar's biggest investors and key political allies, which face a deluge of refugees and disruption to border trade if fighting breaks out.

[Daily Times – December 09, 2010]