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Gender & Women's Empowerment

Women & Politics

Demand for 50 percent Women Participation in Assemblies

Demanding 50 percent women representation in the assemblies and other decision-making bodies of political parties and official committees, participants of a policy dialogue on women's participation in politics under the Political Parties Act, 2002 and the local government system on July 27 called for reforms in the electoral process and political parties. The dialogue was organised by the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) as part of its exercise in all provinces ahead of a national conference for formulation of final recommendations. NCSW Chairperson Anis Haroon, who presided over the dialogue, expressed the view that a strong parliament and an independent election commission were key to achieving that objective as it would also ensure an effective role of women in decision-making at all levels. She said that registration of women under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) had made data of a huge number of women available to political parties, which should use this opportunity to register them as voters and work for their empowerment. Participants, including representatives of various political parties, complained that they were not fairly treated by the country's male-dominated system and were not being made part of the decision-making bodies of their respective parties. It was noted that former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had instilled lot of confidence among women through her courageous struggle for democracy but after her assassination they felt having been neglected and sidelined. It was stressed that the election commission should not allow political parties not holding party elections to take part in national provincial and local elections. The idea of double constituency was also mooted out.

Participants agreed to a set of recommendations to enhance women participation and empowerment in governance and society. Some of them are as follows:

- It is noted that patriarchal values and customary practices still prohibit or ignore registration of women as voters. It is, therefore, recommended that registration of at least 50 per cent women as voters should be made obligatory for election in any constituency; the responsibility may be put on Nadra officials and major political parties.
- Women voters may have different incentives to cast their ballot and hence different choice of political parties and candidates which, however, go unnoticed as their votes are not counted and displayed separately in the final results. It is strongly recommended that the women's votes be counted and displayed separately in the final elections results.
- For the seats reserved for women, it is recommended that the Election Commission of Pakistan should make it mandatory for each political party to prepare and implement a separate code and conduct for their women wings and for selection of women candidate in the general elections. Such a system is supposed to promote active women in politics on the principle of equal opportunities.
- It is also recommended that political parties must ensure that their women members are consulted on party issues such as preparing and amending party manifestoes, issuing their policy on important national issues and bills meant for legislation.
- Women parliamentarians on reserved seats, or those lacking constituencies, are discriminated upon in terms of development funds. The government should ensure that women parliamentarians get their due development funds. Most of development fund at the disposal of women legislators elected on reserved seats is taken away by the party and used in other areas. These legislators are simply told to follow the party line as they don't represent any constituency.
- It is recommended that the government should evaluate and implement a system of direct elections on the reserved seats to provide women legislators more political legitimacy.
- Various amendments to the existing laws on the reserved seats for women from Fata and federal capital territory are needed. It is suggested that a law should be framed to make it mandatory for Fata representatives to elect female candidates on reserved seats. In this context, it is recommended that the government should insert clear guidelines in the electoral laws and the Political Parties Act against inking of any agreement by a 'jirga' or 'panchayat' to restrict women from voting and contesting elections.
- The election commission should ensure that women are free to cast vote, contest elections and run the election campaign; if otherwise, the election in such constituencies should be postponed and results, if out, be declared null and void.

- The voter registration should be linked with Nadra registration.
- Despite having a huge administrative and management set-up, the government has an almost negligible number of women employees. It is recommended that the government and the election commission should recruit more women.
- It is also recommended that more women legislators should be inducted in the ministries, standing committees and other parliamentary committees and decision-making bodies of elected houses.

During the course of the discussion, it was observed that political parties are reluctant to support quota of general seats for women as the parties' main concern is acquiring money and power which is more easily achievable in case of a male candidate. There is a realisation to some extent that women are ignored in the decision-making process. Women political workers who are part of the political struggle are generally ignored at the time of awarding party tickets. The current system of reserved seats is not suitable for women political workers who work genuinely as only those women mostly get party tickets who enjoy contacts and links with the top party leadership. It was also proposed that a speaker or a deputy speaker in all legislatures should be a woman and there should be a 33 per cent quota for women in political parties' elected committees.

[Dawn – July 28, 2010]

Gender Equality Needed in Politics Too

A national discourse organised by the South Asia Partnership (SAP) underscored the need to ensure gender equality in politics. Legislators, lawyers, NGO workers and other socio-political activists attended the two-day event which concluded at a local hotel. SAP International Executive Director Rohit Kumar from Nepal also attended the conference. The event was divided into topics of discussion with special focus on the challenges the women politicians face. The speakers also came up with recommendations to tackle gender inequality.

The MNAs and MPAs from all over the country, though from rival parties, were unanimous that "it's not easy being a woman in politics". The women face problems like discrimination and unfavourable attitude towards them upon entering politics, mistrust and a lack of public confidence. They also face minimal opportunities, a lack of support even from their families and (additional) burden of domestic responsibilities. Many women complained about the concept of women wings and reserved seats. "Bacha Khan had always propagated that women should be educated and that they should be ready to fight in any field along with men," said Awami National Party MPA Shagufta Malik, who belongs to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The concept of women wings means that women ought to be separated and that points out to their image of being weaker than men. Raheela Durrani, a PML-Q legislator from Balochistan, said giving women reserved seats was not an 'honourable' way. "Why can't they have their own constituency?" This made others at the discourse to point out that women were given a seat after contesting the election and they were denied funds required for the whole of a constituency. Rabbiya Bajwa, a lawyer, said changes were required at the grassroots level to end discrimination. "Schools syllabi need to be reviewed and society itself has to be politicised to know what is happening. Women need to be given political training and student unions need to be allowed to flourish so that young blood could come up in political spheres." The speakers demanded that the qualification criterion should be done away with because "it's unfair". Amna Buttar, a PPP MNA, said there should be reserved seats until more women join politics. "At least for the time being the South Asian criteria of 33 per cent of women representatives in the assemblies should be met." The argument was opposed by many. Some participants demanded constitutional reforms and asked why a woman couldn't be Head of the State.

[Dawn – July 21, 2010]

Pakistani Woman Appointed in Canadian Senate

Given the opportunity to grow and excel, Pakistanis are doing well around the globe and in this connection, Salma Ataullahjan has been appointed to the Senate of Canada. Announcing the appointment of Salma Ataullahjan to the Senate, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper said, "I am pleased to announce the appointment of Salma Ataullahjan to the Senate of Canada. A Professional, artist, parent and strong activist for the South Asian community in the Greater Toronto Area, Salma Ataullahjan brings a remarkable dedication and energy to her new role as a Senator for the Province of Ontario. In addition to coming from a family of political activists, Ms. Ataullahjan's political and social activism here in Canada has earned her a reputation of one who both stands against violence and stands for peaceful dialogue and consensus building. As our Government continues working to promote safety and security both at home and abroad, I welcome the addition of Ms. Ataullahjan's skills and experience to the Senate of Canada and look forward to working with her in the months and years ahead." says a press release issued by the Canadian High Commission.

Salma Ataullahjan immigrated to Canada from Pakistan 31 years ago, becoming a Canadian citizen in 1989. After settling in Toronto, she pursued a career in real estate, a profession in which she has worked for the last 21 years. Born into a family with a long-standing history of political activism, Ms. Ataullahjan has spent many years actively involved in the social and political affairs of her community. A natural consensus builder, Ms. Ataullahjan has served many organizations including: on the executive of the Pakistani Canadian Professionals and Academics; as Founder and Chairperson of the Parent Council of David Lewis Public School; as a member of the South Asian Regional Council; as a former President and current Vice-President of the Canadian Pashtun Cultural Association; and on the executive of the Toronto chapter of the Citizens Foundation, a charity organization that builds not-for-profit schools in the poorest districts of Pakistan. Ms. Ataullahjan is an accomplished artist and paints watercolours in her spare time. She and her husband Saleem have been married for 31 years and have two daughters, Anushka and Shaanzeh.

[The News – July 23, 2010]

Projects on Gender

GRAP told to get Packing

The Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP), landmark project of the Ministry of Women Development (MoWD) aimed at following the agenda of gender reforms, ends up in a dramatic way as ministry officials entered the GRAP office at Agha Khan Road, on June 30 asking the staff to vacate the office. The GRAP officials protested against the way they were asked to leave. They said that the letter issued by the Minister In-Charge of MoWD, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, announcing the closure of the project, was sent to the GRAP office only half an hour before the officials from MoWD arrived. The letter mentioned that the Prime Minister is pleased to announce the closure of the project w.e.f. 30-6-2010. The staff were told that as their contracts have been finished on June 30 and no new contracts will be issued as the Prime Minister has taken the decision to close the project hence they should pack up. "It is against the law as the project manual of the government clearly mentions that before closing, the project will be given a prior notice of six months," said Ex-Project Director GRAP Rehana Hashmi. She said that they did not have the idea that the project will be closed this way. "The Parliament approved the budget for the project for financial year 2010-11 and we were expecting that the project will continue," Rehana added. Interestingly, in many ministries the Gender Development Section established under GRAP is still functioning. "We have received no notice in this regard. We were under the impression that the project will continue as the government has allocated budget for the project for next financial year," said one such staff worker.

On the other hand, the MoWD officials said that the GRAP officials had the clear idea that the project was coming to its end as per the recommendations of three review committees. "All review committees had strong reservations on the over ambitious PC-1 of the project and the overall performance of GRAP. The project failed to deliver to a great extent. Every committee recommended that GRAP should be institutionalised and be made part of the ministry," said MoWD Secretary Batool Iqbal. She said that the Ministry is not bind to send six-month notice to the project team. "It is not mentioned in the PC-1." She said that the GRAP office was taken over by the development wing of the ministry under its Director General Development Taimor Khan and he has taken over the charge of reform agenda for now. She said that the GRAP evolved from a donor support project in 2002 and became a 100 per cent public Sector Development Plan (PSDP) project of the GoP in 2005 through PC-1. "It had a project life of three years concluding in June 2008, however, it was given two extensions and has now come to a close on June 30." She pointed out that policies and reforms agenda needs long-term vision and commitment from the state. "Gender Reforms is a multi-dimensional agenda of the GoP which started as a project and has now been institutionalised. It is quite clear that policy reforms cannot be done through a short-term project. It needs long-term strategic policy planning to spear head the processes of change in the society." She said that the MoWD will realign its current set-up with gender reform agenda focus and will be integrated within the administrative structures of MoWD. Approved in the CDWP meeting on July 20, 2005 after thorough consultation with all stakeholders including civil society, relevant government departments, Parliamentarians, activists, researchers and activists, the project was the largest on the portfolio of the MoWD. The overall aim of the project was to promote women's access to economic, political and social empowerment at national, provincial and district level.

The Phase-I of the project was approved on July 20, 2005, for a period of three years. The PC-1 was approved by Planning and Development Division on November 19, 2005 with total approved cost of Phase-I Rs418.5 million and Phase-II Rs201.063. This year the government allocated Rs20.578 million for the project.

Recently, a third party evaluation of GRAP was conducted by JICA which recommended to develop GRAP as a policy framework for the women empowerment and suggested that the project should be re-strategise and

developed as a policy framework. The committee also recommended that once GRAP is developed as a policy framework, it must be integrated into MoWD. Interestingly, the committee also demanded that the MoWD should also undergo restructuring and GRAP should be converted into a foreign aided project, a recommendation that received severe criticism from the civil society. To further evaluate the recommendations from third party evaluation, the Prime Minister formed a committee that also recommended restructuring and institutionalising the project. "On the basis of these reviews and recommendations, the decision to close the project was taken," said the MoWD secretary. It shall be noted here that the decision will leave a staff of around 70 trained people unemployed. On listening to the rumours that the project will be closed, the staff members started contacting 'The News' expressing their anxiety. "Why to close or dismiss the trained team when the ministry plans to continue the project in future," they asked. "It will discontinue the whole process," said another while alleging that the ministry is actually closing the project in the name of institutionalisation. She said that all mega projects of the ministry meet the same fate and are closed before creating any impact. "It is not easy to start the same process all over again," she added while requesting to hide her identity. She said that in start, the ministry has trouble in running the project due to its vast mandate. "Soon after it caught a little momentum, it was closed," she pointed out.

The decision also sparked sharp criticism by the civil society as on many forums, they said that the government consults them when it is planning to launch a project but the same civil society organisations are ignored when the government decides to close the same project. The civil society members also protest against the recommendation by the committee that said that the GRAP should be converted into a foreign aided project. "It was principally agreed at the time of the launch of project that the project will be run by the government of Pakistan and no foreign aid will be utilised for the implementation of gender reform agenda," said women right activist and Acting Chief Operating Officer of Aurat Foundation Naeem Mirza at a seminar titled 'National Gender Reform Agenda: State Responsiveness and Accountability on June 9. He said that GRAP was evolved through long consultative process with all stakeholders, but the government is planning to bring in big changes on the recommendation of few consultants.

Differing from the stance of civil society members, Batool said that civil society was part of the review committee that recommended institutionalisation of the project. She said that Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani has approved 20 new posts for the ministry and soon the posts will be advertised. "The old staff members are free to apply on these posts and they will have high probability to get selected by the Federal Public Services Commission (FPSC) due to their past experience," she added. "Having gone through three to five years of experience of working in gender project of government of Pakistan, these employees are now eligible to apply on all kind of gender related jobs," said the secretary. She explained that the gender reform agenda will run by government in future as well and no donor money will be utilised for this purpose. She further said that PC 1 of the GRAP would also be reviewed.

[The News – July 3, 2010]

Closure of Gender Reforms Action Plan Condemned

The sub-committee of the Senate Standing Committee on Women Development unanimously condemned the closure of the Gender Reforms Action Plan (GRAP), which was the only project being funded by the government of Pakistan for bringing about gender reforms in the country. The sub-committee met at the Ministry of Women Development on July 2. It strongly objected to the fact that the Senate Standing Committee on Women Development was not invited at the decision-making level regarding GRAP, adding that the ministry did not take the committee into confidence over the issue despite the sub-committee asking the ministry not to wrap up the project. The Ministry of Women Development secretary, however, said that GRAP was not delivering, but the committee objected to the explanation and criticised the ministry's non-compliance over the matter.

The sub-committee's convener, Nilofar Bakhtiar, strongly protested against the minimum-level of importance being given to issues related to women by the bureaucracy. Nilofar took a strong exception to the fact that the Election Commission of Pakistan had turned down the standing committee's request for holding the sub-committee's meeting at the ECP office, saying committee members had wished to hold the meeting at the ECP because the agenda focused on electoral reforms for women, who represented 50 percent of the population. The committee unanimously decided to hold the next meeting at the ECP office. The members recommended that during future meetings on electoral reforms for women, the ECP must include members of the Senate's committee and sub-committee on women development. The members also criticised the exclusion of female parliamentarians in the Constitutional Reforms Committee. Awami National Party Secretary General Hasham Babar recommended that as two million people in FATA had been deprived of their right to vote, therefore, the Political Parties' Act must be immediately extended to the Tribal Areas. He said the people in FATA had no access to high courts due to which the Tribal Areas had turned into a "black hole". The sub-committee recommended that the Ministry of Women

Development must ensure the registration of newborns across the country. The sub-committee also directed the Ministry of Women Development to fortify and strengthen the networking of women belong to various political parties, to provide a platform of strength for women across the country. In this regard, women wings of all political parties have been directed to hold meeting and chalk out a future strategy for issues related to women, especially electoral reforms.

[Daily Times – July 3, 2010]

UN Creates New Body on Women, Gender Equality

After years of difficult negotiations, the UN General Assembly voted on July 2 to set up a body that will seek to improve the situation of women and girls around the world. The new body will be known officially as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, although officials say it will be referred to as UN Women (www.unwomen.org). It will consolidate four separate U.N. divisions now dealing with women's and gender issues. UN Women will significantly boost U.N. efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunity, and tackle discrimination around the globe," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement. UN diplomats said four years of negotiations between Western developed nations and developing countries, many of them states where women are often discriminated against, had been tough because of varying views on women's rights and gender equality. A new post of under-secretary-general will created to head U.N. Women, with diplomats saying privately that former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet is one of the top candidates. Ban said he was inviting suggestions for candidates from member states and non-governmental organizations. UN Women will focus on supporting inter-government bodies like the Commission on the Status of Women and ensuring that all United Nations agencies and organizations live up to their commitments to gender equality, the U.N. said in a statement. UN Women will become operational on January 1, 2011.

[Reuters – July 2, 2010]

Women & Laws

Harassment of Women Employees: 40 Ministries, Departments Made Safer Workplaces

Forty ministries and departments working under the federal government have complied with the anti-sexual harassment act and incorporated the code of conduct into their policies. This information was shared at a press conference on July 5 after the first meeting of the 'Implementation Watch Committee' of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). The purpose of this committee is to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the recently passed legislation against sexual harassment of women. The 24-member committee includes representatives from relevant government organisations, private sector, media professionals and members of the civil society. Parliament passed the Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 in February. The act requires every institution, public or private, to form an inquiry committee to receive complaints against sexual harassment and institute a code of conduct prescribed by the law as a part of its human resource policies. On the occasion, the committee's chairperson Dr Fauzia Saeed reported the progress made so far in the implementation process. Dr Saeed said adoption of the code by the ministries and departments was an example for others to have it as part of their policies. She was certain that during the next few months a considerable number of organisations would have sound mechanism for addressing grievances about sexual harassment. "In our first meeting we have set our targets and members have been assigned the tasks of monitoring the implementation process in both public and private organisations", the committee chairperson said. "We will ensure that all the organisations that have adopted the code shall display it on prominent place, hold awareness sessions and constitute a three-member committee to settle the cases of harassment, one of which has to be a female."

The committee has decided to hold quarterly meetings, besides arranging training programmes for the committee members. Replying to a question, Dr Saeed said the case for appointment of an ombudsman was with the Ministry of Women Development. Former Citizen Police chairman Jamil Yousaf, who is one of committee members, said the number of women working in private organisations was very high, and protecting them by adopting this legislation was in the benefit of these organisations. According to him, the first case that came before the committee was of a company's chief executive officer. "We had to involve the FIA (Federal Investigation Agency) in the case and it took us two months to settle the issue." Women's Organisation for Rights and Development director Aqsa Khan said "through this law a positive approach would flourish as far as resolution of such cases is concerned. Previously, the only solution in place was to sack the victim."

[Dawn – July 6, 2010]

Women & Economics

Women Entrepreneurs Assured Support

Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that Pakistan embassies in foreign countries would be asked to facilitate women entrepreneurs in projecting Pakistani products. A woman entrepreneur had sought FM's help for holding exhibitions of Pakistani products of female entrepreneurs on the embassies' premises pleading it will not only cut their cost of doing business but also provide a secure atmosphere for exhibition in a foreign country. At a meeting with industrialist at Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Foreign Minister appreciated the idea and asked the women chamber of commerce and industry South Punjab to send the request in black and white.

[The News – July 5, 2010]

HR Watch

Violence against Women

Violence against Women in KP

As many as 342 incidents of violence against women were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) from January to June this year. Out of these incidents, the highest number of cases occurred in Peshawar, the provincial capital, followed by Mardan, Nowshera, Swabi, Kohat, Mansehra, Malakand, Charsadda and Dera Ismail Khan, said a report released by Aurat Foundation (AF), a non-government organisation. According to the Aurat Foundation report, 257 cases were registered while 43 remained unregistered and there was no information on the first information report (FIR) in the remaining 42 cases.

The biannual report revealed there were 37 kidnapping cases, 161 murder, 54 domestic violence, 30 suicide, 11 honour killing, 4 rape/gang rape, one acid throwing, one sexual harassment and 43 miscellaneous cases of violence against women. The number of married victims and survivors stood at 211, unmarried at 112 and there was no information on 59 victims and survivors whether they were married or single. The report said 59 victims/survivors were under 18 while the age of 48 victims/survivors ranged from 19 to 36 years and 15 victims/survivors were 37 and above. The information about the age of 260 victims/survivors could not be ascertained. According to the report, 222 cases took place in rural and 120 in urban areas. The motives behind violence included family, property and petty disputes, illicit relations, refusal to accept marriage proposal, choice and forced marriages, old enmity and various unknown reasons. The names of weapons used in these cases are pistol, axe, knife, poisonous medicine, kerosene oil, strangulation, suffocation, beating and acid. The information on 296 cases was obtained from the media, 19 from Women Crisis Centre (Federal) and 27 from Mera Ghar (Noor Education Trust). Some cases were reported in Khyber and Bajaur agencies. The biannual report said no cases had been reported from Batagram district and five tribal agencies - Mohmand, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, Kurram and Orakzai. Shabina Ayaz, Aurat Foundation Peshawar Resident Director, said at the report launch ceremony that the Aurat Foundation wanted to send a message to the people through the media about the violence against women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the FATA. "342 is a huge number. Our province has more murder cases than others in the country," she said. Shabina said 14 more cases had been registered with the police this year as compared to the last year. However, she added, the registration of FIRs was not satisfactory.

[Daily Times – July 9, 2010]

Violence against Women in Punjab

According to a report by Aurat Foundation, violence against women has increased by 11 percent in Punjab during the first six months of the calendar year compared with the corresponding period last year. Aurat Foundation's Violence against Women Watch Group member ex-MPA Misbah Kokab said that no concrete steps had been taken to stop violation of women's fundamental rights to life, security and freedom to make independent choices in private and public arenas. Aurat Foundation released its first bi-annual report on violence against women. Joint Action Committee convener Shahtaj Qizilbash, human rights activist Abdulah Malik, Nabeela Shaheen and Abid Ali were also present on the occasion. The former MPA said the foundation had compiled the report in collaboration with Violence Against Women Watch Group titled "Situation of violence against women in Punjab" under its programme and data monitoring (on violence against women). The report highlighted first 12 districts in which violence against women was the highest. It said Lahore with 458 violations was observed the most aggressive city against women, followed by Faisalabad 393, Sargodha 161, Sheikhpura 157, Rawalpindi 139, Okara 134, Kasur 116, Sialkot 114, Sahiwal 88, Gujranwala 87, Jhang 76 and Multan with reported cases of 71. According to the report, there were 2,690 reported cases of violence against women in which 2,909 women and girls had been victimised. As many as 158 men and children were also victimised and a total of 3,066 people had been victimised in 36 districts of Punjab from Jan 1, 2010 to June 30. Geographically and FIR status-wise, the report said there were 1,141 cases reported in urban localities and 1,546 in rural areas. FIR status-wise, 2,353 cases were filed with respective police stations out of 2690 cases while 96 were not registered and 241 cases had no information about registration. According to marital status, of 3,066 victims, 1,535 were unmarried and 1,217 married. Similarly 48 were widows, 39 divorcees and 227 had no information about their marital status. Similarly age-wise, 467 of the victims were under 18 years of age and 185 females in the age group of 19-36.

[Dawn – July 30, 2010]

Seminar on Honour Killing: Changing Mindset Government's Responsibility

Speakers shed light on various causes of honour killings and suggested ways to tackle the issue at a seminar on 'Prevention of Honour Killings in Sindh', organised by the Sindh police. Sindh Home Minister Dr Zulfikar Mirza was the chief guest. Additional IGP Saud Ahmed, the first speaker, said the Sindh police was aware of its social responsibilities and taking many steps to grapple with issues like honour killing, arranging seminars and discussions was one of the many steps. DIG East Abdul Khaliq Shaikh, the director of the 'Prevention of Karo-Kari Project' sponsored by the UNDP, gave details of the project and said one of the traits of a civilised society was how its vulnerable sections were treated. He said though honour killings took place in all parts of the country, it was Sindh from where most cases were reported, so it was decided that the project be launched primarily in four districts of the province namely Sukkur, Ghotki, Naushehro Feroz and Khairpur. However, the project was not Sindh-specific, he clarified. He talked at length about how the police department was sensitised to make the one-year project a success. Prof Mohammad Wasim Akmal traced the history of honour killings. He blamed the Objectives Resolution (1949) for not letting Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah's dream of a welfare state come true, arguing wherever there was 'malookiat', women were 'commodified'. He said honour killings were not something that existed in Pakistan alone, but were there in every part of the world where there's involvement of religion in matters of the state. MPA Humaira Alwani informed the audience that in 2009, 16,000 women were killed for different reasons and there were 1,980 cases of kidnapping. She said that to her, honour killing was like targeted killing because it's a well-thought-out act of murder and later on the killer sought relief citing different flimsy excuses. She observed that in 99 per cent of such cases, honour wasn't the main reason. "It's because women resist against being the property of men... women want to lead their lives the way they want and this becomes the reason for their killing." Ms Alwani said some of the laws had flaws in them. She touched upon the qisas and diyat law, and said out-of-court settlements made the victim's case meaningless. Qisas and diyat shouldn't apply to karo-kari cases, she suggested.

The MPA said murder in the name of honour should be considered an act of terrorism and there must be zero tolerance for the culprit. She said jirga was a parallel judicial system where the fate of innocent young girls was decided. It should be banned. Sindh Police IG Babar Khattak initiated his talk by suggesting that the audience consider three points: (1) integrity of law — whether it's implemented in letter and spirit; (2) writ of law — if law could be enforced; (3) is society ready to accept the law? He said the purpose of the project was to have society on board. He said we needed to take the message to those who didn't subscribe to the idea that honour killing was not right. Sindh Home Minister Dr Zulfiqar Mirza started off by acknowledging the speeches delivered before him saying listening to them was education for him. He said problems such as honour killings emerged at places where male-domination was a norm. He turned down the notion of honour (ghairat), and said it was the 'exploiters' who provoked people into committing such crimes. He claimed these things spread like cancer in Sindh during Gen Ziaul Haq's dictatorship. He agreed with one of the speakers, Shahab Utso, that it was the state's duty to change the mindset (tribal, feudal and macho) of men. He told the audience that in Gen Zia's time, laws were made because of which relatives of the victim and the culprit easily made compromises making it difficult for the police to register the FIR. He said Sufi poet Shah Latif through his verses touched on virtually all aspects of life but no one could find anything on karo-kari in his poetry which proved that the issue was not an old one. He said that a woman MPA was making an unnecessary fuss over the recent murder of Kainat Soomro's brother without knowing its details. He said there were people who did politics by exploiting the dead. The Home Minister vowed to take action against those who held jirgas..

[Dawn – July 9, 2010]

Child Rights

KP Govt Introduces Child Protection Ordinance

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has introduced an ordinance promising stringent punishments to protect child rights, offering death sentence to the offence of selling child's organs, and banning marriage below 18 years of age. "We have come up with a law to protect our children against all sorts of abuse; doing so we are protecting our future," Minister for Information Mian Iftikhar Hussain called to highlight salient features of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Ordinance 2010 promulgated on June 9. The Minister, also flanked by Minister for Law Arshad Abdullah and Minister for Social Welfare Sitara Imran, said that the government had sent the draft bill of the ordinance to the provincial assembly for making it an act. Section 40 of the law declares illegal the business in organs of child while Section 41 lays down the punishment of death or life imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 1 million for it. Mian Iftikhar said marriage under 18 years of age would be illegal and this decision was taken to prevent couples from experiencing early age marriage-related medical and other problems. "Section 30 of the ordinance provides for protection of children against child marriages," he explained, adding that this law does

not clash with Shariah as Islamic system allows steps for welfare of children. Under the ordinance, corporal punishment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been abolished, Minister for Law Arshad Abdullah informed the media-people. Violators will be imprisoned up to three years, the minister added. Minister for Social Welfare Sitara Imran said the ordinance guarantees full protection of child rights. "We have taken all stakeholders onboard in consultation process before promulgating the ordinance," she elaborated hoping the ordinance will play its role in safeguarding the children's rights in the province.

[Daily Times – July 16, 2010]

1,300 Juveniles in Jails: Report

Pakistani jails hold at least 1,300 juvenile prisoners and an up to 10,000 children are facing criminal litigation and appearing in courts. These statistics come from a report launched by the Society for Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) on the 10th anniversary of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (JJSO).

According to the report, there were 1,357 juvenile prisoners in jails in December 2009, and the number dropped to 1,300 by the end June. Speaking at the report launch, National Manager Juvenile Justice Abdullah Khoso said the noticeable decline in the number of juvenile prisoners was an achievement of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, which was promulgated in 2000 when the figure was anything over 5,000. "SPARC commemorates 10 years of the JJSO in the hope that this figure will further decline and there will come a time when children will not be detained in cells, at least not for petty crimes," Khoso noted. Despite this small victory, the JJSO has failed the children who come in conflict with the law in many ways. The JJSO saw many upheavals but the jolt came when it was struck down by the Lahore High Court on December 6, 2004. SPARC and the then attorney general filed a petition contesting the LHC's action. The Supreme Court has temporarily restored its status, yet it has not received any support from the implementing agencies, he added. Over the decade, Khoso said police had tortured the juvenile offenders at police stations, judicial officers gave physical remand of juveniles to the police, and juveniles were awarded rigorous imprisonment and detained along with adults in police lockups and jails and were tried by the anti-terrorism courts. Similarly, the government has not notified the JJSO rules in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and as such Frontier Crimes Regulation 1901 is haunting children as young as three years. He said provinces had failed to strengthen reclamation and probation departments, which would help release children on probation and save them from being jailed.

[Dawn – July 2, 2010]

Swat Protection Centres Beacon of Hope for Affected Children

Dozens of child protection centres in around 60 union councils of Swat district have become a "Beacon of Hope" for thousands of traumatised children, orphans and out-of-school boys and girls. The children in Swat were the ones suffering the most during the three years of militancy in the valley, and following the Taliban's ouster from the area, the emergence of such centres was badly needed to provide counselling, psychiatric treatment and informal education to the affected children. "This centre is very good for our children, where they are regaining confidence," a widow, Iqbal Begum, told outside Bara Baidara union council child protection centre. She believes her children would have gone stray had the centre not been opened in her village. Around 90 centres are operational in 60 union councils of Swat since October last year, however, such centres have not been opened in the remaining 65 union councils due to a lack of security clearance from the military. A year has passed since the conflict ended in June last year, however, its affects still haunt the children. Psychologist Afsheen said the children were still suffering from the "Taliban-linked terror" and they "believe they can come back", as the children were made to believe that the Taliban "are very strong". The psychologist said ridding children's minds of fear "takes a long time". But she said recovery was taking place and some children told that "we now believe that the Taliban cannot come back because the army is here". "The Taliban fear has somehow gone away and we no longer fear them. They will not come back now because the army is guarding us," 10-year-old Asadullah said. In these rehabilitation centres, children aged between 2 to 18 years are provided formal as well as religious education. "It was a pleasant change when my nephew said salam for the first time. He was taught this at the centre," shopkeeper Shakirullah said of the positive utility of the centre in Bara Durushkhela village.

Muhammad Umar, District Coordinator of the Aurat Foundation in Swat, said the centres were "producing good results" as far the rehabilitation of the affected children was concerned. However, Umar pointed to the lack of qualified psychologists in the district. The centres were initially set up for five months, but their operations have now been extended for the next 10 months. Their funding will now end in December, and the Aurat Foundation hopes these centres will continue to serve the children in Swat even after the deadline. The army launched the military offensive in Swat in April last year after the Taliban violated a peace deal – that confined the imposition of their brand of Islam to Swat – by entering the neighbouring Buner district.

[Daily Times – July 5, 2010]

Call for Legislation to Protect Child Rights

Speakers at a national consultation on July 22 voiced concern over the future of child rights after the passage of 18th Constitutional Amendment and called for effective legislation and steps for protection of children's rights. They were speaking at the "National Consultation on Child Rights in Pakistan: Impact and Implications of 18th Constitutional Amendment" organised by Society for Protection of Rights of the Child (SPARC) in collaboration with Save the Children (Sweden) and attended by the people from all walks of life, says a press release.

The event had been organised with a focus on discussing the impact and possible implications for child rights in the country and to come out with a clear solution to the problem. Federal Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education Samina Khalid Ghurki was the chief guest. The speakers pointed out that the deletion of the concurrent list had caused confusion particularly with reference to the legislative competency of the parliament and existence of coordination mechanism at national level on the subject of children in future that had made the future of various laws, bills and policies concerning children uncertain. An expert of child rights issue Iqbal Ahmed Detho said the 18th Amendment passed by the Parliament in April had been receiving praise from many. However, at the same time, he maintained that there was a debate within the relevant ministries, departments and amongst other stakeholders on the future status of child rights. A legal expert Barrister Ahmer Bilal Sufi showed his concern over the transfer of treaties legislation to provincial level. He said with no role stipulated for the federal government to set policy vision and direction, how would the state provide uniformity and apply minimum standards? Chairperson Human Rights Steering Committee Rubina Qaimkhani admitted that the children were being badly neglected and needed protection. She said the government was taking responsibility to provide the children a safe and healthy environment. She said the steering committee was also planning to organise a national event for children. Federal Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education Samina Khalid Gurki said the government was committed to resolving the issues being faced by the children and was working on several fronts for developing proper mechanism in this regard. Arshad Mahmood, the executive director Sparc, in his opening remarks, said that Article 25(3) of the Constitution recognised special right of protection for children due to their vulnerability. Pakistan, he said, ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on November 12, 1990 that provided broader outlines for the promotion and protection of child rights. He said that the UNCRC had made it obligatory on the states to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Convention. Child Rights Legal Centre Executive Director Qindeel Shujaat said the employees of federal departments and divisions had no clarity as how things would functions post June-2011 (the deadline set for the complete implementation of the 18th Amendment) and had virtually stopped functioning. "Evolve a mechanism for implementing and monitoring international treaties and coordinating system without which ratification process will also be difficult," he added. He was of the view that some room must be given to federal government on critical issues to play their role for setting policy direction and minimum standards with legal cover review, revise and notify new rules of business for federal and provincial department.

[Dawn – July 23, 2010]

Minorities Rights

Two Christians Shot Dead in Faisalabad

Section 144 was imposed in Faisalabad following severe clashes between rival groups in Waris Pura area. The clashes came as a result of the killing of two Christian brothers accused of writing a blasphemous pamphlet critical of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) outside a court in Faisalabad. Two people were reported to be injured as a result of the firing. Police used Armored Personal Carrier vehicles to control the situation and resorted to aerial shelling to disperse the people. An unidentified youth shot dead pastor Rashid Emmanuel, 32, and his brother Sajjad, and left their police escort critically wounded, as they left a court hearing, police official Amanullah Khan.

In another development, Regional Police Officer Aftab Cheema and Commissioner Tahir Hussain have held a meeting with Bishop Joseph Cots. Both expressed their grief over the killing of two Christian brothers. They also assured the Bishop of arresting the culprits soon. The brothers were arrested on July 2, with their supporters claiming the charges against them were trumped up. James Aftab, a senior church official in Faisalabad said the men had been "implicated in a fake case" while Atif Jamil Pagaan, a spokesman for Pakistan Minorities Democratic Foundation, also said the men had been set up.

[The Express Tribune – July 20, 2010]

LHC Orders Judicial Inquiry into Christians' Murder

Lahore High Court Chief Justice Khwaja Mohammad Sharif ordered on July 20 a judicial inquiry into the murder of two Christian brothers on the premises of the Faisalabad district courts. The brothers who faced blasphemy

charges were being taken out of the court by policemen when they were gunned down on July 19. The chief justice issued the order at the request of the Punjab government. Faisalabad Labour Court District and Sessions Judge Sheikh Mohammad Yousaf was appointed to conduct the inquiry. Faisalabad Regional Police Officer (RPO) Aftab Ahmad Cheema submitted a report during the suo motu hearing of the incident by the chief justice. He admitted that the incident had taken place because of negligence and inefficiency of police officers who had been asked to make stringent security arrangements. He said Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Ashique Ali and the inspector in charge of investigation, Mohammad Hussain, had been transferred and criminal and departmental actions were being initiated against them for ignoring the directives about providing protection to the accused. The RPO said police had got a lead and the killers would be apprehended soon. The Chief Justice said it was unfortunate that because of police negligence people were taking the law into their own hands and not waiting for the results of cases pending in courts. The suo motu case was disposed of. Rashid Emanuel and Sajid Emanuel, accused of writing a blasphemous pamphlet, were shot dead by a man on Monday. A police official was also injured. Meanwhile, the federal government has directed provincial governments to provide extra security to under trial blasphemy accused to protect them from extra-judicial killing, adds our reporter from Islamabad.

Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti told that a communication had been sent to all provincial governments to protect the lives of blasphemy accused. "They should be provided protection in jails as well as on the occasion of their production before trial courts," he said. Mr Bhatti said nobody would be allowed to resort to the law of the jungle and kill innocent people on the basis of false accusations. He said it was the job of courts to try the accused and decide the case in accordance with the provisions of the law. Earlier, speaking at a press conference the minister said there were plans to introduce amendment to obviate the possibility of misuse of the blasphemy law. He said those who put the life of someone in danger by levelling a false charge of blasphemy should also be punished. The society should play its role to bring an end to misuse of the blasphemy law. He said his ministry would move a summary for legislation against hate literature and hate speeches. The minister said that a hotline would soon be established at the ministry to provide swift access to justice to people belonging to religious minorities feeling insecure. He said the 24-hour hotline would be connected with police stations, hospitals and other relevant places. About the Faisalabad incident, the minister said investigations were in progress and expressed the hope that the killers would be arrested on the basis of the clues. He said the probe would take view of various aspects of the case — who printed the literature, who instigated violence and who provided shelter to the accused.

[Dawn – July 21, 2010]


Shamshan Ghaat – Old Hindus Insist It Is A Religious Place

After the Presidential orders to probe into the matter of demolition of a 'Hindu Mandir', Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti has formed a committee, while the basic stakeholders, the Rawalpindi Hindu community in this regard has expressed complete dissatisfaction and said that they were not taken on board. Jagmohan Kumar, President of the Hindu-Sikh Community said that they were not aware of either formation or composition of this committee. They were even not asked to join the proceedings of this committee. Since they were local Hindus, so only they knew about the facts of this 'mandir' and Shamshan Ghaat, Kumar added. Earlier, Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti said that he has formed a committee to investigate this matter, on the directives of the president. He heads the committee himself and it will give its report to the president within a week. Bhatti said that the committee will listen to all stakeholders and we were firm in our resolve to shun every effort to demolish the religious places of any religion. The Hindu-Sikh community president, while talking about the antiquity and nature of the construction, said: "We have some old pictures of this building when there were some tombs here." Earlier, Kumar held a meeting with the Auqaf Department. Telling about his discussions in that meeting, Kumar said that he told the Auqaf Department that the Hindu worship places differ in their style of construction, just like the construction differences among a Masjid, Eidgah, Shrine and Janazagah. He said that this 87-year-old construction was meant for worship while the dead bodies were also placed there. "We used to pray and place our dead bodies in this 'mandir'. Ashes of the deceased were also kept there," he said. Kumar told that there were mainly two sects of Hindus living in Rawalpindi, one were Hindus by caste and the other scheduled caste Hindus or Balmeeks. Balmeeks bury their dead bodies while the caste Hindus cremate them. There were some graves of the caste Hindus as well inside the premises of this Shamshan Ghaat and Mandir. Kumar said: "We bury young children after their death. We also bury 'Brehmcharis' (those who don't marry and refrain from indulging in worldly matters and affairs).

Forwarding argument regarding the nature of this building, Kumar said that only those buildings were a "trust" which were religious in nature like Mandirs, Gurdwaras, Gaushalas and Pathshalas. Since this building is a "trust" so this thing indicates that this building is of some religious nature. Kumar told that only the Hindu-Sikh Sabha of Rawalpindi has all documentary record of the 'mandir' and its surrounding properties. "We have all correspondence with us that we did with the Auqaf Department in the past. So a committee could do nothing without consulting us",

he added. Other members of the Hindu community said that Shamshan Ghaat is the only one in the Rawalpindi division. "Whenever any Hindu dies in the surrounding regions like Chakwal, Pind Dandan Khan and Khewra, his relatives contact us for his cremation. So Shamshan Ghaat is of great importance to the community," they said. The Hindu-Sikh community has complained of gross inefficiency of the administration of Auqaf Department and said that it could never do anything for them. "They always keep on lingering things whenever we forwarded any demand". They urged President Asif Ali Zardari to play his role in resolving the issue at the earliest.

[The News – July 23, 2010]



Governance Watch

Political Governance

Legislative Business

Functions of NRB Given to Provinces

The Government has abolished the Musharraf-era National Reconstruction Bureau as its basic responsibility of implementing the local government system has been handed over to the provinces. "A notification about the abolition of the NRB and its renaming was issued on July 15," a senior official of the establishment division, who heads the committee on restructuring of the bureau told. The bureau has been given a new name -- Policy Analysis Unit (PAU). The 22-member unit will be headed by an adviser. The President's Adviser, Sughra Imam, is likely to head the new body. The PAU will work as a think-tank and deal with many other issues, except the local government system. The size of the NRB was trimmed during the tenure of the local government which ended on Dec 31 last year. The remaining section of the bureau had been tasked to deal with other issues, including rehabilitation of internally-displaced persons.

An official of the cabinet division told that the government had set up a committee, headed by the additional secretary of the establishment division, with a task to wrap up the NRB by June 30. "The committee completed its work and the notification was issued today (July 16)," he said. The government will try to utilise the expertise and skills of some seasoned and experienced officials of the NRB in research and policy planning. The remaining may be placed in the surplus pool. Although the NRB was doing no worthwhile work after the PPP government took charge, it consumed Rs110 million last year. Even in this year's budget, the bureau has been allocated Rs119 million. Former President Pervez Musharraf had created the NRB under the chairmanship of Lt-Gen (Retd) Tanvir Naqvi, who conceived the district government system and police order, fundamentally changing the colonial-era arrangement. The new political set-up has abolished most parts of the LB system and the remaining will be done away with in the new local government laws. Although provincial governments have rejected the LB system, they have yet to decide what system they want to implement at the district-level.

[Dawn – July 16, 2010]

Punjab Assembly passes Sasti Roti Authority Bill 2009

Rejecting all the amendments proposed by the opposition benches, the Punjab Assembly on July 15 unanimously passed the Sasti Roti Authority Bill 2009. During the PA's Government Business session, the opposition moved for several amendments in the bill, but the treasury benches did not accept any. After passing the bill, the Sasti Roti Authority – now working under the Punjab Ministry of Industries – has now been empowered to look into matters relating to the Sasti Roti Scheme.

Speaking on the occasion, PML-Q member Dr Samia Amjad said the name of the scheme, Sasti Roti, should be changed because it had a "negative impact on the dignity of poor people who cannot afford food items". Samina Khawar Hayyat, discussing the Sasti Roti Scheme, said the PML-Nawaz-led government should announce a special subsidy on wheat so that the rates of flour could be brought down. Criticism: During the session, opposition leader Chaudhry Zaheeruddin protested against the "poor performance" of the Punjab government for failing to secure the province's water rights and said that Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif had not made out a good case regarding the province's share of water. Zaheeruddin said that during his party's tenure in the government, the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal had not been closed for even a single day, but in the tenure of the incumbent government the canal is repeatedly being closed. He said that the CM failed to plead Punjab's water case with Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani and President Asif Ali Zardari, while also getting loans from them to cover the province's financial deficit. The opposition leader also criticised Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah and called him "the Khadim-e-Ala of Khadim-e-Ala Shahbaz Sharif". He later announced that the opposition would walk out and not attend proceedings for as long as the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal remained closed. After making the announcement, the opposition walked out of the House. In response, Punjab Minister for Irrigation Raja Riaz Ahmad addressed the House and said that due to the efforts of Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal had been opened and 15,000 cusecs of water had been released from the canal for the province's southern areas.

[Daily Times – July 16, 2010]

Punjab Govt Withdraws Changes in Nikah Form

The Punjab government has annulled the notification introducing eight new clauses to the nikahnama on July 8. Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah confirmed the report, saying that the provincial government had decided to withdraw the notification for the time being. The amendments – which made it necessary for both the bride and the bridegroom to undergo blood tests to prevent genetically as well as sexually transmitted diseases, affixing of photos of the couple, inclusion of verified dates of birth and provision of national identity cards of the parents and witnesses – before performing the nikah have been overturned. Many ministers and oppositions leaders were unaware of the changes and failed to make any comment on the report. Others were of the view that such amendments were legislatively weak. The Punjab government had made the amendments to the nikah forms after instructions from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

[Daily Times – July 10, 2010]

Demand for New Provinces

MPAs Begin Signature Campaign for South Punjab Province

The legislators elected from Seraiki areas have started a "signature movement" for the creation of a separate administrative unit in Punjab. The movement has support from all political parties in the Punjab Assembly. Sardar Mohsin Leghari is the key person getting signatures from MPAs having political affiliations with the PML-Q, PPP, PML-Quaid dissidents group and the PML-Nawaz. Irshad Sial, Makhdoom Irtaza, Rafique Khar, Fateh Muhammad Buzdar, Shahzad Rasool Jatoi, Abbas Raan, Mehar Irshad Khan, Bilal Khar, Abbas Khitran and Rai Safdar have signed the resolution. Athar Gorchani is another legislator from Rajanpur district in southern Punjab, having political affiliation with the PPP, who was seen convincing his colleagues to support the cause. Legislators belonging to the PPP and the PML-Q are making the demand openly, while the PML-N legislators, despite being sympathetic to the cause, are reluctant to sign the resolution, however, they have assured their support in the voting. "Every legislator elected from South Punjab wants a separate federating unit. The PPP and PML-Q MPAs are very vocal on the issue, but the PML-N members are under the pressure of their leadership. They are fully supporting our cause, but are reluctant to sign the resolution. They, however, have assured us to vote in favour of the resolution if it comes before the House," Leghari said. The resolution reads, "This House recommends to the federal government to make necessary amendments in the constitution of 1973 for the creation of a separate administrative unit in Punjab." The resolution is a smart move by the aforementioned members, as the federal government cannot make amendments in the constitution regarding the creation of a separate federating unit in any part of the existing provinces, unless the assemblies concerned pass a resolution in this regard. If the resolution gets a nod from the provincial assembly, this constitutional requirement would be fulfilled. The PPP is already supporting the creation of South Punjab, but is not speaking openly due to political constraints. The passage of the resolution would provide them a stand against the PML-N, who does not want the division. They would have a moral stand to fulfill the demand of the area and secure their votes.

[Daily Times – July 9, 2010]

Hazara Tehrik Warns of March to Islamabad

Hazara Tehrik Chief Sardar Haider Zaman threatened to launch a 'long march' to Islamabad if the government did not fulfil their legitimate demand for Hazara province. He was addressing a big public meeting at Shuhada Chowk on July 8 in connection with Karwan-i-Hazara rally that began in the remote Kohistan district on July 7 and made stopovers on the way while driving on the Karakoram Highway. It would end at Jhari Kas, the boundary of Punjab and Khyber Paktunkhwa. On July 8 morning, the vehicular rally started from Shinkiari town of Mansehra district and passed via Baffa and Mansehra city to reach Abbottabad at 4.30 pm. The procession was led by the central leaders of the Hazara Tehrik and was accorded a warm welcome in Abbottabad. Naseer Khan Jadoon (Hazara Qaumi Mahaz), Waseem Khan Jadoon (People's Youth Federation), Abdur Razzaq Abbasi (Amir of Jamaat-i-Islami), Qazi Azhar (Hazara Qaumi Mahaz), Wali Muhammad Khan (Awami Ittehad), Ali Khan Jadoon, Mushtaq Ahmed Ghani, Amanullah Khan Jadoon, Syed Qasim Shah, Shahzada Gustasap Khan, Dr Azhar Khan Jadoon, Qalandar Khan Lodhi, office-bearers of traders associations, transporters and a large number of people were present to welcome the vehicular caravan. Sardar Haider Zaman in his speech said the government was aware of the situation and emotions of the people, but was deliberately not respecting the will of the people of Hazara. He added that their struggle would come to a logical end with the creation of Hazara province.

"In addition to the civil disobedience movement, we will not allow anyone from the ruling party to hold any event and meeting in Hazara," he threatened, asking the Public Accounts Committee of the provincial assembly to pack up from Frontier House otherwise they would throw them out.

[The News – July 9, 2010]

ANP Backs Hazara, South Punjab Provinces

ANP Punjab Chapter has given its approval to the party's central command regarding the establishment of separate provinces of Hazara and South Punjab, Daily Times learnt on July 26. ANP Punjab Senior Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry, along with other office-bearers, said that the party's Punjab chapter is in favour of giving provincial autonomy to southern Punjab. He said that the ANP had already declared Punjab and South Punjab two separate areas in its manifesto 40 years ago. He further said that even the party had separate chapters for both regions. Chaudhry said the ANP openly supported the resolution moved in the Punjab Assembly regarding the establishment of another province in Punjab. He said that the central party leadership also agrees over this point of view under the new political situation in the country.

Regarding the Hazara movement for an independent province carved out of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Chaudhry said that his party supported the ideology and was of the opinion that the establishment of new provinces in the country would strengthen the federation. He suggested that legislators from Hazara table a resolution in favour of their demands for a separate province, adding that if the resolution was passed, the ANP government would immediately give autonomous status to the area.

[Daily Times – July 27, 2010]

Water Issue between Provinces

IRSA Somersaults, Reopens CJ Link Canal

In an intriguing twist to the water-sharing row between Sindh and Punjab, the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) re-opened the Chashma-Jhelum Link canal on July 15 and released 15,000 cusecs of water for Punjab to irrigate its southern region. There was no official word from IRSA authorities, but sources said the order to open the canal was issued by the water regulator 'on orders from above' to start immediate release of 15,000 cusecs of water to Chashma-Jhelum Link canal from July 15 noon. In Karahi, Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah deplored the IRSA decision and said that the release of water into the Chashma-Jhelum canal was an arbitrary move which was against the spirit of the 1990 Water Accord.

[Dawn – July 16, 2010]

Punjab, Sindh Settle Water Row

The Punjab and Sindh governments have agreed to close the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal in a bid to resolve the row over water distribution, as the Chief Ministers of both provinces held discussions with each other following a meeting with Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on July 13. Sources privy to the meeting told that Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah agreed that the Indus River System Authority's (IRSA) decision to open the link canal was not according to rules and it should be immediately overturned for inter-provincial harmony. The sources said IRSA Acting Chairman Shafqat Masood has also been removed and succeeded by Raqeeb Khan Khattak from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. At the conclusion of the meeting between the two Chief Ministers and their teams, the PM was informed that reservations of Sindh regarding the procedure adopted by IRSA in its July 6 meeting had been withdrawn by consensus and with immediate effect.

[Dawn – July 14, 2010]

Sindh not Giving Balochistan its Share of Water, says IRSA

In an unusual move, the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has openly accused the government of Sindh of not providing to Balochistan its full share of water despite improved river flows. IRSA said in a statement that it is continuously asking the Sindh province to provide the share of water to Balochistan released from Chashma barrage but the shortage of supplies is still continuing. The allegation came only a week after the governments of Sindh and Punjab had settled a dispute over the opening of Chashma-Jhelum link canal with the intervention of the political leaderships. And this has happened at a time when water availability in almost all rivers and reservoirs has improved. The water regulator also accused Sindh of not implementing recommendations of an inter-provincial committee and decisions of IRSA. It may be mentioned that a committee of three IRSA members had been constituted by the minister for water and power in 2004 to settle such issues.

IRSA said that the Balochistan government has been accusing Sindh of stealing its water. "The water dispute between Sindh and Balochistan is an old issue. The job of IRSA is to release indented supply to the provinces at Chashma barrage and it then becomes the responsibility of the provincial irrigation departments to further distribute the water in their system. During the ongoing Kharif season, it said, Sindh was of the view that certain pond level was required to feed the right side channels of the Sukkur barrage, although IRSA believed that Khirthar canal

could be fed even at a lesser discharge. However, as a special consideration, Irsa agreed to release unprecedented discharge of 240,000 cusecs (full indent) for Sindh, so that the required pond level at Sukkur barrage could be attained. IRSA also asked the irrigation authorities of Sindh to make necessary arrangements at Sukkur barrage through rehabilitation or revamping to ensure that right bank channels could be fed easily even at low discharge to meet the indented supply of Balochistan canals. It said Balochistan had no direct access to Indus system and received water from Sindh canals through Guddu and Sukkur barrages.

[Dawn – July 23, 2010]

ECP & Election Related News

PML-N Thrashed in Sargodha By-Polls, Fails to Re-Win Seat

In what appeared to be an indication of the party's dwindling popularity in the province, PML-N was inflicted a crushing defeat in July 26's by-polls in PP-34 Sargodha constituency, one of PML-N's home battlegrounds. According to the unofficial results, Kahlon received 15,967 votes as opposed to his rival, who got 14,717 votes. The PML-Quaid and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) backed the independent candidate in the by-polls. After Kahlon was declared the winner, police raided his place and arrested three people on charges of aerial firing. The court had rendered the seat vacant after PML-N's MPA Chaudhry Rizwan Gul was declared ineligible after his degree was proved to be fake. Later, the Election Commission had announced by-polls in the constituency, the channel reported. There were at least 112 polling stations with 350 polling booths, while presiding officers were deputed with additional powers of magistrates, under which they were authorised to arrest those who tried to cast fake votes. The constituency has a total of 151,902 registered voters of whom 81,554 are men and 70,348 women, the channel reported.

[Daily Times – July 27, 2010]

Khuda Bux Rajar Elected Unopposed on NA-235

Election Commissioner of Pakistan Thursday announced that Haji Khuda Bux Rajar, has been elected unopposed to constituency of the National Assembly (NA-235 Sanghar-cum-Mirpurkhas-cum-Umerkot (Old Sanghar-II). The NA-235 constituency became vacant due to disqualification of Ghulam Dastgir Rajar, Member of the National Assembly.

[APP – July 23, 2010]

Seven By-Elections Open to Legal Challenge

Chief Election Commissioner Justice Hamid Ali Mirza is in the proverbial eye of the storm because of the fake degree issue. But in reality he is at the centre stage of even a bigger controversy — he has conducted seven by-elections for National and Provincial Assemblies despite the fact that he no longer has the powers to do so under the 18th Amendment which was passed on April 9, 2010. "In fact, if these by-elections are challenged in a court of law they may be declared invalid," a senior member of the federal cabinet, who was also a member of the 18th Constitution Amendment Committee, told. His views are echoed by a retired judge of the high court and a former member of the election commission, Justice (Retd) Tariq Mehmood. He said that the government knew that following the approval of the 18th Constitution Amendment by the president, the appointment of members of the commission was imperative for holding elections; even then it did not pay any heed to this constitutional requirement.

Under the amendment, the process of supervising and holding elections is not the responsibility of the CEC but of the Election Commission which comprises the CEC and four members. The powers of the election commissioner have been delegated to the commission under Article 219 of the Constitution which is subtitled 'Duties of Commissioner'. It says the ("Commission") "shall be charged with the duties of – (a) preparing electoral rolls for election to the National Assembly and the Provincial Assemblies, and revising such rolls annually; (b) organising and conducting election to the Senate or to fill casual vacancies of a House or a Provincial Assembly; (c) and to appoint election tribunals; (d) the holding of election to the National Assembly, provincial assemblies and the local government and (e) such other functions as may be specified by an act of Majlis-i-Shoora (Parliament)."

[Dawn – July 15, 2010]

ECP Seeks Statement of Accounts from Political Parties

ECP has sought statements of accounts from all political parties to fulfill a mandatory but cosmetic requirement under the law. Within 60 days from the start of the new financial year, every political party registered with the ECP

has to submit its account details, which includes annual income and expenses of the party, along with the source of the funding, as well as details of the assets and liabilities certified by a chartered accountant. The requirement is covered under Article 13 of the Political Parties Order 2002.

Under the law, the head of a political party also submits a certificate declaring that the party's income had not come through any illegal means or prohibited sources. After compiling these details, the commission publishes it in the official gazette annually, and this information is accessible to every citizen on payment of a certain prescribed fee. Under the law, party heads or their nominated representatives are required to submit these details directly to the chief election commissioner by hand.

The whole procedure appears an interesting and pro-democratic one, but is a mere cosmetic exercise in reality, as the ECP has not evolved any mechanism to verify the information provided by the parties. The statements of accounts filed by the country's mainstream political parties for the last year showed that the parties apparently lacked financial capacity to organise even a small party convention. A total of 56 registered political parties had submitted their assets and account statements, including the ruling PPP - that was among the poorest of all parties, as it declared a balance of Rs 435,745 - Rs 7,005 in cash and Rs 429,400 in the party's bank account.

[Daily Times – July 7, 2010]

ECP Yet to Finalise Course of Action against Fake Degree Holders

ECP is yet to announce a procedure for dealing with lawmakers whose degrees are declared fake by educational institutes after verification. Though the ECP has not announced any such procedure, sources said public representatives whose educational certificates are declared fake would be given a chance to contest their cases in courts before being disqualified. The sources said the Commission is likely to send the cases of fake-degree holders to district courts in their respective constituencies. Usually, the Speakers of National or Provincial Assemblies and the Chairman of Senate send references against lawmakers to the ECP for disqualification. However, the Supreme Court has directed the ECP to act on its own and take action against public representatives who contested the last general elections by submitting forged documents. ECP has not yet made public its future course of action, however, legal pundits of the present government say the commission is likely to adopt a lengthy and cumbersome procedure before taking final action against the fake degree-holders. Another possibility is that such members themselves submit their resignations to the Speakers of their respective assemblies. Such seats will be declared vacant then. The apex court has given three months to the ECP to complete the process of verification and initiate action against fake degree-holders.

[Daily Times – July 9, 2010]

Population Census

Fresh Summary to Conduct Population Census Sent to PM

A fresh summary has been moved to Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani for conducting the upcoming population census in two phases — housing census in October/ November 2010 and individual census by March 2011, it was learnt. In the aftermath of 18th Constitutional Amendment, the holding of population census falls under the jurisdiction to Federal Legislative List-Part II, so the approval of the Council of Common Interest (CCI) will be sought for conducting this crucial exercise, which has already been delayed for three years.

A senior official of the government said that the government would take a decision whether to seek Army's help to conduct the upcoming census or not. He further said that, "I don't think that there will be a need to seek the Army's help this time as in the past they had done couple of times without ther Army's help. When reminded about the last census held in 1998 that was done with the help of the Army to remove controversies, he said that it was done with the Army's help during the last time but the decision was up to the government keeping in view the ground realities. However, the sources said that Army seemed reluctant to spare its troops keeping in view its heavy engagement on war against terrorism in various parts, especially in tribal areas. Secretary Statistics Division, Saeed Ahmed Khan confirmed that they had sent a fresh summary to the Prime Minister for getting approval to conduct the next population census during the ongoing financial year. He said that, "we proposed to conduct house listing in the first phase to be done in Oct/Nov 2010, while the individual census was proposed to be done in March 2011". The Secretary Statistics said that the concerns of the provinces were removed before forwarding the summary to the

Prime Minister as without evolving a consensus it was not possible to conduct this crucial exercise in the whole country.

[The News – July 6, 2010]

Economic Governance

Statistics and Reports on Pakistan's Economy

Financial Year 2009-10 – Government Pays \$3.136 billion in Debt Servicing

The government reportedly paid \$3.136 billion as debt servicing from July 2009 to June 2010. Out of the total payment, an amount of \$2.380 billion was paid as principal amount and \$756 million as interest on foreign loan. In June 2010 alone, the government paid \$196.605 million as debt servicing i.e. \$140.190 million as principal amount and \$56.415 million as interest on foreign loan, the sources maintained. From July 2009 to June 2010, the government received \$3.647 billion external resources from foreign donors and other countries on bilateral basis, sources maintained. Out of the total foreign financial assistance, an amount of \$3.001 billion came as foreign loan and \$646 million as grant for different purposes.

Purpose-wise disbursement of external resources received in last fiscal year are; \$5.16 million for Afghan Relief and Reconstruction Authority (ARRA), \$192.57 million for Earthquake, \$569.53 million for Industrial Development Bank (ST), \$1.231 billion for Non-project Aid (BOP/Cash), \$100 million assistance received as Commodity Aid, \$51.52 million for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), \$986.03 million as Project Aid, and \$511.34 million received as from Tokyo pledges. The sum-total of these disbursements of foreign loan/grants was equal to \$3.647 billion. The sources maintained that the government provided these figures to International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the month of June 2010 and for the whole fiscal year 2009-10. On the basis of these figures the IMF evaluates the economy of Pakistan.

External Budget Financing Loan: The government received a total of \$3.001 billion foreign assistance in the form of loan in the last fiscal year, details of which are; \$168.07 million for Earthquake Rehabilitation Authority (ERA), \$569.53 for Industrial Development Bank (ST), \$1.072 billion for Non-project Aid (BOP/Cash), \$100 million loan received as Commodity Aid, \$865.83 million as Project Aid, and \$225.90 million received as from Tokyo pledges.

External Budget Financing Grant: In the outgoing fiscal year the government received \$646.18 million foreign assistance in the form of grant from donors countries, financial organizations. Details of the grants are; \$5.16 million for Afghan Relief and Reconstruction Authority (ARRA), \$24.50 million for Earthquake Rehabilitation Authority, \$51.52 million for Internally Displaced Persons (from war on terror affected areas), \$159.36 million grants for Non-project Aid (BOP/Cash), \$120.20 million assistance received for Project Aid and \$285.44 million as Tokyo pledges. The sourcing mentioning only Asian Development Bank, International Development Association, European Union and United Kingdom and they extended total of \$1.231 billion foreign loan/grant in the outgoing fiscal year. The ADB extended \$622.1 million in the last fiscal year as loan, and IDA forwarded \$450.08 million loan in 2009-10. While the European Union extended \$12.26 million as grant for Sindh government in education sector, while the UK provided \$147.09 million as grant for Pakistan in 2009-10.

[Daily Times – July 30, 2010]

MoF's Role in Release of Uplift Funds Ends

A meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani decided at the Ministry of Finance on July 9 that the Ministry would have no role in the release of funds for its development budget. It also empowered the Planning Commission to make the releases according to the progress of the projects, stating that the projects which were 70 percent complete would be the top priority and those yet to begin would be avoided. It was also decided that further fiscal consolidation would be on top of the agenda, tight fiscal and monetary policies would continue to decrease inflation and fiscal discipline would be maintained through austerity measures with major cut on non-obligatory

foreign visits. The Prime Minister also directed the Finance Ministry to prepare a restructuring plan for the Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) and submit it to the cabinet for approval, adding that the economy could not afford their heavy losses.

Gilani said there was consensus with respect to making the Annual Development Plan (ADP) realistic and moving away from the previous pattern of making large allocations for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) that were not fully utilised. It was decided in the meeting that only those projects, ongoing or new, would be taken which could be completed in the current fiscal year. Gilani said there were complaints in the past regarding the release of development funds, which would not be seen this year as releases against the ADP in the current year would be automatic and the Finance Ministry would have no role in it. The Prime Minister told that he had directed the Ministry to take steps about the restructuring of the PSEs and to adopt strict austerity. Gilani said that he had assured complete cooperation and support to the ministry for the measures to be taken for fiscal consolidation. He said Rs 243 billion earmarked for the PSEs was a large amount and the cabinet had directed the finance minister to submit a plan for their restructuring. The Prime Minister said current expenditures of the Prime Minister's House, the Presidency and other departments had been frozen to last year's level.

[Daily Times – July 10, 2010]

BISP Updates

BISP to End Poverty, says Farzana

The purpose of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is to end poverty on permanent basis by enabling the poor to stand on their own feet, BISP Chairperson Farzana Raja said here on July 6. Farzana Raja said that seven million people would be imparted technical training under the BISP. Appreciating the humanitarian projects initiated by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), Farzana said the government has planned to initiate several such projects, which would bring meaningful decrease in the poverty ratio. The BISP Chairperson said the role of the PPAF is very crucial in the implementation of the BISP. She said the programme would bring positive change in the lives of the poor and their financial problems would be resolved to a great extent. Farzana Raja was of the view that majority of problems of the country are directly or indirectly linked with poverty. Therefore, she said, the government and the people should join hand to overcome these problems. She said the private sector should come forward to help the government in controlling the unemployment.

Farzana said over 150,000 families benefited from the programme in Balochistan. She said the work has been initiated on imparting technical training to one member of each family to enable them get honourable jobs in the country and abroad. The BISP Chairperson said the programme has now decided to seek the help of the Ministry of Labour and Manpower for imparting technical training to illiterate people so that they could meet the international standards and requirements. Farzana was of the opinion that after imparting technical training to seven million people, the poverty ratio would decrease significantly. "People are also provided loans under the 'Waseela-e-Haq' programme which will also help in reducing poverty," she said.

[The News – July 7, 2010]

US Transfers \$75m to Pakistan under BISP

The United States announced on July 29 that it has transferred \$75 million to Pakistan for BISP to help meet the immediate needs of 600,000 impoverished families across Pakistan. The BISP provides basic income and access to opportunities for some of Pakistan's most underprivileged people. Participants in the programme receive, skill development training, and medical insurance and food subsidies. According to American Embassy, their Ambassador Anne W Patterson, while giving her comments on this occasion, said, "The Benazir Income Support Programme helps some of Pakistan's poorest people meet their everyday needs." Initiated in 2008, the BISP programme offsets the impact of inflation in the poorer sections of society. The BISP will help approximately 15 percent of the population, including 40 percent of those living below the poverty line.

[Daily Times – July 30, 2010]

Local Governance

Politicians to Monitor Local Govts Now

Politics rather than public service seems to be at the heart of a new provincial government's order to divest commissioners of monitoring and oversight powers and nominate a committee of ruling coalition members to oversee the local governments. With an eye on the next local bodies' elections, the surprising move by the government came through a notification naming a six-member committee headed by Minister for Local Governments Bashir Ahmad Bilour and including Information Minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain, Minister for Irrigation Pervaiz Khattak, Minister for Industries Ahmad Hussain Shah, Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Arshad Abdullah and Abdul Akbar Khan, PPP MPA from Mardan.

According to its terms of reference, the committee will review regularly the performance of administrators throughout the province, oversee implementation of the local government development plan and monitor resource generation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. What prompted the move is not clear as officials in the civil secretariat said a similar bid by the minister for local governments to get total control of the civil bodies had come to a naught after opposition from coalition partner – the PPP. Officials said the Chief Minister had been warned that any such move would actually undermine his authority by ceding total and absolute control over the devolved departments to the districts that included all the line departments including education, health, works and services and others. The composition of the committee indicates a compromise formula to placate the PPP and overcome its opposition to any move by the senior minister to gain total control of the district government to manipulate the local bodies' elections.

[Dawn – July 2, 2010]

Proposals on LG Polls Likely by August End, LHC told

Meetings at both the Federal and Provincial levels are being conducted to discuss local government elections and recommendations about the same will be finalised by the last week of August, Additional Advocate General Muhammad Hanif Khatana informed the Lahore High Court on July 19. Earlier on July 19, Lahore High Court Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed rejected a plea seeking a bar on district administrators from using funds of district governments (DG) until the election of fresh local governments in local body elections. The judge held that the restraint on using district funds would cause a financial crisis in the system, as employees of district governments were receiving their salaries through these funds. This request was made during the hearing of a petition moved by Local Councils Association of Pakistan (LCAP) through its director Anwer Hussain. The director had already filed a petition against the appointments of administrators in Punjab and sought the court's directions for holding fresh local bodies election in the province. Khatana added that the issuance of a notification for elections was the responsibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan. He submitted the minutes of the meetings that had taken up the local bodies' elections issue, after which the judge adjourned the proceedings until August 22. On June 9, the Judge had directed the federal and provincial governments to inform the court about the schedule of local bodies elections. The petitioner's lawyer, Fawad Chaudhry, had submitted that the Punjab government was getting the control of local governments. He said the provincial government had resorted to malicious and foul means to harass and torment the district governments.

[Daily Times – July 20, 2010]

Centre, Sindh at Odds over LG Poll

The controversy over the holding of local government elections this year deepened on July 22 when conflicting points of view emerged between the federal and provincial governments on the issue. Federal Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Abdul Razzaq Thahim claimed that local government elections would not be held in the current year. But a Sindh Minister insisted that the provincial government was trying to hold them this year. Speaking to the media after meeting Sindh Minister for Rural Development Zubair Ahmad, Mr Thahim claimed that after the passage and ratification of the 18th constitutional amendment, a newly constituted Election Commission would hold local government elections. He said that before the passage of the 18th amendment the four members of the election commission were sitting judges of various high courts. The Election Commission was yet to be structured, he said, adding that four retired judges would be appointed to complete the restructuring of the EC. These members would be appointed after consultation between the prime minister and the leader of the opposition in the national assembly and approval by the committee. Answering a question, he said elections would be held by the election commission with the concurrence of the provincial governments. When Sindh Minister for Local Government Agha Siraj was asked to comment on the statement, he said efforts were being made to hold local government elections in Sindh this year. He said the issue would be discussed by President Asif Ali Zardari with MQM leader Altaf Hussain in London where they would shortly be deliberating on a host of other issues also.

He said after the passage of the 18th amendment the role of the federal ministry for local government had been restricted and it would be confined to holding local government elections in Islam

[Dawn – July 23, 2010]

Punjab Govt Should Hold Local Bodies Polls Immediately

The Punjab government should fulfil its promise and immediately hold local government (LG) elections in the province, participants at a seminar demanded on July 28. The seminar was organised by the Pattan Development Organisation, the Local Council Association of Punjab and the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN). PPP MPAs Sajida Mir and Faiza Malik, representatives from various non-government organisations and journalists attended the seminar. The participants termed the local government system “people-friendly” and demanded the government to hold local bodies’ polls “immediately”. A resolution was also moved at the end of the discussion, urging the government to fulfil its promise of holding LG elections. The resolution further read that it is compulsory for all the provinces, as per the Constitution, to set up local bodies and devolve political, administrative and financial responsibilities to the LG representatives. Moreover, it said that elected LG representatives are an essential element of a successful democratic set-up and democracy could not flourish unless the citizens’ participation is ensured in issues that directly affect their lives. “The current LG system is not flawless, but the reforms should not eliminate the democratic spirit of the present system,” it said. The participants also demanded an increase in the representation of women, workers, minorities and farmers in LG elections. They further said that the government should take all stakeholders onboard to make the LG system more effective, adding that all district and tehsil nazims should be made accountable to their elected assemblies.

[Daily Times – July 29, 2010]

Govt Decides to Divide Swat into Two Districts

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government on July 20 firmly decided to divide Swat into two districts, Lower Swat and Upper Swat. Elected representatives from Swat had time and again demanded of the ANP-led provincial government to create another district by dividing Swat into two districts, Lower Swat and Upper Swat, urging that it would help run the administrative affairs of Swat efficiently. In the wake of increased population and difficulties in running administrative affairs, the sources said that there was a need to create more districts. With same spirit, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had already declared Kala Dhaka a semi tribal area of Mansehra district, as a new district. A formal announcement of dividing Swat into two districts would be made soon, the sources maintained, adding that Mingora, the main city of Swat, would be the head-quarter of Lower Swat district. The sources further explained that the present provincial coalition govt of ANP and PPP also intended to create two more divisions in the province by dividing Malakand and Hazara divisions. To accomplish the plan, a new division was likely to be carved out from the existing Malakand division, consisting of Malakand Agency, Chitral, Dir Lower and Dir Upper districts while Swat Lower, Swat Upper, Buner and Shangla districts would be lumped together and given the name of Swat division. Another new division comprising Battagram, Kohistan and Kala Dhaka, the semi-tribal area of Mansehra district will be separated from Hazara division to form Abaseen division. It is worth mentioning here that the legislatures, representing the Malakand division had been demanding to have a new division, while the MPAs from Battagram and Kohistan have already submitted resolution for a separate Abaseen division, the sources concluded.

[The Nation – July 21, 2010]

Regional Politics & Election Watch

Pakistan's Foreign Relations

Pakistan, China Vow to Strengthen Strategic Ties

Pakistan and China on July 7 reaffirmed to strengthen strategic relationship between the two countries, increase the level of economic cooperation and take concrete measures to further bring their people closer. The two countries pledged to make joint efforts to fight terrorism, and signed six deals of cooperation in the areas of agriculture, healthcare, justice, media, economy and technology. Chinese President Hu Jintao and President Asif Ali Zardari witnessed the signing of the deals. During the two-hour-long talks before the signing ceremony, Jintao and Zardari also vowed to fight the "three forces" of extremism, separatism and terrorism jointly. Jintao added that China and Pakistan are both victims of terrorism and cooperation between the two countries in fighting the 'three forces' complies with the interests of people of both the countries and is conducive to peace, stability and security in the region. China is a friend and a strategic partner, committed to the promotion of stability and economic progress of Pakistan" is how Jintao summed up the strategic relations. Zardari responded by saying, "It is our belief that Pakistan can act as a force multiplier for China and we will continue to work towards this end." The president's spokesman Farhatullah Babar said the two leaders discussed a host of issues relating to strategic partnership, reviewing the steps taken thus far and also charting a future course of action. Militancy: Jintao reaffirmed his country's support to Pakistan in its fight against militancy, saying China appreciated the struggle of the people and the government of Pakistan against terrorists. On trade cooperation, Jintao said China would explore new ways to cooperate as well as cement cooperation between the two countries in areas such as energy, transportation, telecommunication, infrastructure and agriculture. He appreciated the Pakistan government's efforts to safeguard the security of Chinese nationals and organisations in Pakistan, while Zardari said Pakistan would create a secure environment for Chinese firms in his country. Welcoming Zardari, the Chinese president said he had directed his foreign minister to take steps for the exchange of youth, cultural and writers' delegations between the two countries and also increasing scholarships for young Pakistanis to study in China. He said the Chinese government was determined to making the relationship "more vibrant". He added that China valued Pakistan's support on regional and international forums. Jintao said China would continue to maintain contact with Pakistan on issues such as the reform of the UN Security Council and climate change in order to ensure common interests of the developing countries. Minister of State for Finance Hina Rabbani Khar signed an agreement on economic and technical cooperation on the occasion.

[Daily Times – July 8, 2010]

Pakistan, India Vow to Rebuild Trust through Dialogue

Pakistan and India ended their engagement with a positive note on July 15, as foreign ministers of both countries termed their talks 'useful' and vowed that the talks would pave the way for serious, comprehensive and sustainable dialogue between the two countries. During their joint press briefing no breakthrough announcement was made, but both Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Indian counterpart SM Krishna claimed that they had discussed all outstanding issues. They said they had prolonged discussions aimed at paving the way for serious, comprehensive and sustained dialogue on issues of mutual interest and concerns. Qureshi said he would visit India in the near future to continue the dialogue process.

Qureshi said that we made progress on the Kashmir issue. We will try to build on what we achieved in the past. Pakistan has asked for the amicable resolution of the Sir Creek issue. We have to respect the Indian point of view. We have agreed to continue this engagement in future. Krishna said, "I agreed with Foreign Minister Qureshi that we have cordial and frank exchange of views on all issues between the two countries. Effective action against terrorism is required." He added that India is committed to being a sincere partner in our effort to establish peaceful and progressive relationship between India and Pakistan. To a question regarding Indian involvement in Balochistan, Krishna said the issue had been mentioned in the Sharmel Sheikh declaration, but "we have not yet received any evidence from Pakistan in this regard". "We have been waiting for some evidence being provided by Pakistan of Indian involvement. If credible evidence or any evidence is provided to us about Indian involvement, it will certainly be looked into," he maintained. Qureshi said that during the meeting, he had also mentioned reports that Brahamdagh Bugti had obtained an Indian passport, and had been assured by Krishna that the Indian government would cancel any such passport if it exists. Krishna reiterated the demand that Pakistan should not allow its territory to be used against India. To a question about the human rights violations in Indian-held Kashmir,

Krishna said that the valley had a legitimate chief minister and maintaining law and order was the responsibility of the state government. Krishna said there had been an increase in infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC) particularly in 2008 and 2009. Qureshi reacted by saying that "infiltration is not the policy of Pakistan or any intelligence agency in Pakistan". Qureshi said that he had informed the Indian delegation about progress regarding the prosecution of the Mumbai culprits. He, however, said that Pakistan had an independent judiciary, which could not be dictated to.

[Daily Times – July 16, 2010]

Water Row Key to Indo-Pak Rivalry

For Pakistani farmer Ghulam Sarwar, only war with India can overcome the water shortages parching his crops and drying up his profits. His family owns 85 acres in northern Punjab, traditionally the breadbasket of Pakistan but where the country's sizeable agriculture sector is finding it increasingly difficult to irrigate crops. Sarwar said that this year water supply is less than last year. Crop earnings decline every year and water shortages have affected 50 percent of our agricultural business. The problems with India can only be resolved with war. The 29-year-old says his family is forced to use costly motors to pump water in their village of Budhan Kay, 40 kilometres north of Lahore. "Our yields have declined up to 50 percent in the last two, three years. If things continue, agriculture will go down 75 percent in the next 10 years," he said. When the foreign ministers of India and Pakistan sit down on Thursday for their first face-to-face talks since New Delhi called off a peace process after the 2008 Mumbai attacks, water will be one of the issues on the agenda.

Water availability in Pakistan has fallen from about 5,000 cubic metres per capita in the early 1950s to less than 1,500 cubic metres, said a 2008 report for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Growing population, rising demand, and snow and ice reductions in the Himalayas account for the shortages, which are compounded by inefficient irrigation, abysmal urban sanitation and unequal water rights, it said. But many in Pakistan have accused arch-rival India, the powerful neighbour to the east, of stealing water. Whipping up anger, terrorist groups even called for a new jihad, or holy war, over water — something few took seriously. "Only jihad can help get water released to Pakistan, so people should rise up," said Jamaatud Dawa, a charity seen as a front for Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, blamed for the Mumbai attacks.. India denies that it is unfairly diverting water. Indian analysts accuse Pakistan of trying to divert attention from water mismanagement and a crippling energy crisis, saying Islamabad should better share out water within Pakistan. India and Pakistan say all issues are up for discussion on Thursday, but right-wing religious groups and farmers in Pakistan believe the dialogue will be useless unless Pakistan focuses on water and Kashmir. Unreliable rains mean that agriculture in Punjab depends heavily on river water. Agriculture accounts for about 20 percent of Pakistan's gross domestic product and millions of jobs depend on farming. The 1960 Indus Water Treaty gave India and Pakistan three Himalayan rivers each and the right to hydropower and irrigation resources. It established the India-Pakistan Indus Commission, which is supposed to resolve any problems that arise. If not, they can call on World Bank-appointed experts and arbitration. That last happened in 2005, when India was told to make small changes to the design of another big dam to which Pakistan objected. But Pakistan now wants a court of arbitration over an Indian hydropower dam on the Kishanganga River that it says violates the 1960 treaty. Hamid Malhi, Coordinator of the Punjab Water Council that represents farmers, said urgent talks were required to appease Pakistani fears that Indian hydroelectric stations could run Pakistan's rivers dry. "If diversions like the Kishanganga project are not settled as it should be, then we have serious apprehensions that diversions from other rivers would also be made and precedents would be set," he told AFP. "The only way is to sit down and talk." Whatever happens, solutions will come only once India and Pakistan overcome their current hostility. "We'll be thankful if the Pakistani government takes up the water issue with India," said Mohammad Sharif, a small farmer in a run-down village near the Wahga border crossing with India. "There is no water. Seeds are costly. Fertilisers are beyond my means. Electricity bills are high and we can hardly meet our expenses," he said.

[Daily Times – July 16, 2010]

Pakistan and India Agree to Install Telemetry System

Pakistan and India agreed in principle on July 21 to put in place a telemetry system on the Indus to record and transfer real-time data for the benefit of both countries. The agreement was reached between Indus water commissioners of the two countries on the first day of their two-day meeting after the Indians "conceded to the utility" of the telemetry system in removing the confusion over water flow. However, the visiting delegates maintained that they had to take Indian states (provinces) on board because they controlled water flows and would be providing space for installation of the equipment. The funds needed for installation and running the system was also a matter that would be decided in consultation with the states. At a media briefing with his Pakistani counterpart Syed Jamaat Ali Shah, Indian Commissioner Aranga Nathan confirmed that the agreement had been

reached and promised to take up the matter with the governments of different Indian states where the system could be installed. According to insiders, both sides also agreed to jointly inspect the flood embankment of River Ravi. India built a number of embankments on Ravi in the year 2001 and Pakistan has since been asking it for permission to inspect them. Instead of agreeing to inspection, India alleged that Pakistan had also built such structures and sought to inspect them. The dates for joint inspection would be decided through correspondence. The third issue that came under discussion was about pollution of rivers on both sides, especially in lower riparian Pakistan. The two commissioners agreed that as trustees of waters they must also start talks about the pollution. Pakistan raised the issue of India's Hadiyara drain that flows near Lahore and brings the industrial waste to Pakistan and pollutes Ravi. The issue of Baramulla waste polluting Jhelum river was also brought to the notice of the Indian side. The Indian officials said that Pakistan's Kasur drain was causing the same damage on their side. The two sides agreed to look into each other's complaints and suggest remedial measures. Pakistani officials told the visitors that India had not yet responded to technical concerns over different projects which India was building on Pakistani rivers. The Indian side said it would be sending its response to Pakistani objections on the Nimo Bazgo Dam "within days". Pakistan is of the view that Nimo Bazgo Dam and Chutak Power Plant on Indus River would block over 35,000 cusecs and badly hit the river hydrology. The Indian side agreed to quicken the process.

[Dawn – July 22, 2010]

Political and Security Situation in Afghanistan

Afghans to Get Full Control Over Security by 2014

Afghan forces should be leading security operations in all parts of the country by 2014, an international conference agreed on July 20, with the aim of taking over from foreign troops in some areas by the year's end. The deadline will rely heavily on the success of the foreign troops in an ongoing operation against the Taliban, as well as on enticing thousands of insurgents to lay down arms. The reality of security elsewhere was illustrated by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's flight to the conference being diverted to NATO's Bagram airfield following a rocket attack. The final communiqué from the gathering said the Afghan government would be given more responsibility for its own affairs — including security — in exchange for guarantees it will improve standards and accountability. The communiqué said that the Afghan National Security Forces should lead and conduct military operations in all provinces by the end of 2014. Afghan President Hamid Karzai delivered a keynote address seeking to convince the international community he was capable of assuming responsibility for security and cleaning up government. He said the international community had committed enough money to see Afghanistan through the next three years and called for greater control of the aid budget for his country.

The Conference urged Kabul to make reforms to strengthen public financial management and reduce corruption, saying at least 50 percent of development aid would be channelled into the government's budget within two years, from the current 20 percent, in exchange for better accountability and a crackdown on graft. British Foreign Secretary William Hague said the Afghans had set out their own plans, but needed to put those into practice. "I have said to their ministers that it's now very important to implement these plans," Hague told reporters after the conference. The UN chief, who chaired the conference with Karzai, said the final communiqué reflected the determination of the international community "to stay engaged for the long term". "Now we must focus all our energies on making this vision a reality." US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the plan as "comprehensive" and said the conference marked a "turning point", while British Prime Minister David Cameron said plans for a transition in four years were "realistic".

The conference ended with an endorsement of Afghan President Hamid Karzai's plans to make peace with insurgents in an effort to end a nearly nine-year war. "Participants welcomed and endorsed in principle the Afghan government's peace and reintegration programme," the communiqué added. Karzai's programme is open to insurgents, "who renounce violence, have no links to international terrorist organisations, respect the constitution and are willing to join in building a peaceful Afghanistan", the statement noted. NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said the alliance would never allow the Taliban to topple the Afghan government. "Our mission will end only when the Afghans are able to maintain security on their own," he said. Rasmussen said transition would be based on "conditions, not calendars" with NATO forces working to train Afghan police and army to take the lead in protecting the country. "And when it happens, international forces won't leave; they will simply move into a supporting role," he added.

[Daily Times – July 21, 2010]

Bangladesh Politics

Bangladesh Court Bans Religion in Politics

Bangladesh's Supreme Court has reinstated a ban on Islamic political parties after striking down a key constitutional amendment, law minister Shafiq Ahmed told on July 28. In a detailed verdict, the Supreme Court scrapped the bulk of the 1979 fifth amendment, including provisions that had allowed religious political parties to flourish and legalised military rule. Ahmed said that secularism will again be the cornerstone of our constitution. After independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh's first constitution made secularism a key pillar. Following a 1975 coup, the army-led government amended the constitution's guiding principle to "faith in Allah" in 1979. Religious parties, which were banned in the original 1971 constitution but legalised by the 1979 amendments, are now banned again as the "faith in Allah" provision has been thrown out, said Ahmed. He said that Islamic parties cannot use religion in politics any more. In 1988, a second military-led government made Islam the state religion in the Muslim-majority nation and incorporated Quranic verses into the constitution. Neither of those changes was affected by the court verdict. "But following the scrapping of the fifth amendment, these later amendments can now be challenged in court," Ahmed said. In the verdict, the Supreme Court declared the 1975-1990 military rule illegal, and recommended punishing military dictators, Ahmed said. Since the Awami League's landslide election win over the Islamist-allied Bangladesh Nationalist Party in 2008, the government has cracked down on Islamic groups and political parties. The new government outlawed one Islamic party in October last year, accusing it of destabilising the country. Four other Islamist organisations, including the Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh, were earlier banned after they carried out a series of nationwide bombings that left 28 people dead in 2005.

[Dawn – July 29, 2010]

Maoist Problem of India

Indian State Offers Surrender Package to Maoists

One of India's states worst-hit by Maoist violence has offered more than 2,000 dollars to each rebel who surrenders their weapons and gives up the fight, police said on July 29. The State government in West Bengal has promised a bank account with a deposit of 100,000 rupees (2,140 dollars), as well as job training and employment opportunities. "The state promises to take care of them," senior police officer Surajit Kur Purkayastha told on July 29. "We will continue our fight but there are many Maoists who are keen to surrender. We are giving them a chance to change." The Maoists are fighting government rule in a large swathe of eastern and central India with support from landless tribal groups and poor farmers who have been left behind by economic development. Their insurgency, which first erupted in 1967 in a village in West Bengal, has spread to 20 of India's 29 states and been described by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as the country's largest internal security threat. Similar rehabilitation packages have been introduced in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh and the eastern state of Chhattisgarh, both of which face a significant Maoist threat. The government launched a major offensive last year to tackle the left-wing rebels, but top officials have warned that it could take between five and seven years to fully quell the insurgency. In retaliation, the rebels have killed over 100 police officers in the last four months and in May the insurgents were blamed for derailing a Kolkata to Mumbai passenger train, killing nearly 150.

[Daily Times – July 30, 2010]

Maoist Problem will be Overcome in Three Years: Chidambaram

Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram said on July 29 that the government was confident that the problem of Left-wing extremism would be overcome in the next three years. Addressing a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Minister expressed confidence that the challenge would be met jointly by the Central and State governments. Mr. Chidambaram said that after consultations with the Naxal-affected States, it was agreed to have a two-pronged strategy to handle the Maoist issue — based on development and police action. While the Central government acknowledged that the primary role and responsibility was that of State governments to enforce law and order, it also recognised its own responsibility in assisting the States in every way, he said. The Minister said the Centre was assisting the States by providing paramilitary forces, sharing intelligence, and funding development schemes and security needs. He said that at the July 14 meeting of Chief Ministers of seven Naxal-affected States, it was agreed that a Unified Command would be set up in West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand for anti-Naxal operations. Besides, the Centre would provide these States additional helicopters for logistics support, funds for establishment and strengthening of 400 police stations.

It was also agreed to set up an Empowered Group Chaired by Member Secretary, Planning Commission, to review existing norms and guidelines in implementation of various development schemes, having regard to local needs

such as road connectivity, primary education, primary health care and drinking water. During the discussions, the members broadly agreed with the suggestions given in the agenda note, which included steps on both security and development fronts.

[The Hindu – July 30, 2010]

Political Crisis in Nepal

Nepalese PM Resigns 'To End Political Stalemate'

Nepal's Prime Minister resigned after just 13 months in office, saying he wanted to end a long political stalemate in the troubled nation. Madhav Kumar Nepal had been under intense pressure from the opposition Maoist party to quit ever since he agreed last month to make way for a power-sharing government in a deal with the former rebels. "I have decided to resign from the post of Prime Minister so that the peace process can be completed, a new constitution drafted and the current political deadlock resolved," he said in a televised address to the nation. "Our country is facing the pain of transition and change ... National consensus is crucial if we are to find a way through these difficult times." Nepal's three biggest parties agreed last month to form a government of national unity in a deal to extend the term of the current parliament and avert a crisis that would have left the country without a functioning legislature. But there have been fierce disagreements over what form a new government should take and with no clear replacement, Nepal is expected to be appointed caretaker Prime Minister until a permanent successor can be chosen. The Maoists, who fought a decade-long civil war against the state before signing a 2006 peace agreement and winning elections two years later, argue that as the largest party in parliament they should lead any new government. The former rebels formed a government in 2008 and abolished the unpopular 240-year-old monarchy, but their administration fell nine months later in a row over the integration of their former fighters into the national army. The outgoing prime minister, a former leader of the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (UML), was sworn in on May 25, 2009, taking the helm of a 22-member coalition government that was seen as weak from the start.

[Daily Times – July 1, 2010]

State of Emergency in Thailand

Thailand Lifts State of Emergency in More Provinces

Thailand's government lifted a state of emergency in six provinces on July 29 but said the special security law would remain in place in 10 others, including Bangkok, scene of a deadly bomb blast on July 25. "It will take effect today in six provinces," Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said after a meeting with the National Security Council. The state of emergency, imposed since April to deal with anti-government protests, bans political gatherings of more than five people and gives the government powers to impose a curfew and censor media. It also gives broad powers to security forces, including the right to detain suspects without charge for 30 days.

[Reuters – July 29, 2010]