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Gender & Women's Empowerment

Women & Politics

Provincial Legislative Agenda on Women's Rights: Sharing of Ideas and Identifying Priority Issues

Women parliamentarians have been urged to participate in the law-making process of the Punjab Assembly, especially the legislations concerning women's rights, more effectively. Speaking at the working group meeting on 'Provincial Legislative Agenda on Women's Rights: Sharing of Ideas and Identifying Priority Issues'. Justice Nasira Javed Iqbal (retired) said that women representatives in the provincial and national assemblies had immensely contributed towards women's empowerment through their legislative actions. However, owing to several constraints and factors, work in certain crucial areas either could have not been initiated or had been left incomplete.

Labour Department Deputy-Director Naveed Warraich, Industrial Relations Institute Director Saeed Awan and Hanif Ramay of the Muttahida Labour Federation's Punjab chapter were key speakers at the meeting which recommended that:

- Women's party caucus should be strengthened.
- The government should fulfill its promise to provide 10 percent jobs quota to women in all its departments at all levels, particularly in decision-making positions.
- The provisions of the Sexual Harassment Act, 2010, must be displayed prominently and explained to all female workers.
- There should be clear legislation and codes of conduct on the responsibility of security personnel concerning internal prevention and response to human rights violations, including disciplinary procedures.
- Political parties should allocate funds for their women workers and there should be orientation programmes on assembly proceedings so that members could get knowledge about it.
- Legislation on women's issues must be taught to all women parliamentarians and trained staff of the assembly secretariat must be assigned exclusively to them.
- Development funds should be allocated for women's projects.
- Discrimination in release of funds for the women elected on general seats and those elected on reserved seats should be ended.
- The meetings of House Steering Committees should be regularised and vocational training centres should be opened wherever informal schools or literacy centres already existed.
- The National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) should automatically register all persons over 18 years of age as voters while issuing CNIC which must bear photos to avoid fraud.
- Electoral laws should declare such elections to be void in which women were excluded from voting by political parties.
- Political parties should also ensure equal participations for women in their manifestoes. There should be gender review of manifestoes of all political parties that should organise training programs for the political awareness of their women workers at grassroots.
- Women parliamentarians should direct all their efforts to create such government-funded projects and programmes that could bridge the gender gap; create space for women within the existing system; address child rights issues; and try to change the existing system for the betterment of the ordinary woman.
- There should be affirmative action policies and laws to provide Pakistani women opportunity to become equal partners with men in national development efforts.
- Women reserved seats should be allocated to women technocrats (50 percent) political workers (25 percent) educated female counterparts of male politicians (25 percent) in an attempt to form an efficient and effective working force of parliamentarians dedicated to make that substantive contribution required to empower women at all levels.
- Gender sensitive operations, leading to gender equality, must be conducted with the help of exclusive women task forces in accordance with the present government policy.
- Political reforms facilitating effective participation of women in the political sphere must be ensured within all political parties.

- Reforms in public sector recruitment process and safe working conditions in offices to encourage women for employment in all sectors should be ensured by implementation of present international and national laws.
- An awareness campaign should be launched for empowerment of marginalised female population. Knowledge of female laws and programmes would enable women to play their due substantive role in the overall socioeconomic development of the society.
- There should be affirmative action for the implementation of the existing laws, especially concerning inheritance that existed but women were not given their share in inheritance.
- There should be legislation for an increased participation of female parliamentarians on security-related committees. There should be refresher courses for women parliamentarians and back-up technical support for making laws.

Aurat Foundation Legislative Watch Programme provincial coordinator Mumtaz Mughal said that the working paper on the current status of women's legislative agenda included achievements and what needed to be done. The task was completed with the help of the assembly's record and input of some members of the Punjab Assembly and with the assistance of the USAID-Pakistan to enhance knowledge of women parliamentarians and women in political parties on specific women right issues, Mumtaz added.

[Dawn – June 9, 2010]

WPC Forms Committee to Monitor Education Policy Implementation

Venturing into the education sector, the Women Parliamentarians Caucus (WPC) has formed a committee to monitor the implementation of educational policy and suggest measures to remove the impediment in its implementation. The decision was taken in a meeting of the working council of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus in the National Assembly on Monday. National Assembly Speaker Dr. Fehmida Mirza chaired the meeting. The working council expressed its satisfaction over the recently held convention of women parliamentarians, widely attended by women parliamentarians from Senate, National Assembly, all provincial assemblies, Legislative Assemblies of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, civil society and media. The council unanimously resolved that the convention provided an opportunity to women parliamentarians to forge unity to build collective vision for women emancipation and gender equality.

The Speaker was of the view that the women MPs actively participated in the working sessions during the convention, which formed the basis of the landmark resolution adopted at the conclusion of the convention. The meeting was attended by MNAs Nafeesa Shah, Begum Nuzhat Sadiq, Bushra Gohar, Saima Akhtar Barwana, Begum Ishrat Ashraf, Khushbakht Shujaat and Dr. Doniya Aziz.

[The News – June 8, 2010]

The Land Down Under Welcomes First Woman PM

Australian women welcomed their first woman Prime Minister, but warned that the unmarried, childless Julia Gillard could face a gender backlash in a land known for its macho culture. Forty years after Australia's Germaine Greer penned "The Female Eunuch" which unpicked the traditional role of women, Gillard was appointed in an historic moment seen as the realisation of a feminist fantasy.

The fact that Gillard was sworn in by another woman — Governor General Quentin Bryce, the first woman to hold the post as Queen Elizabeth II's representative in the country, appeared the icing on the cake. "It's precisely what our mothers — and Germaine! — hoped would one day happen, as they argued, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, for fundamental changes to the fabric of the nation," The Australian's Caroline Overington wrote. "Imagine that, 30 years ago: an unmarried woman, living in sin with a man. Who is a hairdresser. And aspiring to high office. Forget about it. That's how far we've come."

The change which brings Welsh-born Gillard, 48, to the top job will shake up the land of "cold beer and untrammelled misogyny", according to expatriate writer Kathy Lette. "Let me say Australian men are quaking in their Ugg boots because even though we're one of the first countries in the world to give women the vote, it's a very sexist country," she told Britain's Sky News.

With Gillard's Labor Party flailing in the polls against a conservative opposition led by man's man Tony Abbott, Cox said women were sometimes appointed to lead parties because they were "good at cleaning up messes". Such is

the case with New South Wales Premier Kristina Keneally, who heads the Labor Party in the country's most populous state and is known for her windswept hairstyle as much as her government's transport and health failings. Keneally may have some support from state governor Marie Bashir, who is also the first female in that position, who has said she will not remove the premier unless there was a successful no-confidence motion. "It's never easy being a pioneer," said the only other woman currently leading a state, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, adding that Gillard will face intense scrutiny in the role. From her flaming red hair to her black stilettos, Gillard will be under the spotlight as perhaps only one other female Australian politician has been before her — anti-immigration firebrand Pauline Hanson. Gillard's ever-changing hairstyles, her live-in partner of four years hairdresser Tim Mathieson and her childless status have already provided rich fodder for discussion. In 2007, she was forced to respond to comments from a conservative politician that she was "deliberately barren" and therefore unable to connect with average Australian mums and dads. Gillard's ascension was not a sign that gender was irrelevant, "but it is an important signal to women that girls can do anything".

[Daily Times – June 26, 2010]

Women's Empowerment

Engendered Fiscal and Policy Reforms – A Review of GRAP

Fiscal and policy reforms is one of the four major reform areas to be implemented under the aegis of the Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP). This reform component has been introduced due to the realisation that engendering of budget and policies can lead to better policy outcomes. There are 17 actions planned under the fiscal and policy reforms, which aim to engender policy formulation and implementation processes. These actions include **reforming the budgetary and planning processes, modifying the public expenditure mechanisms, review of key policies through gender lens, as well as initiation of an informed debate on government budgeting and policy-making.**

Launched in 2005, Federal GRAP is currently in its fourth year of implementation. The first phase of GRAP was to span over a period of two years, but the project is still in the same phase, having received two no-cost extensions of one year each. The project has not been able to achieve many of its targets for phase one. However, some activities have been undertaken by the various implementing partners. Six key ministries/departments were identified by GRAP, which were felt to be critical in implementing the reform agenda. These ministries/departments were to establish gender development sections/units for conducting activities specific to each implementing partner, along with assisting the process of gender mainstreaming.

The GDSs were established in five of the six identified ministries at the federal level, but their presence has not ensured that gender concerns be incorporated in the functioning of the ministries and has in fact further compartmentalised the reform agenda. Although the GDSs have undertaken most of the activities assigned to them under the PC-1, they lack clarity on the objectives of the tasks assigned, and do not have the ability to play a policy level role. This also holds true for the gender mainstreaming units established in the key departments in Punjab, which is the only province where GRAP has been operationalised. The revision in the rules of business has not seen any progress so far for any of the IPs. There have however, been certain achievements over the period of the last four years for both the federal as well as the provincial GRAPs.

The level of implementation of GRAP varies from one province to the other. Punjab is the only province in which the project is functional, though multiple issues exist in the implementation process. Sindh and Balochistan initiated the project four years ago but their achievements are far from satisfactory. In the Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, GRAP has still not been given cabinet approval. Most of the implementing partners have undertaken a number of fiscal and policy reform initiatives to enhance capacities of their staff, as well as improving the provision of basic amenities as suggested in the reform agenda under GRAP.

The implementation of GRAP has been riddled with challenges and issues, which is the reason why most of the activities planned under GRAP have not been completed. The overall issues leading to the lack of implementation are inter-related and are serious in their own right, but have also had a direct impact upon the expected scale and quality of implementation of individual thematic areas (TAs) of the GRAP/s. The policy and fiscal reforms have been largely ignored in the implementation of GRAPs; gaps relating to the implementation procedures of the TA in the GRAPs; gaps in PC-1s and the corresponding lack of political will; and limited capacities of GDSs/GMUs. This piece is based on the analysis of Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) undertaken by the Citizen Commission for Human Development for a project gender mainstreaming through media. The project is meant to increase

awareness of general public about GRAP. GRAP is an agenda for gender reform within an overall governance structure. It focuses on the executive arm of the government, and covers federal, provincial and district levels.

GRAP proposes a set of key reforms in four areas through which gender is to be mainstreamed in the government's systems and procedures. **These reforms include institutional reforms, reforms in policies, budgeting and public expenditure mechanisms; increase and improvement in women's employment in public sector organisations and reforms to improve women's political participation; and related capacity building interventions.** 'Supporting Reforms' include legislative support actions, poverty reduction support actions and projects and programmes. Total estimated cost of federal GRAP over four years was Rs619.6 million (24% recurrent and 76% non-recurrent capital cost. The budgetary allocations for GRAP for three of the provinces were revised in the PC-1s and the overall costs of each province were: Punjab Rs605.3 million; Sindh Rs308.67 million; and Balochistan Rs530 million. The Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa GRAP has not been approved by the provincial cabinet to-date and therefore a PC-1 has still not been designed.

[The News – June 9, 2010]

Continuation of Women's Empowerment Projects Urged

Stressing for smooth continuation of the projects designed for women's empowerment at policy level, participants of a seminar said that abrupt disruption in programmes especially those relating to gender reform agenda not only cause financial loss, but also fail to achieve the target of institutionalising gender in governance process. These views were expressed at a seminar titled '**National Gender Reform Agenda: State Responsiveness and Accountability**,' organized by Aurat Foundation. The event was presided over by National Commission on the Status of Women Chairperson Anis Haroon whereas Advisor to Ministry of Women Development Yasmeen Rehman was the chief guest on the occasion.

Prominent civil society members, human right activists, women leaders from mainstream political parties and a large number of students participated in the seminar. The participants were briefed about the functioning and performance of the programmes working on the lines of national gender reform agenda including **Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP), Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) and Gender Crime Centre.**

Participants criticised that stakeholders are thoroughly involved at the time of the launching of such project but while taking the decision of closing or making big changes in any such project, it is the bureaucracy or consultants who have the final words. They said that it was the political participation of women in local bodies that raised Pakistan's ranking in the Global Gender Index, but after deferring the local bodies' election, the government has lost its only strong point. Referring to the decision of restructuring GRAP, Acting Chief Operating Officer Naeem Mirza 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. He strongly resisted the idea of running GRAP through foreign aid. "It was the basic principle decided at the launching time that the project will run only through the government assistance," he pointed out. While appreciating the overall performance of the BISP and the role it is playing to empower women by making them a vital part of the project, the participants also registered their reservation regarding its implementation. Some said that instead of giving charity, the government should try to lower the inflation while others criticised the role of postmen, who were blamed for taking tip from the recipients. The project that came under immense criticism was Gender Crime Centre. It was disclosed that only three officials are running the centre, established to deal with violence against women cases in the country. Even the organizers experienced difficulty in locating the officials. The participants requested Advisor on Women Development Yasmeen Rehman to look into the matter and work for the capacity building of the centre so that it can play some affective role in combating the cases of violence against women.

Earlier, BISP (Operations) Director General Mukhtar Ahmed and GRAP Executive Director Rehana Hashmi gave presentations about the two most prominent projects launched by the government to mainstream national gender reform agenda. Speaking about the background of GRAP, Rehana Hashmi said that the cabinet approved the project in the year 2005, but it started functioning in March 2008. "The GRAP focuses on executive arm of the government and covers federal, provincial and district level with the main objective of introducing administrative, institutional and political reforms," she pointed out. Sharing recommendations of the third party evaluation, she said that it recommended restructuring of Ministry of Women Development and suggested that GRAP should be converted into a foreign aided project. "It was recommended that GRAP needs to be developed as policy framework for women empowerment than a nuts and bolt project that focuses on provision of basic facilities than strategic needs," she added. She regretted that the review team did not give any chance to the GRAP team to present their point of view. Director General BISP Mukhtar Ahmed said that the BISP has set the target to benefit 5

million families in the next financial year, which will make 15 per cent of the population. In past two years, he said that registration of women for National Identity Card has increased from men because of the condition money is released in the name of the women of the house.

[The News – June 9, 2010]

Women & Economics

Experts Stress Legal Cover for Home-Based Female Workers

Participants of a national consultation on Home Based Women Workers (HBWW) held at National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) have stressed on evolving a strong institutional and legal cover to protect labour and social rights of HBWWs.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Social Affairs Shehnaz Wazir Ali chaired the event organised by NCSW and Coalition on Rights of Home Based Workers (KARKUN). Provincial Minister for Women Development for Sindh Tauqir Fatima Bhutto and Provincial Minister for Balochistan Ghazala Gola were also present on the occasion. The consultation was aimed at developing key aspects of legislation for the protection of HBWWs. The consultation started with a comprehensive briefing highlighting the overall situation of HBWWs in Pakistan. Bushra Khalid and Aqsa Khan from KARKUN conducted the briefing. According to various estimates, they said that over 20 million women workers in Pakistan are engaged in home-based work in value addition sectors like garments, bangle-making, shoe-stitching, embroidery, carpet weaving, dry fruit peeling, jewellery, leather products, stitching of mobile phone covers, prawn shelling etc.

They pointed out that working hours of these women range from 12 to 16 hours whereas their daily income in return of this sheer hard work is Rs10 to Rs50 only. "They have no social and legal recognition for their work. Working in isolation, they have no rights as workers by law. Long working hours, poor working conditions, and family pressure badly affect their health," they mentioned. They said that more than three-fourth of urban employment for women takes place in the informal sector. Coupled with increasing workload, this poor lot of workers is at the mercy of middleman, contractor and sub-contractor.

The briefing was followed by an interactive session moderated by Dr. Fauzia Saeed in which participants came up with suggestions based on their experience. Some said that it was better to utilise already existing institutions for the benefit of HBWWs instead of evolving new mechanisms where as others thought that HBWW should be dealt separately as they had special needs that were always ignored in past. Prominent human rights activist Tahira Abdullah said that HBWW should first be recognised as workers and all the benefits legally provided to workers should be extended to HBWWs. "We already have several draft laws on the issue of social security for workers, produced by stakeholders in past," she said suggesting that women workers should be included in those security nets instead of creating another network. Economist Dr. Aliya H Khan said that the policy on HBWWs, prepared by Sungi and was presented to Ministry of Labour and Manpower last year, is still pending with the Ministry of Labour and Manpower and has not been presented before the cabinet yet. She said that HBWWs were not given appropriate importance in the new labour policy and demanded that they should first be included in all aspects of new labour policy. Shehnaz Wazir Ali said that the government would like to build on the base work done by civil society and other stakeholders so far. She further said that the formal labour has easy access to the decision-making and work related benefits but it is the informal workers that have no voice. Advisor to Prime Minister Yasmeen Rehman said that the Ministry of Women (MoWD) is committed to take this draft legislation forward after getting views and inputs from all the stakeholders. Secretary Women Parliamentarian Caucus, Nafeesa Shah, appreciated the initiative and assured all out support of caucus in this regard.

[The News – June 8, 2010]

Women & Laws

Women's Ministry Again Fails to Submit CEDAW Report

The Ministry of Women Development (MoWD) has again failed to submit Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw) report in time as the deadline to submit the report was April end whereas the report is still passing through lengthy bureaucratic procedures. Pakistan acceded to CEDAW in February 1996, a convention that was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 18, 1979. Acceding to the Convention, it makes obligatory for a member country to condemn any biases against women and take affirmative steps to make society discrimination-free. The members are also asked to submit regular reports on the status of women and then defend them verbally before the experts' committee.

Since acceding to the convention, Pakistan repeatedly failed to submit its reports in time. Its combined initial, second and third periodic report was submitted to UN committee after 9 years in March 2005. The MoWD defended these reports before a 23-member experts' committee in what was the 38th session of the Convention on May 22, 2007. In its response, the Cedaw committee expressed concern over the issue of violence against women and demanded further details on the issues of health, education, micro-financing, citizenship laws, women representation in decision-making, institutional as well as administrative gaps, and women with disability. The committee asked the government to correct stereotypes, especially those related to religion while also showing its reservations on the 'jirga' and 'panchayat' systems. It also sought explanation in the next report on insufficient representation of women in state institutions and even lesser representation at policy and decision-making levels. In the year 2009, the Cedaw Follow-up and Reporting Project, a separate set up established within the MoWD to draft the report, finally produced the first draft of the fourth report that contained answers to the queries posed by the committee. The draft was presented before the National Assembly Standing Committee that rejected it while terming it "not matching" to the reality on ground.

"The issue was to synchronise government CEDAW report with the shadow reports to be produced by civil society," said an official of the ministry. "Due to lack of coordination previously, there was a huge difference between the official and shadow reports submitted last time," the official admitted. The report then went through a review at federal and provincial level and consultations were arranged with the NGOs. The report then went to the cabinet and from there to the Foreign Office for vetting on February 16. Project Director CEDAW Mazhar Hussain Hashmi told that the report has returned from the Foreign Office after vetting and now it will go to Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani for approval, as he is the minister in charge. He said that from there the report will go for printing and then again it will be presented before the cabinet for approval. He further said that the report will be submitted after that," he said hoping that the report will be submitted till the end of August this year. Talking about the delay, he said that the Foreign Office took more time than expected. Rejecting impression that the Foreign Office had certain objections regarding the report as they found it more representative of the NGO version than the official version, he said that delay was only of bureaucratic nature.

[The News – June 22, 2010]

Women & Media

Two-Day Workshop for Female Journalists Concludes

The Women Media Centre (WMC) organised a two-day workshop to train female journalists on issues related to reporting on constitution and constitutional amendments. Organised in collaboration with National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the workshop covered the basic knowledge about the Constitution of Pakistan, its development process, constitutional crisis, constitutional amendment procedure, indemnity bill and chapter of fundamental rights in the Constitution.

A large number of working and aspiring female journalists attended the workshop that included informative lectures around the topic and technical aspects involved in making a good report for electronic media. The training will include lighting, camera work, and storyboard, scripting and editing techniques as well. The participants will experience both the classroom understanding and practical applications. Senior journalists and lawmakers such as Senator S M Zafar, Dr Zafar Ullah Khan and Nazir Laghari briefed the participants on the history of constitution in Pakistan and answered tough questions regarding the constitutional developments in the past. With the introduction of 18th Amendment, they said that the Parliament has reached consensus on majority of the issues. "It is now the responsibility of civil society to push for the implementation of the constitution," they said. They criticised military regimes for toying with the constitution and said that the only way to bring change in the constitution is through parliament. They urged participants to read the constitution especially the part about fundamental rights so that they can create awareness among the masses. "Not many people know that they can go to court if their fundamental rights that are guaranteed in the constitution are violated," they added. Highlighting new addition in fundamental rights that are brought by 18th Amendment, they said that introduction of 'right to education' in the constitution as fundamental right has enabled public to go to court if they even found teachers missing from the school of their locality. "It is now up to media to aware public about the new powers given to them through constitutional amendment." They said that constitution should be made part of the textbooks and a copy of constitution should be made available in the libraries of all universities. "There is a need to make people realize that constitution is a contract between them and the government."

[The News – June 17, 2010]

Articles, Reports & Books on Gender

Urdu Translation of Handbook for Women Launched

Aimed at empowering women to take on leadership roles in their families, communities and societies, Aurat Foundation on June 14 launched the Urdu translation of an international leadership training handbook for women titled '**Pasand ki Janib (Leading To Choices)**'.

The Urdu translation of culture-specific adaptations of Leading to Choices is done by Dr. Masuma Hasan. Launched by international organisation Women's learning Partnership, the manual is used to train diverse groups of women and girls in the practice of inclusive, participatory, and horizontal leadership. The book is based on the premise that effective leadership relies on the ability to communicate, listen, build consensus, and work in partnership with allies to develop a collective vision and implement an action plan. Sharing power and respect creates a strong group identity that both empowers individuals to achieve personal goals and mobilises the group for collective action.

Leading to Choices has been used in interactive training workshops with thousands of participants in more than 25 countries, including women activists, academics, domestic workers, factory workers, NGO leaders, politicians, refugees, students, and indigenous women. The manual is currently available in English, Maghreby-Arabic, Shamy-Arabic, Assamese, French, Hausa, Malay, Meiteilon, Persian, Russian, Shona, Spanish, Swahili, and Uzbek. Bahasa Indonesian, Kokborok, Portuguese, Turkish, and Tagalog editions are forthcoming.

Advisor to Prime Minister on Social Sector Shehnaz Wazir Ali was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony attended by a large number of civil society activists and representatives of CBOs and NGOs. Other who expressed their views about the manual included feminist thinker and researcher Rubina Saigol, political and civil rights activist and academician Amar Sindhu and training specialist and gender expert Zahra-tul-Fatima. Executive Director, Aurat Foundation Nigar Ahmed chaired the book launch session. Acting Chief Operating Officer Aurat Foundation Naeem Mriza briefed the audience about the manual and its need in enhancing women leadership in Pakistan. Referring to the manual, Zahra-tul-Fatima reiterated that in order to properly listen and understand what we listen, it is necessary to burry our already-made opinion.

She said that the main emphasis of the manual is on gender-based discrimination that is a major factor behind destruction of socio-cultural fabric of our society and consequent increase in violence in the society. She however expressed concerns that the manual does not recommend any session with men to sensitise them on gender equality and women's right to lead. Appreciating title of the manual 'Pasand ki Janib', Amar Sindhu said that women are mostly deprived of their basic right of choice in all basic human rights matters. Robina Saigol was of the view that mentioning of national women's rights movements like 'Sindhianni tehrik' would have made the manual more interesting and effective in national context. She said instead of manuals, it was the passion and determination that makes true leaders. Shehnaz Wazir Ali in her concluding remarks appreciated Aurat Foundation's role in paving way for women to realise their role as 'leaders,' human rights activists as well as legislators and parliamentarians. She expressed hope that such training manual for enhancing women's leadership role would strengthen Pakistani women to come forward and play their role as leaders in bringing sustainable democratic change in Pakistan.

[The News – June 15, 2010]

Launching of The State of Pakistan's Children 2009

The State of Pakistan's Children 2009 is once again a sad reminder that Pakistan is not doing enough or not at all for the welfare of its children, when we record the grim health statistics that every year 400,000 children under five years of age die and out of these, over 300,000 in the first year of their life, while increasing poverty is pushing more children into child labour, and the low and inefficiently spent education budget decreasing opportunities for children to access the right to education. In addition to the fact that all child related legislation are in an indeterminate state, stated a Press Release issued by Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) today in Islamabad.

Speaking at the launch of the SPARC flagship report The State of Pakistan's Children 2009 Executive Director Mr Arshad Mahmood said this is an opportune time to ask some difficult questions. We have to ask the State as to what has been done in the past 20 years to ensure all children enjoy their basic rights. We need to know why it is taking so long to legislate for children; why budgetary allocations for child centered programmes remain at bare minimum levels; why there is still no statutory body to protect and promote child rights in Pakistan. In 1990 Pakistan ratified the Convention on the rights of the child and committed to align its national laws and policies with the provisions given in the convention. The successive governments have failed to fulfil this promise. Most importantly, how can we expect Pakistan to prosper without investing in its children? Children in Pakistan continue to bear the brunt of poverty, illiteracy, poor governance and corruption, terrorism and militancy. Children are either directly involved, are potential militants or are victims of militancy. Whichever ways we look at it, children are paying a heavy price and losing out on all the rights enshrined in the country's constitution as well as in the international instrument to which Pakistan is a signatory.

Giving an overview of the 2009 report on state of children Ms Amina Sarwar, Research Officer SPARC said despite all the grimness there are some positive developments too. In juvenile justice the number of children has dropped from estimated 4, 000 to about 1800-2000 at any given time. Besides there has been 90% increase in the gross enrollment of children at pre-primary level. However, from the overview it is clear that the large chunk of the children is still denied their rights to education, health, safety, security etc. and is becoming victims of terrorism, internal conflict, losing homes and adding to the army of deprived children. According to the report edited by National Manager Research Ms. Zarina Jillani, the wave of internal displacement in 2009 is considered 'the single largest population movement recorded in the country since it was created'. Children in Swat witnessed some of the most brutal acts of the militants. In this conflict, 600,000 children are reported to have missed up to a year of school. The total estimated cost of the damage caused to education sector in the five districts of Buner, Upper and Lower Dir, Shangla, and Swat as well as the two tribal agencies of Bajaur and Mohmand in FATA is Rs. 3,040.5 million.

The report once again laments the lack of reliable and comparable statistical data on child labour at the national level that makes it difficult to study the trend of child labour over the years understand the impact of the numerous interventions or plan actions to address the issue. There are various estimates of the number of child labourers in the country. In 2003, UNICEF estimates were about eight million child labourers and in 2005, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan report estimated the number of child labourers in the country to be about ten million. According to the Pakistan Labour Force Survey (2007-2008) there are over 21million children between 10 to 14 years of age. Out of this 2.68 million or 12 percent of this age group is employed.

[SPARC Website]

Child Welfare Bureau Has No Room for Girl Beggars

The Child Welfare and Protection Bureau, which is mandated to eliminate child beggary and labour, has no arrangements for accommodating girl beggars after picking them up from the street. The Bureau looks after and rehabilitates only young male beggars and destitute children. It has no arrangements for entertaining girl beggars as the office has no lady staff to take care of them. At present there are 60 teenage boys in the bureau's office who are being imparted education and other skills in order to make them earn respectable livelihood. However, the office extends no support to female beggars. Established in 2008, the Child Welfare and Protection Bureau picks up only boys from the streets and spares girls resulting in sharp increase in the number of girls begging in the city.

Traveling through Benazir Bhutto Road, one can see girl beggars at almost each intersection cleaning windscreens of cars and asking for money. In other words, girl beggars have become hallmark of the busy traffic route due to the government's indifference to their plight. District Officer Irfan Farid told that there was a dire need of female staff at his office to look after girl beggars adding that the only reason behind the increasing teenage girls' beggary was lack of arrangements in the bureau.

The Officer said that we are extremely worried about the future of teenage girls involved in begging. They might be abused anytime. Their number is increasing because temporary crackdown of police on them is not a permanent solution. Official sources said that the number of teenage girl beggars in the city was much greater than their counterpart as hundreds of boys had been enabled to leave the profession and earn livelihood through skilled work. "But we have failed to purge the city of female beggars because we do not entertain them like other beggars. There are hundreds of teenage girls begging in the city streets, roads and commercial areas," he added.

Najma, a teenage beggar told this reporter that she was willing to leave the profession if she is given two times meal, a shelter and clothes. "I want to live like others. I have to bear thousand of unpleasant words daily for getting a few rupees," she said. She said that their counterparts were offered support from government while they were ignored. "Sometimes police come and threaten us but now we are used to warnings. We know people take no pity on us. We clean windscreens for getting money," Najma said. However, Executive District Officer (revenue) Zubair Khan said that soon a summary would be sent to Lahore for sanctioning lady staff at the office of Child Welfare and Protection Bureau in order to rehabilitate teenage girl beggars.

[Dawn – June 20, 2010]

Borstal Institutions for Juvenile Offenders Soon

Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Barrister Arshad Abdullah has said that Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was determined to establish a reform centre for juvenile offenders and borstal institutions to impart them education and training for their mental and moral development. He was addressing a consultative workshop on Borstal Law organised by Society for the Protection of Rights of the Child (SPARC) on June 17. The Minister underlined the need for sensitising the station house officers (SHOs) so that the age of a juvenile offender could rightly be mentioned in the first information reports. About the suggestions and recommendations forwarded at the workshop, the Minister said that his department would look into the recommendations so that the proposed law could be made more effective and workable.

SPARC National Manager Rashid Aziz dwelt at length on the proposed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Borstal Act, 2010. He said that if borstal institutions were established the juvenile offenders would be imparted education and training for their mental, moral and psychological development to make them useful citizens of the society in future. SPARC Project Manager Ijaz Muhammad Khan and national manager, Abdullah Khoso, said that juvenile offenders were being detained in prisons with hardcore criminals, which, they added, had negative effects on the personality of the children.

[The News – June 18, 2010]

Child Labour Issue Worsening in Country

Nation coordinator of Coalition Against Child Labour (CACL) Shahid Mahmood Ansari has said that the child labour issue is worsening after every passing day in Pakistan because of negligence of the department concerned. He said that child rights were being violated badly in the country as the children were force to work in sheer violation of related laws. He said that the CACL was going to launch a series of new activities with the collaboration of another organization SPARC to create awareness on child labour as well as to protest child rights. He said that the CACL would celebrate Child Labour Eradication week between June 7 and 12 in connection with world Child Labour Day. He said that different, seminars, meetings, walks and demonstration would be held during the week to create awareness among masses.

[The Nation – June 4, 2010]

70,000 Working Children Rehabilitated under IPECL

More than 70,000 working children have been rehabilitated in Pakistan through International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (IPECL) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). ILO representative Taseer Alizai said this at a seminar arranged by the Child Labour Unit Centre on 'Improvement 4443of Working Conditions and Environment of the Punjab Labour and Human Resource Department' in connection with the World Day Against Child Labour on June 15.

The day was observed in the backdrop of FIFA Football World Cup and on the theme “Go for the Goal: End Child Labour and Red Card to Child Labour”. Alizai said the ILO had been helping Pakistan in identification and rehabilitation of working children, especially those in hazardous sectors. With the cooperation of European Union, the ILO has launched a project to address child labour in Sahiwal and Sukkur districts. Punjab Labour Minister Ashraf Sohna said the government was fully committed to eradicate child labour, particularly its worst forms. Brick Kiln Owners Association President Shoaib Khan Niazi assured the participants of full support in making brick kilns free of child and bonded labour. Labour Department Director Altaf Ezid Khan spoke about the action oriented programmes being launched by the government to eliminate child labour. A project had been started in Lahore and Kasur districts to educate 7,000 children at brick kiln, he said. The ‘high quality’ education system set up by the government for children of workers, besides other welfare schemes, had been benefiting thousands of such children in Punjab, Khan added. Child Labour Unit Centre Director Saeed Ahmad Awan, quoting a survey of the federal government, said Punjab had most of the country’s 3.3 million child labourers. Tailor-made programmes were being launched to address worst forms of child labour in the province, he said. Children enrolled at schools at brick kilns were special guests at the funfair that followed the seminar. Along with their families, such children presented songs and skits highlighting the importance of education. Drawings by these children were also put on display on the occasion.

[Dawn – June 16, 2010]

Minorities Rights

Christians Continue to Suffer at Hands of Local Landlord

The lives of 44 Christian residents of the village of Renala Khurd remained threatened, as a local feudal lord continued to detain them illegally despite court orders, due to the slow response of the police. A local feudal lord was keeping the Christians imprisoned in their own homes and threatened to burn them all alive if his daughter, who had allegedly eloped with a Christian boy, was not handed over to him along with the boy. Irshad Masih, uncle of Basharat Masih, the Christian boy who allegedly eloped with the daughter, Nadia of the village Chaudhry, Muhammad Ashraf, told Daily Times that the police never arrived to rescue the people imprisoned by Ashraf and his armed guards, despite the orders of Renala Khurd District and Sessions Judge Shafiqur Rehman Khan. The court had issued directions to the relevant Station House Officer to take action by June 25 after hearing a petition filed by Irshad under section 491 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Pakistan, but the police had yet to reach the area.

However, Irshad told that the chaudhry himself and other village elders including Nambardar Muhammad Jamil, Mohammad Aslam Fauji and Muhammad Akram, had gotten angry after Daily Times had published the story. He said that Arshad and his family were angry with the Christians for contacting the court and media against their orders, and were now threatening Irshad and several others who were helping him expose the unjust act and recover his family members. “I have been receiving continuous death threats and they are even warning me that they will prevent me from reaching the court. I don’t know what to do because I am feeling really insecure,” Irshad stated. He said that he and his lawyers had not been given any police protection despite multiple requests to SHO Arif and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Tariq Warraich who had replied that the police was only responsible for the protection of Irshad and the others in the premises of the court. He alleged that the police was clearly taking the landlord’s side and that Ashraf was controlling the police. He claimed Ashraf had friends in the police and had bribed them in the past as well. He said that the death threat to himself and his family had become even more severe since he had sought justice because the government machinery was clearly supporting the offenders and further oppressing the victims. He said that the situation has become so grim at his village that a few of his friends in the area had told him that Ashraf had even denied the supply of medicine and milk to the severely ill people and children he had detained. Irshad’s lawyer, Niaz Amir, told Daily Times that on June 23, the judge had ordered the police to produce the detained people before him by June 25 but the police had not reached the houses till the night of June 24. Niaz said that the police had let the people suffer for at least two days instead of getting them released as soon as possible. He said that the courts normally sent bailiffs to recover detained people in cases filed under 491 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Pakistan but the honourable court had given the orders to the SHO instead. He said that he could not find any precedent for sending police officers to recover detained or abducted people under section 491 and he would take up the issue with the court the next day. He said that he had requested the DSP concerned, Tariq Warriach to provide Irshad and the people accompanying him in court on June 25 with proper security but the DSP had turned down the request and had said that the police could only protect them inside the court premises. DSP Tariq Warriach told Daily Times that the police had already investigated the case and that nobody was being detained in the said village. He said that the case was actually about the abduction of a Muslim girl by a Christian but the local Christians were telling the police a different story.

He said that the police was bound to abide by the court orders and was acting upon them, however the anger of the girl's family was justified. Meanwhile, Bishop of Lahore Dr Alexander John Malik and several rights activists have slammed the government and law enforcement agencies for failing to protect the rights of the innocent Christians of Renala Khurd. Community Development Initiative (CDI) Executive Director Asif Aqeel told that no government authorities had taken notice that death threats against local Christians had become stronger.

[Daily Times – June 25, 2010]

Minorities Seek Right of Domicile in FATA

Minority communities settled in FATA have demanded that the government should give them the right of getting domicile certificates in order to avail job opportunities in their areas. Taking part in a dialogue at the Peshawar Press Club on June 9, members of Hindu, Christian and Sikh communities said they had been living in the tribal region for decades but the government had not given them the right to get domicile certificates. They said that no facilities are available to minorities, particularly Christians, in the region," they said. The dialogue was arranged by the Tribal Development Network and South Asian Partnership (SAP), Pakistan.

Those spoke on the occasion included Arshad Masih, Sumera George, Arhist Jacob, Sikandar Hayat and Nizam Dawar. A large number of minority members from Khyber, Kurram and South Waziristan agencies and representatives of NGOs participated in the dialogue. Church of Pakistan Bishop Arnist Jacob was the chief guest. They said the minority members were not allowed to purchase land despite the fact they had been living there for decades and had no intention to shift somewhere else. They said that our forefathers had come to the tribal region where the families have been living in a very cordial atmosphere with the Muslims but even then we have been kept deprived of such basic rights, Arshad Masih said they could not avail government jobs and most of them were either doing jobs in private schools etc or dealing in different kinds of businesses to earn a livelihood. Referring to ordeals of internally displaced persons of different tribal areas, he said the Muslims had been provided camps, relief items and registration facilities, but the minorities had been kept deprived of it. About 45,000 non-Muslims, including 4,500 Christians, were living in FATA, he said. He said the Hindus also needed a place of worship in the tribal region. However, he said, there was no threat to their lives from the Taliban even when performed their religious activities. Bishop Jacob said the minorities had been facing problems from the very inception and they would have to join hands in a peaceful struggle for their rights. Tribal Development Network Chairman Nizam Dawar, SAP-Pakistan project manager Sikandar Hayat and others appealed to President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani and Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti to take steps to ensure facilities to minorities in the tribal areas.

[Dawn – June 10, 2010]

Other HR Related Issues

Pakistan Ranks as 'Tier 2' Country in Human Trafficking

Pakistan has been ranked as a "Tier 2" country in the 2010 US Trafficking in Persons Report, which has cited improvements from the previous year due to efforts to prosecute human traffickers, and prevent and combat bonded labour. Announcing the release of the report, US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said Washington was committed to supporting Pakistan in its efforts to combat human trafficking.

Prosecutions: Highlighting Pakistan's action against human trafficking, the report said the conviction of 385 criminals in 2009 under the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance, and 2,894 prosecutions and 166 convictions under various other penal code sections used to prosecute trafficking offences had led to significant improvements.

The report stated that the Sindh police's successful efforts to free over 2,000 bonded labourers from feudal landlords, and their work with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to raise awareness and develop better protection services for labourers and their families had also improved the situation.

The report stated the Punjab government's Elimination of Bonded Labour in Brick Kilns project – launched with assistance from the International Labour Organisation and Pakistani NGOs – helped nearly 6,000 bonded labourers obtain Computerized National Identification Cards, provided \$140,000 in interest-free loans to labourers and established 60 schools for the workers' children.

The report highlighted that Islamabad had also completed a four-year project to repatriate and rehabilitate over 1,000 children who had been trafficked to the United Arab Emirates.

It also lauded the Sindh government's Landless Harees Programme, which offered the landless-poor in rural Sindh an alternative to tenant farming including land, seed and fertiliser distribution, agricultural development assistance, cash grants, and micro health insurance.

The 10th annual US Trafficking in Persons Report outlines the continuing challenges across the globe, including in the US. The report, for the first time, includes a ranking of the US based on the same standards with which it ranks other countries.

The report stated Washington takes its first-ever ranking not as a reprieve but as a responsibility to strengthen global efforts against modern slavery, including those within America. This human rights abuse is universal, and no one should claim immunity from its reach or from the responsibility to confront it, it stated.

The report serves as the primary diplomatic tool through which Washington encourages partnership and increased determination in the fight against forced labour, sexual exploitation and modern-day slavery.

[Daily Times – June 15, 2010]

Joint Efforts Urged to Curb Bonded Labour

Bonded labour can only be eliminated from the province through coordination and cooperation among the government, civil society and stakeholders, especially in the brick kiln sector. Updating the existing laws on bonded labour in the light of changing economic and administrative realities, enforcement of minimum wages and provision of health services were the other points agreed on by participants at the Bonded Labour Stakeholders' Conference, hosted by the US Consulate on June 2.

Following are some of the recommendations by the participants of the Conference:

- The participants were of the view that healthy trade union activity needed to be promoted in the sectors vulnerable to bonded labour so that a social dialogue could be initiated.
- They called for special measures to protect the women at brick kilns and other vulnerable sectors and laid stress on provision of maternity care and separate toilets.
- Regarding provision of health services to brick kiln and other vulnerable workers, they proposed that a special model of social security based on the profitability and paying capacity of the employers should be evolved for them. Vulnerable workers should be facilitated to acquire CNICs to enable them to avail facilities like Zakat, Food Stamp Scheme and Benazir Income Support Programme.
- Skill development plans, especially for women workers, should be arranged besides non-formal education and adult literacy programmes for all vulnerable workers.
- They also stressed the need to enhance public awareness on current anti-bonded labour efforts and recommended that rights and responsibilities of employers and workers should be displayed at the workplaces in local languages.
- Representatives of civil society, trade unions and brick kiln workers said that Peshgi (advance payments) were the major cause of bonded labour. Other participants supported the idea of a formal contract to regulate advance payments.
- They called for accounting and monitoring of brick kiln financial activities.

[Dawn – June 3, 2010]

President signs Convention on Civil, Political Rights

President Asif Ali Zardari has signed the Instrument of Ratification for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention Against Torture (CAT). This has made Pakistan join the countries that have signed and ratified all the international conventions relating to good governance, sustainable development and human rights. Spokesperson to the President former Senator Farhatullah Babar said that the two important covenants were signed during the first weeks of the present government on April 17, 2008 and were awaiting ratification by the Cabinet and signatures on the instrument of ratification by the President. The Cabinet in its meeting on March 24, 2010 approved the ratification of the conventions with certain reservations. The Instrument of the Ratification signed by the President will now be deposited in the United Nations, he said. The Instrument of Ratification signed by the President said "Now, therefore, be it known that I, Asif Ali Zardari, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, do by this Instrument of Ratification, confirm that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has ratified the said Convention subject to the contents of the Annex."

The salient features of the **Convention on Civil and Political Rights** are:

- Article-1 All peoples have the right of self-determination.
- Article-2 Respect for individuals without distinction of any kind e.g. race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- Article -3 Equal right of men and women to all civil and political rights.
- Article-6 Every human being has the inherent right to live. In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes. Anyone sentenced to death shall have the right to seek pardon or commutation of the sentence. Sentence of death shall not be imposed below eighteen.
- Article-7 No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.
- Article-12 No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of the right to enter his own country.
- Article-17 No one shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his privacy, family, or correspondence.
- Article-18 Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.
- Article-19 Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

The salient features of the **Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment and Punishment (CAT)** are as under:

- Article-1 All peoples have the right of self-determination.
- Article-2 Respect for individuals without distinction of any kind e.g. race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- Article-3 No State Party shall expel, return, extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture.
- Article-4 Ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law.
- Article-14 Enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation.
- The Instrument of Ratification signed by the President also contains reservations protecting national rights relating to (a) Islamic law and ideology (b) issue of self-determination, (c) anything repugnant to the provisions of Constitution of Pakistan.

[Pakistan Times – June 4, 2010]

Degrees of 200 MPs including PM sent for Verification

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has sent degrees of 200 parliamentarians including Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani to the universities concerned for verification. The commission said the verification process would be completed in four to six weeks. Prime Minister Gilani's degree is also among the 1,095 degrees of members of national and provincial assemblies being sent to the HEC by the NA Standing Committee on Education. Prime

Minister Gilani's degree has been sent to the Punjab University for verification. The HEC will now send degrees to relevant universities for verification through post. Previously, the HEC had decided that its own representatives would verify the degrees. HEC official Dr Mehmood Raza said the degrees verification process would be completed in four to six weeks.

The degrees of national and provincial assemblies members belonging to Balochistan have been sent to the HEC for verification, sources told a private TV channel. Sources said the degrees verification process had created stir among Balochistan lawmakers because 17 out of 20 members allegedly did not have genuine degrees. "This has also been confirmed by Senate Deputy Chairman Jan Muhammad Jamali. Balochistan Interior Minister Mir Zafar Zahri had urged the fake degree holders to resign because they had lost moral grounds of representing the public. Separately, Election Commission Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmed said the verdict of the Supreme Court on fake degree case would be implemented, and no pressure would be acceptable in this regard. He said there was no pressure on the EC regarding verification of fake degrees, and it was functioning independently. Responding to a question, the EC secretary said the commission had received the detailed verdict of the Supreme Court and a copy of the verdict would be sent to the chief election commissioner today (June 28).

[The News – June 29, 2010]

Draft of National Population Policy Finalized

Having finished with the long-drawn-out exercise of finalising the new national population policy for the next five years, the Ministry of Population Welfare intends to secure the much-revised document's approval from the Prime Minister-Headed National Commission for Population Welfare in its June 22 meeting before putting it up for the cabinet's nod. The draft policy, which underwent revision after revision for the incorporation of local and international stakeholders' opinion over the last one year sets reduction of the nationwide unmet need for family planning from 25 per cent at present to 20 per cent by 2015, cutting the total fertility rate from the current 3.6 births to 3.2 births per woman by 2015, reducing the incidence of first birth among mothers aged below 18, and discouraging the trend of mothers giving birth after 34 and above as major short-term objectives.

The other things to be done in the short term are improving maternal health by encouraging pregnancy spacing of more than 36 months, ensuring availability of family planning services to the country's remotest areas and provision of contraceptive commodity security for all public and private sector outlets by 2015. The policy also has some long-term targets like increase in the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) from the current 30 per cent to 60 per cent; attainment of replacement level fertility; achievement of universal access to family planning services; and reduction of the unmet need for family planning from the current 25 per cent to five per cent by 2030.

In the policy, family planning has been repositioned as a health initiative, with a focus on maternal health and child survival, by making family planning services a vital component of the essential services package. The policy re-emphasises on timely completion of fertility transition for stabilising the population and reaping the demographic dividend. The policy will contribute meaningfully to the implementation of the programme of action of the ICPD and the achievement of the MDGs, especially reducing the maternal mortality ratio by two-thirds by 2015. The policy is based on sustained political commitment at the federal and provincial levels; full ownership of the programme by the provincial governments by 2015 and programmatic interventions by them to reduce the unmet need; enhanced resource availability for the programme under the NFC Award; mandatory provision of family planning services by the provincial departments of health and adoption of family planning as an essential health intervention by the Health Ministry; centre staging of the population factor in national development planning for reaping the demographic dividend; and broad-based multi-sectoral support.

Implementation of the policy will be through five-year population welfare plans to be part of the five-year national development plans. Every subsequent plan will be based on the evaluation of the previous one, as well as on the regional and global best practices. The first five-year plan of the programme under the policy will be an integral component of the people's development plan 2010-15. Under the plan of action developed to implement the population policy, strengthening of the National Commission for Population Welfare through an appropriate legal framework for creating synergies with other social sector ministries and departments; formulation of a joint action plan to synergies the human development initiatives of different government ministries and social sector organisations; improvement of quality of counselling to emphasise benefits of family planning, and removal of doubts and fears about side effects of contraceptives; emphasis on mandatory counselling on pregnancy spacing during antenatal and postpartum checkups and post-miscarriage; use of existing public sector infrastructure and that of CSOs/NGOs for social mobilisation to reach out to rural communities; and engagement of public representatives, opinion leaders, journalists, lawyers, academicians and religious scholars for the promotion of

pregnancy spacing, safe motherhood and responsible parenthood have been planned. Men will also be involved in reproductive health and family planning through innovative community level initiatives, especially in rural areas. The number of family welfare centres will be increased from 2,853 to 5,255, that of reproductive health service centres from 271 to 321 and that of mobile service units from 292 to 346. The thrust of expansion of service delivery outlets will be shifted from urban to semi-urban and rural areas focusing on outreach and community-based service delivery under an institutional arrangement. While urban slums would receive priority, the bulk of services will be located in rural and remote areas. Broadening networking with NGOs (500) for providing FP/RH information and services in the rural and remote areas through family health homes has also been planned.

To ensure contraceptive commodity security being a basic requirement for dispensation of family planning services, the ministry plans an independent institutional arrangement under the policy. An estimated amount of Rs6.5 billion for national contraceptive commodity security will be required to raise the CPR from the current level of 30 per cent to 38 per cent by 2015, Rs9.6 billion to raise it from 38 per cent to 45.5 per cent by 2020, Rs12.8 billion to raise it from 45.5 per cent to 54 per cent by 2025, and Rs14 billion to raise it from 54 per cent to 60 per cent by 2030. Also part of the policy's objectives is boosting human resource development efforts for ensuring effective implementation of the programme through revamping and up-gradation of PWTIs and RTIs with modern facilities and professional staff; incorporation of reproductive health and family planning into the curricula of all medical colleges and universities, and development of HRD plans, both short-term and long-term, to institutionalise appointment of right persons to the right job.

In a bid to enhance research and evaluation, the ministry intends to strengthen NIPS as an autonomous research arm through appropriate legal framework, upgrade the NRIFC to institutionalise research based-planning, and repositioning it to work on clinical studies, bio-medical research, and testing of the existing and new family planning methods; encourage collaboration of NIPS and the NRIFC with national and international academic and research organisations to support demographic and clinical research, and focus on Pakistan-specific research in the areas that have a clear link with population: health, morbidity, mortality, etc.

The focus of the population welfare strategy will be on extending the outreach of family planning and reproductive health services to rural areas and urban slums through public-private partnerships. Some of the activities to be undertaken include strengthening of the NATPOW to institutionalise and catalyse PPPs for broadening networking; expansion of the cooperation for the expansion of FP/RH services through the network of about 13,000 service outlets of the ministry and provincial health departments; strengthening of partnership with public sector organisations and corporate bodies and establishment of community partnership for setting up FHHs at the village level (1,000-3,000 house holds); provision of budgetary support to the SMCs working in rural areas and urban slums; expansion of social marketing network to rural areas by franchising SMCs; and establishment of an independent body for regulating the resources and performance of SMCs and other private sector institutions working in the areas of reproductive health and family planning.

All stakeholders will create a joint forum for carrying out strategic monitoring to ensure effective implementation of the population welfare programme. Formal pronouncement of the policy in a news conference will come shortly thereafter.

[The News – June 21, 2010]

ECP & Election Related News

ECP Exploring Possibility of Using EVMs for Elections: Justice Mirza

To create awareness among the masses and get stakeholders reaction towards the possibility of switching over to electronic voting, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) organized a demonstration on feasibility study of the electronic voting machines in the country. The ECP had invited 15 leading political parties, having representation in the parliament, representatives of election-related NGOs, and experts from National Institute of Electronics (NIE) and some universities.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Retd) Hamid Ali Mirza in his welcome address said, "the ECP plays a pivotal role in protection and strengthening democracy in Pakistan as it is charged with the fundamental responsibility of holding elections in the country in a free, fair and transparent manner with complete neutrality and impartiality". He

said with the assistance of international donor community, the ECP was committed to wide-ranging electoral reforms in all spheres of our operations.

The ECP is exploring the possibility of using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for elections and an EVM Committee has been constituted with the objective of conducting a feasibility study on the use of new technologies for voting and the counting, in order to determine whether these technologies are suitable for introduction in Pakistan. The CEC said that the suitability of the technologies is being assessed in terms of the advantages they might offer over the current system of paper balloting and counting, the technical and operational challenges associated with their use, a financial assessment of the comparative costs of paper versus electronic voting or counting machines, and the legal implications of using electronic voting or counting machines. He said that this demonstration was an important part of the process that we are conducting, and will help us to fully understand what these technologies have to offer, therefore enabling us to make informed and appropriate recommendations on the matter.

Secretary ECP Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan said that the commission is considering the potential use of electronic voting machines during elections. For this purpose the CEC formed a Committee to conduct a detailed feasibility study on the potential use of EVMs in Pakistan. The EVM Committee will issue a report outlining all of the options in this regard and its recommendations, and will consider all of the technical; operational, financial and legal aspects concerning the possible use of EVMs. In order to provide the EVM Committee and the electoral stakeholders with a clearer understanding of how electronic voting and counting technologies might be used in Pakistan, a number of internationally established EVM vendors were contacted and three of the vendors contacted are making presentations to the ECP and electoral stakeholders. Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan said the ECP believes that gathering the opinions of all stakeholders on the possible use of electronic voting and counting machines in Pakistan is immensely important. Two forums have been established by the ECP for this purpose - the Political Parties Consultative Forum and the Civil Society Consultative Forum. He said that at the end of the EVM demonstration and consultative process the EVM Committee will finalize its report. The report will outline all the steps to be taken and will make recommendations about the suitability of using electronic voting and counting in Pakistan.

The report will be completed by the end of July and will be presented to the Honorable Chief Election Commissioner. Ben Goldsmith, Deputy Country Director for International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) said that technology has much to offer to democracy, but it should not be used for its own sake and should meet specific needs of the country. Representatives of three vendors Smartmatic, Dominion and Indra System gave detailed presentations about their electronic voting machines. Later the open viewing of the vendor equipment was also done for the benefit of the participants.

[The News – June 29, 2010]

EC Suggests CNIC Mandatory for Vote Registration

ECP dispatched a draft bill to the Government for legislation seeking to make the Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) mandatory for enrolment as a bona fide voter. According to the informed sources, the ECP's move has come in the light of recommendations of thirteen political parties having representation in the Parliament. The ECP has already sent a draft bill to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs for the legislation regarding the CNIC as a prerequisite for the registration as voter, he observed. Sources informed that the consultative meeting of political parties had unanimously agreed on making the CNIC compulsory for registration as voter as well as for casting of vote. The political leaders strongly recommended that a person holding an old NIC should not be allowed to cast his vote and all the old NICs should be cancelled. They had further suggested that the ECP, in collaboration with National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), should make a mechanism for the registration of voters that should become automatic with issuance of the CNIC.

The ECP has proposed certain amendments in the Electoral Rolls Act, 1974 {Section 6 (2)} and the Representation of the People Act, 1976 Section 33 (1) and 33 (3) (a) in order to ensuring the accuracy of electoral rolls and fairness of the elections. Under the proposed provisions, Section 6 (2) of the Electoral Rolls Act, a person shall not be entitled to be enrolled as a voter, unless he possesses the CNIC issued to him under the NADRA Ordinance, 2000(VIII of 2000). The proposed amendments in the aforementioned sections of the Representation of the People Act, 1976, envisage that a person is bound to produce his CNIC at the time of casting his vote and in case of failure to produce his CNIC, he would serve as a restriction to casting of his vote.

Sources further said that the ECP would not be in a position to enter into an effective collaboration with NADRA, until the proposed bill was passed by the Parliament. Once the law is in place, the ECP would have no legal hurdle in preparing credible Computerised Electoral Rolls (CERs) in collaboration with NADRA. Besides, this would help

preparing complete, accurate and updated computerised electoral rolls for ensuring free, fair and transparent elections for all times to come.

[The Nation – June 15, 2010]

EC in Contact with NADRA for Electoral Rolls Revision

Facing a daunting task of revision of electoral rolls and above all, making the entire database transparent, which is replete with errors, the Election Commission (EC) has approached the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) for help in this context. More than Rs 1.2 billion were spent on preparation of electoral rolls, which sparked criticism from all the stakeholders for these had multiple errors. The experience essentially barred the electoral body from undertaking revision of the rolls for two years, sources in the ECP told this correspondent.

However, sources pointed out that the incumbent Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice (Retd) Hamid Ali Mirza is keen on seeking NADRA's cooperation on two proposals: either to making the old list error-free; or going for a fresh list of electoral rolls. It is a fundamental duty of the CEC to revise and update the electoral rolls every year to ensure making participation of people maximum in an electoral process. They said technical groups of the ECP as well as Nadra were deliberating upon the two proposals. Sources revealed the authority had rejected the ECP's request for free of cost execution of the task. Although, Nadra is self-reliant but it is not in a position to oblige the electoral body this way.

[The News – June 13, 2010]

Proposal on Voting Rights for Overseas Pakistanis Rejected

ECP has rejected a proposed draft legislation to grant overseas Pakistanis the right to vote in the general election and to have representation in the national and provincial legislatures. At a meeting of the "Special Committee on Right of Vote for Overseas Pakistanis" it was noted that various areas would require proper legislation, including amendments to the Constitution, Representation of the People's Act 1976, Delimitations of the Constituencies Act, 1974 and Electoral Rolls Act 1974, besides other relevant rules.

According to a document, the committee comprises senior officers from relevant ministries and divisions. The meeting was informed that 5.5 million Pakistanis were living in 105 countries. Various interesting questions were raised during the meeting, including where a returning officer would be based to receive and scrutinise nomination papers and where appellate tribunals would be constituted to hear appeals against rejection or acceptance of nomination papers if the right to representation in legislatures was given to overseas Pakistanis. Another pertinent question was, how the electorate for a candidate to a seat in provincial assembly would be divided into various constituencies, if according to the proposal, a seat was reserved for overseas Pakistanis in each provincial assembly. If a person was competing for a seat in the National Assembly from Australia, how he would be able to run his campaign in Saudi Arabia. It was pointed out that political activities were banned in certain countries, and even in countries where there was no bar on political activities otherwise, the permission for establishment of polling stations, holding meetings for canvassing and launching political campaigns may have to be obtained from respective governments. The operational complexities involved in out-of-country voting and the cost involved in the registration of expatriate electorates was also discussed and it was noted that overseas voting operations would cost at least between \$10 to 30 per voter. It was said that if the right to vote was eventually granted to expatriates and an electoral roll containing names of all overseas Pakistanis was developed, the next step would be that it will have to ensure delivery of election materials in all the countries where right to vote is extended to expatriate Pakistanis, establishment of polling stations, appointment of polling staff, necessary training for polling staff and in time receipt of election results from these locations. It was highlighted that costs for proposed external voting programme might include security of persons, locations and materials, special security arrangements in case of a perceived risk for voters or ballot papers, recruitment, salaries and training, office spaces, printing and transportation of election material, cost of registration and polling, special communication programme to reach external voters, travelling expenses for administrative staff and oversight and observation missions.

It was suggested that it would be appropriate, in the first place to define the term overseas Pakistanis for the purpose of extending the right of vote, with regard to possession of required legal documents and duration of stay abroad to qualify for external voting facility. It was pointed out that MoUs were needed to be signed with host countries, as most of the countries where Pakistanis were concentrated do not allow political activities. Eligibility criterion for voters as well as candidates to fill reserved seats for overseas Pakistanis has to be defined. A separate electoral roll for overseas Pakistanis will have to be prepared. Financial resources will have to be worked out and earmarked for registration of voters and actual conduct of elections. Necessary constitutional and legal amendments will have to be made prior to proceeding further in the matter.

[Dawn – June 9, 2010]

PML-N Candidate Wins PP-160

PML-N candidate Malik Saiful Muluk Khokhar came out as the winner in June 24 by-elections in PP-160, which witnessed a low turnout of PML-N voters as compared to the polls conducted for the same seat in the last general elections. The total number of registered votes in PP-160 was 187,842 which were cast in 145 polling stations. In the last election, the PML-N candidate, Rana Mubashar Iqbal, had grabbed 42,056 votes, while a total of around 77,000 votes were cast. The seat fell vacant after Mubashar quit for having a fake graduation degree. However, Thursday's by-elections witnessed a dramatic decrease in the votes obtained by the PML-N candidate. At the time of the filing of this report, Khokhar had obtained 27,997 votes. Different observers and voters belonging to various political parties attributed the low turnout to the persistent hot weather, which they said had barred people from stepping out of their homes. However, supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf and Jamaat-e-Islami levelled allegations that the government had rigged the by-polls. There are six complete union councils and parts of two other union councils in the constituency – UC-117, 118, 119, 120, 145 and 147 are the councils that are completely included in the constituency, while some parts of UC-143 and 144 are also included in it. Major areas in the constituency are Mansoor, Mustafa Town, Johar Town, Sattu Katla, Wapda Town, Tech Society, PCSIR Colony, Nasheeman Iqbal Society, Ittefaq Town, Sher Shah Colony, Dhoop Sarri, Dubai Town, Canal View Society, Jia Bagga, Gaju Matta and Chamroo Pur. Polling began at 8am and continued until 5pm without any interval, except on a few instances after officials received reports of fake votes. Khokhar was followed by PTI's Malik Zaheer Abbas who obtained 19,927 votes. JI candidate Malik Jahangir Hussain Bara stood third and grabbed 8,514 votes [at the time of the filing of this report].

[Daily Times – June 25, 2010]

FAFEN Reports Fraudulent Voting in PP-160 Bye-Polls

Incidents of fraudulent voting, low turnout and heavy presence of police and Rangers inside polling stations marked the by-election for the PP-160 constituency, said a report compiled by the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN). The report stated that the seat was vacated due to the resignation tendered by Rana Mubashir, who won the 2008 general elections on a PML-N ticket by securing 42,056 votes when the voter turnout remained 41 per cent. As many as 187,933 voters are registered in PP-160 — 106,890 male and 81,043 female. ECP had set-up 145 polling stations — 51 male, 48 female and 46 combined polling stations. The 145 polling stations had 307 polling booths — 164 male and 143 female. According to 14 randomly sampled polling stations, the turnout remained 24.90 per cent, considerably lower than the turnout in the 2008 general elections. The turnout at male polling stations remained 27.7 per cent and 19.2 per cent at female polling stations. The turnout was 26.7 per cent at combined polling stations. At three of 60 observed polling stations (five per cent of observed polling stations), additional counterfoils had been filled on the ballot books whereas at similar number of polling stations, ballot papers were issued without filling the counterfoils, indicating the possibility of fraudulent votes being stuffed in ballot boxes.

According to FAFEN observers, location of at least one polling station in Tech Society was changed a night before the polling. At PS 44 (Government Boys' Primary School Shadiwal Majha), polling was stopped for 40 minutes after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf workers clashed with PML-N workers, who were allegedly involved in fraudulent voting. The report alleged that at PS 78, a PML-N MNA was campaigning inside the polling station. An official vehicle of the Punjab government bearing number LEH 3992 was parked outside the premises where PS 46, 47 and 48 were established. At PS 100 (Government Boys High School Halloke), 104 per cent votes were polled. As many as 532 votes were counted against the total registered votes of 512. Similarly, FAFEN observers reported from one polling station that the numbers of Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) of voters as written on the counterfoils of the ballot books did not match the corresponding entries on the electoral rolls, again raising the possibility that fraudulent voting might have taken place. At five polling stations, dubious thumb impressions marked on counterfoils of ballot books at the same angle with phasing out ink print were observed.

[The News – June 26, 2010]

Economic Governance

SBP Quarterly-Performance Review

The Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) registered a growth of 20 per cent to reach Rs457 billion during the third quarter (January-March) of the current fiscal year from Rs379 billion during the corresponding period last year. In the quarterly performance review of the banking system, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said that the non-performing loans registered a slight improvement by 5.8 per cent during the quarter from Rs432 billion during the previous quarter ended in December 2009. However, given the benefit of liquid collaterals and Forced Sale Value (FSV) of pledged and mortgaged collaterals held against the NPLs, banks set aside relatively lower amount of provisions, it added. Following are some other findings of the report:

- Challenging economic and business environment continue to affect the growth and asset quality of the banking system. In line with the established pattern of the first calendar quarter and reduction in the public sector advances, the asset base of the banking system contracted over the quarter under review.
- Banks' investments, particularly in government papers, continued to grow, though at a decelerated pace as compared with the trend of the last six quarters. Accordingly, the asset mix slightly shifted towards investments. Deposits of the banking system, after experiencing a strong growth during the last quarter, with slight decline remained almost stable.
- The baseline indicators of solvency slightly deteriorated due to increase in the credit risk and market risk charges. The quarter under review was marked with significant reduction in the banks' lending to the public sector and slight increase in advances to the private sector, which otherwise experienced consistent decline during the first three quarters of CY09.
- The advances to the public sector, particularly for commodity operations remained significantly high and stagnant since the mid of CY09. The unusually high level of commodity finance was burdening the liquidity profile of the system and limiting its ability to lend the private sector.
- Incidentally, reduction in the public sector financing due to contraction of commodity finance during March came just before the inception of wheat harvest.
- The lending to the private sector corporations showed some growth, however, SME and consumer sectors further shed their bank borrowings. Unlike the past quarter's widespread growth in advances to different sectors of the economy, a mixed trend was observed during March.
- The lower loan loss charges preserved the banks' earnings from any significant deterioration, which remained prominent feature since the later half of CY08. However, the core earning position of the system also strengthened, as the net interest income and non-interest income improved as compared with the results of December 2009 and corresponding quarter of CY09.
- Compared to the recent trend of concentration of earnings in relatively larger size banks, the quarter also witnessed improvement in earnings of individual banks as the number of loss making banks came down.
- Due to contraction in the asset base of the system, leverage of the system lowered by 20 basis points to 8.7 per cent.
- Increase in risk weighted asset (RWA) due to increase in the private sector credit coupled with increase in the market risk weighted assets (MRWA) and enhanced deductions for eligible risk-based capital, the risk-based capital adequacy ratio (CAR) declined to 13.7 per cent.
- The deposit base of the banking system remained lacklustre. The greater reduction in lending portfolio released additional liquidity into the system, which in the past few quarters experienced constrained liquidity condition reflected in the low inter-bank activity and high liquidity injections by the central bank.
- Accordingly, the volatility in prices of financial assets also subsided and due to contained risk positions of banks, market risk of the system remained subdued.
- The public sector borrowings for procurement of new wheat crop and liveliness in the private sector credit in line with higher projected economic growth rates are likely to increase the lending portfolio. However, the borrowing needs of the government for budgetary support, as well as that of public sector enterprises (PSEs) will keep an upward pressure on the banks' investments in government papers, though the rate of growth is likely to remain low. In this scenario, the banks' capacity to lend private sector and build high return earning assets will largely depend on a number of factors vis-à-vis, their ability to mobilise additional savings, manage increased credit risk and high infected portfolio, and early retirement of commodity finance by the government.
- The aggregate earnings of the system are likely to remain largely immune from heightened risk. "Nevertheless, the banks with relatively large size and better earning profile will continue to account for the major part of the system's overall earnings.

[The News – June 8, 2010]

Climate Change Causing Additional Stress on Economy, Livelihoods of People: Afridi

The ecological and socio-economic systems in Pakistan are facing tremendous pressure due to population growth, rapid urbanization and unsustainable development patterns. Besides, the challenges of climate change is causing an additional stress on the economy and livelihoods of people, coupled by weak institutional system and research base and huge population and fragile natural resource based economy, Federal Minister for Environment Hameedullah Jan Afridi said at Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR). He expressed these views while addressing as the chief guest at two days international workshop on "**Climate Change and Sustainability of Agro-Environment: Challenges and Interventions**" organized by the Department of Environmental Sciences, PMAS-AAUR, as being part of World Environment Day celebration activity in

collaboration with Institute of Agro-Environment and Forest Biology, National Research Council of Italy and Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

The objectives of the workshop included risk assessment of climatic changes to agro-environmental system, dissemination of possible interventions available for these changes and formulation of strategy for sustainable development of agro-environmental system. Experts from local academia, research institutions and foreign universities in their presentations and papers in the workshop would highlight current challenges being posed by climatic change and possible interventions to develop a sustainable development in future. "Rising temperatures and reduced precipitation is one of the biggest threats against global ecosystem sustainability. Pakistan is ranked at 28th place by the Maple Croft, a UK based organization, amongst those that will be most severely affected. But since 22 of those countries are in Africa, Pakistan is ranked amongst the top ten outside Africa," he said.

PMAS-AAUR Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Mahmood Khan in his welcome address said that climate change is a global phenomenon that is adversely affecting the humans, animals and plants around the globe. He said the Indus Valley, which is the backbone of Pakistan's agriculture, is presently threatened by the influence of climate change, largely due to anthropogenic activities that result in global warming. "We are vulnerable to climate change but vulnerability can be reduced by identifying suitable adaptation measures so that in future the adverse effects of changing climatic conditions can be properly mitigated," he said. Prof. Dr. Khalid Mahmood said the Department of Environmental Sciences of the University has established close links both locally and internationally with major academic and research institutions to share knowledge and conduct joint activities in different areas of environment sciences.

[The Nation – June 4, 2010]

Oman to Provide \$45m Grant for Gwadar Development Projects

The Sultanate of Oman has agreed to provide a grant of \$45 million for a number of development projects in Gwadar District, along with another \$20 million for the preservation and maintenance of the Gwadar Fort, to serve as a museum. This was announced by the Oman Ambassador HE Mohammad bin Said Mohammad Al Lawati, during a meeting with Balochistan Chief Minister Nawab Muhammad Aslam Khan Raisani. The grant was announced by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said during his last visit to Gwadar. Under residential quarters for r it a 50-bed hospital along with allied facilities, including doctors, nurses and paramedics; furniture, equipments, ambulances and staff vans will be constructed at Pasni, the second biggest town of Gwadar. There are also three other projects, including construction of blacktop roads. A 54 kilometre-road from Nagore Sharif to Suntsar, a 15 kilometre-road from Chib Rikani to Coastal Highway, and a 7.3 kilometres and 11.3 kilometres roads from Nallaint to Kappar and Tak Village (Ormara) to Coastal Highway, respectively. A scheme for laying parallel pipelines from Swali Gwarm to Pasni town would also be part of the uplift plan for the provision of drinking water to the people of the area, while the Quetta Electricity Supply Company (QESCO) had been assigned the task for linking the Pishukan, a tiny settlement on the Mekran coast with the main grid supplying power from Iran to Gwadar and other parts of the district.

[Daily Times – June 19, 2010]

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Updates

600,000 to Get Free Vocational Training

The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and National Vocational and Technical Education Commission (NAVTEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on June 7 for the provision of vocational training to BISP beneficiaries. The MoU was signed by the Chairperson BISP Farzana Raja and Chairman NAVTEC Adnan A Khawaja at the BISP Secretariat. BISP has initiated a Technical and Vocational Programme to impart vocational training to its beneficiaries so that they acquire a skill and are able to earn a respectful livelihood and break the shackles of poverty. One person of each beneficiary family will be nominated by the family head and that person will be given vocational training. Talking to the media at the MoU signing ceremony, Farzana Raja said work is underway to give free vocational training to 600,000 families of those districts where the poverty survey has been completed. She said that BISP will bear the expenses of those girls who are interested in nursing and other fields.

Under the MoU, Navtec will undertake vocational and technical training of BISP beneficiaries. BISP will provide NAVTEC the data of prospective beneficiaries, which will include academic qualification and the preferred field and place of training. BISP will bear the cost of training and will provide funds for it. NAVTEC will make necessary arrangements for training of the nominated beneficiaries in the disciplines and trade of their preference. NAVTEC

will also assist BISP in project formulation, monitoring and evaluation of training activities and will regularly send monitoring and evaluation reports to BISP. A six-member monitoring and evaluation committee will be formed which will comprise officials of both organizations. This committee will furnish a monthly report. NAVTEC would also ensure that this programme does not overlap with other training programmes being run by it. Navtec will also ensure that the successful participants of the vocational and technical training are given certificates/diplomas bearing the logos of BISP and NAVTEC. It must be mentioned here that Navtec will provide training to BISP beneficiaries all over Pakistan including Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Fata and Gilgit-Baltistan. It is pertinent to mention here that NAVTEC has successfully trained 10,000 youth in various trades and crafts in collaboration with public and private organisations.

[The News – June 8, 2010]

Survey for BISP to Complete by March 2011

Poor households in many parts of the country would be required to wait for one more year to get Rs 1000 per month in the form of financial assistance as the World Bank assisted Survey for the identification of poor for the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) is scheduled to complete by March 2011. The delay in the completion of the Survey is reported to have been caused by the apprehensions that major portion of an amount of Rs 90 billion allocated in the budget 2010-11 for the BISP will remain unutilised, official sources informed on June 12. At present, BISP is operational in 15 targeted districts of the country and upon completion of survey the programme would be rolled out across the country. Due to lengthy procedure adopted in identification of poor household in the country under the said survey, it has been reported that only Rs 17.5 billion have been utilised under BISP and it is expected that till June 30, 2010, total utilisation would reach at Rs 40 billion out of the total allocation of Rs 70 billion allocated in 2009-10.

National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Pakistan Census Organisation and Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) are now surveying different districts of the country for identification of poor households according to the set scorecard. The outcome of the survey would enable the government to provide financial assistance to those poor households identified under survey instead of existing poor households recommended by the members of the National Assembly. According to the official sources, the districts surveyed till date has revealed that majority of the poor households do not have the Computerised National Identity Cards (CNIC). Keeping in view this fact the government has started providing CNIC to the poor households through mobile CNIC vans in such districts. Test audits and post audits are also being carried out on the basis of data on poor households collected under Survey. BISP aims at developing a poverty-reduction strategy that takes into its ambit social assistance like health and skill development in addition to cash transfers. It was initiated in response to the rising inflation and the global economic recession of the last few years, and to offset its impact on the purchasing power of the poor, which will be used to provide relief to 5 million families. The programme is expected to cover 7 million families in the medium term starting from the year 2010-11 with an allocation of Rs 90 billion. Around 36.1 percent of the total population of Pakistan is living below the poverty line, according to an estimate in 2008-09, which reveals that 62 million people (11.83 million families) are sufferings from poverty. A cash grant of Rs 2,000 to each family is disbursed every alternate month, and covering 5 million families in 2009-10 means paying cash benefits to almost 16 percent of the total population. The BISP covers all four provinces, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan, FATA, AJK and the Islamabad Capital Territory.

[Daily Times – June 13, 2010]

Local Governance

LB Polls to be Held in 2011: EC

The Election Commission (EC) announced on June 15 that the local bodies elections would be held in 2011 instead of 2010 on the basis of the computerised voter lists. This announcement was made by Secretary Election Commission Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan after a meeting, which was presided over by Chief Election Commissioner Justice Hamid Ali Mirza. He said the voter lists would be prepared in six months with the help of the NADRA. The meeting was attended by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Qamar Zaman Kaira, the secretaries local bodies of the four provinces, provincial election commissioners and senior officials. Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan said the preparation of the voter lists and holding of the elections were the constitutional responsibilities of the Election Commission. He said new error-free voter lists would be prepared through the NADRA database. He said it had been decided that the new voter lists would be prepared with the collaboration of the Election Commission and the NADRA, and after it the problem of error-free voter lists would be solved. He said suitable amendments would be introduced and it would be mandatory to show the computerised identity card to cast the vote. He said the government had assured that the appropriate amendments would be made in the law in this regard. He said the preparation of the new voter

lists would take six months and after that the local bodies elections would be held. He said that the four provinces would be taken on board through the Ministry of Local Bodies to introduce uniform laws to hold the LB elections. He said that the all the political parties would be consulted on the issue of election symbols to hold the elections on party basis and all the matters would be settled by taking all the political parties into confidence.

[The News – June 16, 2010]

Local Governments in Capital, Cantonments Demanded

Consensus evolved among the speakers at a seminar to establish local government system in the federal capital and cantonment areas of the country. It was also demanded of the government to announce an early date to hold local government (LG) elections. The seminar on 'Why Capital is without local Government System' was held here at National Press Club (NPC) under the auspices of Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment (DTCE), Local Council Associations (LCAs), Awami Rabita Committee and other civil society organizations.

Former Chairman of National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB), Daniyal Aziz, while fully backing the idea of local government system in federal capital said he would continue to support those striving for their rights. He recalled that National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) was a think-tank which would have by now prepared instruments for the implementation of people-friendly policies. "The implementation of these policies was duty of the cabinet," he added. He said the NRB structured local government laws and sent them to the provinces for implementation. "If there were flaws in these laws, the provincial governments could improve them but they were not interested in devolution," he maintained. He said it is very easy to criticize but difficult to perform. Citing the example of Balochistan, he said provinces had passed a new LG system, which is identical to 1979 local bodies system but at the same time DCOs, EDOs and other officials are still working there. He said in Pakistan it is impossible to show door to the bureaucracy as compared to the politicians who can be expelled easily from parliament. He pinpointed that though Balochistan government had repealed the LG system but LG officials were still there. He criticized the decision of Election Commission of Pakistan to defer LG polls till 2011 in connivance with the provinces whereas he said the Lahore High Court had ordered the Punjab government to announce local government elections on July 1. He said in Sindh the case is all together different as the provincial government is totally confused and amending the LG laws day by day. He said the LG polls cannot be delayed in the presence of Article 140-A of the Constitution and not a single moment can be spent without Nazims. He said it was a good omen that the Centre was correcting its mistakes by shifting more powers to provinces but unfortunately the provinces were reluctant to do the same. Referring to a study, he said at least 40 percent old local government representatives would retrieve their seats, which is why the provinces are delaying the polls deliberately.

Spokesman for PML-N Siddiqui Farooq said politics meant solving nation and state's problems through forming a consolidated strategy. "I uphold the best local government system in the country but the foundation of the system made by the Musharraf regime was laid on hypocrisy," he added. He said the dictators' aim to introduce the local government system was in fact to prolong his rule, as Nazims were his constituency. He said surprisingly the architects of this program had failed to enforce the system in Islamabad and cantonments besides they were all powerful. He said sometimes dictators do a very good job but it does not mean that we should support them. He said nations progressed with the continuity and improvement of the systems. He said every individual should correct himself. He said if New York and London like cities could have mayors, why not Islamabad. Former district Nazim Sukkar and LCA Sindh Convener Nasir Hussaina Shah said conspiracies were being hatched to demolish LG system throughout the country. He said if the system was implemented completely, it could bring fruitful results. He said the political parties are opposing the system saying that it had been formed by a dictator. He said our weaknesses should not be used an excuse to axe the system. He stressed the need to improve the system while removing flaws from it.

LCA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary General said that Article 140A of the Constitution is being violated by using local government funds through the administrators. He said the democratic governments led by elite of the country, in its first step, had hammered out the democracies led by the poor. On the one hand the government portrays that it is against the rule of bureaucracy while on the other hand commissionertae system has been restored in the country.

Former district Nazim Quetta and LCA Balochistan President Mir Maqbool Lehri said this was very unfortunate that Nazims were always aligned with General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf whereas the latter had left the country and Nazims were struggling for the rights of people. He said the system had been bulldozed in all the four provinces, which is against the spirit of the Constitution and law. He said many cases regarding holding of local government

elections are being heard in higher courts and contrary to this the Balochistan government had terminated the whole system replacing it with the old draconian laws. He said its time to go for action and we should not limit ourself till seminars. He endorsed the idea that the system must be introduced in federal capital. LCA Punjab President Syed Wajahat Ali said local government system is the basic unit of democracy and it must run. He said the in the absence of Nazims people are worries as they cannot approach administrators for the solution of their problems.

JI Islamabad Amir Sayyad Belal said the present democratic government had made the local government system a disputed one. He said there were apprehensions the local government polls may be delayed, which is a matter of concern. He said “we were expecting that the democratic government will bring a social contract devolving power at lower level but besides doing so the government is bent upon usurping the rights of people.” He called upon the political parties to show wisdom at this critical time of history.

[Daily Times – June 26, 2010]

Budget 2010-11

Federal Budget

Salient Features of the Federal Budget 2010-11

1. In order to provide relief to large number of taxpayers deriving their incomes from Salary and business, the limit of Basic Exemption is proposed to be enhanced from Rs.200,000/- to Rs.300,000/- in respect of Salaried taxpayers, while in the respect of Non-Salaried taxpayers it has been proposed to enhanced from Rs.100,000/- to Rs.300,000/-.

2. For welfare of industrial & commercial consumers of electricity, the maximum rate of advance tax deductible under section 235 on monthly electricity bills is proposed to be reduced from 10% to 5%, on the amount of the bills payable by them;

3. The Senior Citizens of the age of 60 years or more, are proposed to be eligible for relief of 50% of tax on their income, if their income does not exceed Rs.100,000/- as compared to previous maximum limit of Rs.75,000/-. However this relief shall not be available on income subject to Presumptive Tax Regime.

4. In pursuance of Prime Minister's Relief Package to rehabilitate the economy of Khyber Paktunkhwa, FATA and PATA, some amendments are proposed to be introduced in the Income Tax Law. These measures provide following reliefs to industrial and commercial taxpayers hailing from most and moderately affected areas, as prescribed:

- a) Waiver of entire amount of default surcharge & penalty till 30th June 2010;
- b) Exemption from advance tax on electricity for tax years 2010 and 2011;
- c) Exemption from withholding tax on exports;
- d) Recovery of outstanding income tax arrears through easy installments;
- e) Enhancement of income tax exemption limit from Rs.0.1 million to Rs.0.3 million;
- f) Annual Audit with the approval of FBR; and
- g) Exemption from advance tax on import of plant and machinery upto 30th June 2011;

However these concessions shall not be available to manufacturers and suppliers of cement, sugar, beverages and cigarettes.

5. For the wellbeing of disabled persons, 100% depreciation expense can be claimed on Ramp built to provide access to disabled persons, is proposed through a new provision to be inserted in the law.

In order to provide relief to employees, exemption from taxation of perquisites on waiver of employees obligation to pay or repay, and amount owed to employer, is proposed.

7. In order to facilitate the withholding agents, instead of e-filing monthly, quarterly and annual withholding tax statements, the e-filing of only quarterly withholding tax statements is proposed;

Tax Incentives for Foreign and Domestic Investment

1. For the wellbeing of listed company a Tax credit for BMR costs incurred by such a company is proposed to be provided @ 10% for the tax year of its incurrence. This concession has been proposed to be admissible for the tax years 2011 to 2015;

2. With the purpose to encourage enlistment of corporate sector, a 5% tax credit is proposed to be allowed to a company in the tax year of its enlistment.

3. In order to align with rest of the scheme, 10% withholding tax deductible on Government Securities is proposed to be a FINAL tax.

4. Withholding tax deductible on debt instruments is proposed to be a FINAL tax, in order to relieve the non-resident taxpayers of statutory requirement for filing income tax return.
5. For providing incentive to foreign lenders for tax-free repatriation of profits earned on foreign industrial loans, Clause 72(iii) of Part-IV of Second Schedule to the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 is proposed to be re-instated.
6. The maximum rate of withholding tax deductible on payments made to non-resident taxpayers who are not subject to Avoidance of Double Taxation Treaties (other than payments made on account of royalty and fee for technical services) is proposed to be @ 20% instead of 30%;
7. Honoring wide demand, the rate of withholding tax deductible @ 20% on cross-word puzzles is proposed to be reduced to a rate of 10%;

Revenue Measures

1. In order to strengthen the drive for documentation, a uniform tax rate for small companies as well as AOPs is proposed @ 25% of their taxable income.
2. Advance tax deductible on imports made by commercial importers is proposed to be enhanced to @5% being a FINAL tax.
3. Tax on capital gains accruing on account of holdings of stocks/shares/securities for six-months or less is proposed @ 10%, while holdings of stocks/shares/securities exceeding six-months is proposed @ 7.5%. However no tax has been proposed on such capital gains arising held for a period exceeding 12 months.
4. In order to rationalize and simplify slab-rates provided in respect of advance tax deductible on goods transport vehicles under Item (1) of Division-III of Part-IV of Second Schedule to the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 are proposed to be abolished, and tax is proposed @ Re.1 per kilogram of the laden weight capacity of goods transport vehicle. No change has been proposed in the rate of tax on goods forwarding contracts, which remain taxable at the existing rate of 2%.
5. In order to bring clarity on advance tax deductible on Cash Withdrawals from Banks, various banking transactions including modes like withdrawals through Demand Draft, Pay Order, Online Transfer, Telegraphic Transfer, TDR, CDR, STDR and RTC, are proposed to be subject to 0.3% deduction of the advance tax, if such transactions exceed threshold of Rs.25,000/- in a single day. The advance tax is adjustable.
6. Turnover Tax on Loss Making Companies is proposed to be enhanced to @ 1%.
7. Withholding tax on gross value of Inland Air Ticket has been proposed @ 5%. Under the scheme the Inland Air-Ticketing persons shall withholding the tax, which will be adjustable against the tax liability of the purchaser of such ticket;

Technical Measures

1. Section 4 of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 is proposed to be amended to include a reference regarding tax credit on account of share of profits received by a company from an AOP.
2. In order to bring clarity, expression "CDí" appearing in Division-V of Part-IV of First Schedule to the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 is proposed to be replaced by "any electronic medium".
3. The mandatory requirement of Filing of Wealth Statement by the Taxpayers in FTR cases with yearly tax amounting to Rs.35, 000/- is proposed to be included in section 116 of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001.
4. For enforcing checks on non-compliant taxpayers, and to encourage compliant-taxpayers, a new section 181A is proposed to be inserted in the Ordinance.

5. In order to streamline accounting of Advance Tax payments, certain amendments are proposed in section 147 of the Ordinance, so that quarterly advance tax payments are paid by 25th of last month, as compared to earlier requirement of such payments by 15th of every month after the end of a quarter.
6. Through an editorial amendment, the reference of 'minimum tax' on importer of edible oil and packing materials under section 148, is proposed to be incorporated in provisions referring to final tax on the income of an importer.
7. For the purposes of clarity, through an editorial amendment the reference of sub-section (1AA) of section 152 is proposed to be inserted in sub-section (2) of section 152.
8. In order to rationalize the definition of 'Prescribed Persons' as given in sub-section (9) of section 153, an individual with turnover of Rs.50 millions or above is proposed to be added.
9. In order to perceive better audit of withholding taxes, the withholding agents shall be required to e-file quarterly statements even in the cases where no-tax was deducted. For the purpose of alignment and uniformity, the words 'a person collecting tax' are proposed to be replaced with the words 'a withholding agent' in sub-section (2) of section 165.
10. Editorial amendments in Section 236A of the Ordinance are proposed in order to bring clarity and remove confusion about the charge of advance tax on public auction of all kind of property including confiscated or attached goods.
11. On merger of Investment Corporation of Pakistan with Industrial Development Bank, the exemption available to ICP on dividend received from any other company is proposed to be withdrawn.
12. Exemption under clause (52) of Part-IV of the Second Schedule to the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 available to Vanaspati Ghee or Oil is proposed to be withdrawn, in view of demise of SRO. 593(I) 1991 Dated 30th June 1991.
[The News – June 6, 2010]

NA Approves Budget 2010-11 With Majority

The National Assembly has approved the federal budget 2010-11 with majority. Under Finance Bill, GST has been increased to 17 percent. PML-N candidates staged walkout from the session. Finance Minister Abdul Hafeez Sheikh presented the Finance Bill in the National Assembly which was opposed by the PML-N. Whereas all amendments presented by the party were rejected. Taking part in debate, Zahid Hamid said that levy on petroleum should be curtailed and amendments should be made in Customs Act. He suggested that fine on transit trade should be 3 percent. Demanding check and balance on FBR, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that GST should be decreased to 12 percent. Rana Tanveer said that corruption is rampant in FBR.

[The Nation – June 25, 2010]

Punjab Budget

Punjab Budget 2010-11: Rs 14.5 billion Earmarked for Health Sector

The Punjab government has allocated Rs 14,500 million for health sector in Punjab budget for the year 2010-11 against Rs 12,025 million set aside for the year 2009-10. In addition to this, Rs 1500 million has also been allocated for the establishment of three new medical colleges in the province.

The budget document says that establishment of Drug Testing Labs at Faisalabad and Rawalpindi, strengthening of Drug Testing Lab at Multan, setting up of Food Testing Labs at Rawalpindi and Faisalabad and establishment of Mobile Food Testing Lab facilities at Tertiary level would help in refurbishing the diagnostic facilities and also help in ascertaining the quality and purity of food and beverages. Priorities have been re-orientated leading to a new strategic thrust which would enable to grapple with service delivery issues with a fresh approach and in a focused manner. The following initiatives are taken in this respect:

The Mobile Health Unit system is being introduced at Tehsil level to make up the deficiencies of static coverage. This initiative shall be piloted in 12 tehsils and then expanded in phases. The Mobile Health Unit shall comprise collapsible and non-collapsible diagnostic, invasive and non-invasive electro-medical equipment. An allocation of Rs 614 million is being made on this count. Emergency Services Block at DHQ Hospitals: This would be pro-poor as well as a result-oriented intervention and give a real boost to service delivery. The service delivery would be

expanded in a manner that people living in different districts and rural areas are provided with quality healthcare services at the local level. For this purpose, a plan has been chalked out to undertake construction of dedicated emergency blocks, which would be equipped with all necessary diagnostic facilities. Establishment of Centres of Excellence augment specialised service delivery at the high-end level and may become avenues of revenue generation in times to come. The approved Health Policy Framework has also recognised their significance. The establishment of these centres is now believed to be appropriate and result-oriented. These Centres are Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology, Institute of Urology & Transplantation at Rawalpindi, Kidney Centres at Multan and Bahawalpur, Children Hospital Complex, Bahawalpur, Gynae & Obstetric Care Complex, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, expansion of children hospital, Multan (addition of 150 beds), Fatima Jinnah Institute of Dental Sciences, Lahore and establishment of 300 bedded hospital at Bahawalpur.

[Business Recorder – June 16, 2010]

PA Passes Budget

The Punjab Assembly on Tuesday passed the budget for the financial year 2010-11, with the opposition staying away from voting. Earlier, Speaker Rana Muhammad Iqbal Khan got “The Punjab Finance Bill 2010” moved by Finance Minister Tanvir Ashraf Kaira and clause-by-clause approval by the assembly members. The amendment to the bill says “a new clause 7 has been inserted, while in the Punjab Finance Act 2008 (Act-I of 2008) – a) section 6 shall be omitted; and b) the schedule shall be omitted”. Later, the Punjab Industrial Relations Ordinance 2010 was laid in the house and the speaker referred it to the Standing Committee on Labour with the direction to present its report till July 31. Similarly, three bills – the Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan Bill 2010; the Lahore Leads University Bill 2010; and the Global Institute Lahore Bill 2010 – were laid in the house. The speaker referred all the three bills to the Standing Committee on Education for its report till July 31.

[Dawn – June 23, 2010]

Sindh Budget

Rs422b Sindh Budget Unveiled

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah on June 11 presented Rs422 billion Sindh budget for 2010-11, showing a deficit of Rs25 billion. The budget shows total revenue of Rs397 billion, with a deficit of Rs25 billion, which is six per cent of the total budget. The province’s Annual Development Programme has been set at record Rs115 billion against the current year’s allocation of Rs75 billion with an increase of 53 per cent.

Delivering the budget speech in Sindh Assembly, CM Qaim Ali Shah described the budget a tax-free in essence. His speech was frequently punctuated with thumping of desks. The estimated revenue receipts from divisible pool under the new NFC Award are Rs207.3 billion with 78.2 per cent increase over 2009-10 budget. This, however, includes the receipt relating to Octroi and Zila tax. The estimates under oil and gas receipts are Rs51.2 billion against revised estimates of Rs53.7 billion. Provincial own receipts have been pitched at Rs50.5 billion with an increase of 27 percent over the revised estimates of outgoing year. The government in addition a provision of Rs25 billion for the sales tax on services, which will begin to collect soon. The aim will be to target collection of Rs40 billion, however, the government made slightly conservative estimates in budget this is the first year, Shah said. On the expenditure side, the Chief Minister said the current revenue expenditure has been estimated at Rs268.3 billion with an increase of 19.3 per cent over the revised estimates of Rs224.8 billion. The shares of local governments have been worked out to be Rs120.8 (including Rs33.2 billion of District Support Grant) on the basis of the 2007 PFC Award and it reflects an increase of 20 percent over budget 2009-10.

Referring to the Development Budget for 2010-11, Qaim Ali Shah said that the government has been increasing the Provincial ADP to Rs115 billion against the current year’s allocation of Rs75 billion an increase of 53 per cent. The District Development portfolio has been at Rs18 billion. Shah said that the deficit shall be finance through improving the revenue collection, mobilising additional resources, containing current expenditure through ban on wasteful expenditures especially vehicles and discouraging unnecessary foreign visits etc. We also expect to resolve the issue of SCARP CDLs. Here we have paid an amount of Rs22 billion to the government of Pakistan and we plan to take the issue with federal government again, he added.

[The Nation – June 12, 2010]

Sindh Budget, Finance Bill Approved

The Sindh Assembly approved the Rs415 billion Sindh Budget 2010-11, with Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah indicating that the provincial government might purchase a new helicopter as the Opposition criticised the government for spending Rs100 on the repair of the old one last year. The Opposition preferred silence when the

budget was presented for vote. However, its members voted in favour of the Sindh Finance Bill 2010, which aims at reducing duties and collecting Capital Value Tax (CVT) as the CAT has become a provincial subject after 18th Amendment.

The Opposition, comprising the PML-F and the PML-Q, had submitted around 552 cut motions, seeking reduction of at least Rs100 million in administrative expenditure but all were rejected with a majority vote. Before presenting cut motions to vote, Speaker Nisar Ahmed Khuhro asked the Opposition members to explain the rationale behind seeking reduction in what they called the unnecessary burden on the public exchequer.

The Sindh Assembly also unanimously passed the Sindh Finance Bill 2010 to “rationalise” certain duties and taxes and collect Capital Value Tax (CVT). Chief Minister Sindh Syed Qaim Ali Shah, while talking about the general principles of the bill, said that they have incorporated recommendations of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to reduce certain duties and taxes so that the people could be encouraged to disclose real value of their properties. Shah said the stamp duty has been reduced from 3 per cent to 2 per cent while duty on sale agreement of the land would be reduced from 3 per cent to 0.5 per cent on the recommendations of the SBP to facilitate the sale of property and encourage investment in real estate business.

[The News – June 27, 2010]

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Presents Rs 294bn Budget with Zero Deficit

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Finance Muhammad Hamayun Khan presented the Rs 294 billion budget for fiscal year 2010-11 in the provincial assembly on June 12. It is worth 40 percent more than the [outgoing year's] budget,” said Humayun during the budget speech. The Minister termed the budget a balanced one as the total estimated revenue is Rs 294.2 billion while the total estimated expenditure also amounts to Rs 294.2 billion. In his budget speech, Hamayun said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would receive Rs 123.4 billion as its share from federal taxes, Rs 9.4 billion from oil and gas royalties and Rs 6 billion as hydel generation profits. The minister added that the province was expected to get Rs 25 billion in July 2010 as net hydel profit arrears.

The Minister said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also expected to receive Rs 15.2 billion as a special grant for the war against terrorism, Rs 7.2 billion from the province's own receipts, Rs 842 million from the Malakand-III hydel power project, Rs 12.3 billion from general sales tax on services, Rs 400 million from general capital receipts, Rs 9.3 billion in foreign aid, and Rs 85.9 billion under the head of food trading.

The Finance Minister said that out of an estimated expenditure of Rs 294.2 billion, the government had allocated Rs 127.9 billion for current expenditures, including Rs 9.4 billion for health and education, Rs 21 billion for the police, Rs 11 billion for payment of pensions, and Rs 51.9 billion for district salaries and other expenditures. The minister said that Rs 2.5 billion had been earmarked for wheat subsidy, Rs 16.6 billion for the salaries of other departments, Rs 9.6 billion for the payment of loans and Rs 60 billion had been allocated for development expenditures. Hamayun said arrangements would be made to provide quality education through 27,419 schools during the next fiscal year, and 604 teachers' positions would be created in new schools. The Minister said the government will launch the Benazir Health Support Programme to provide free treatment to hepatitis patients, for which Rs 500 million had initially been allocated. Presenting the supplementary budget for fiscal year 2009-10, Hamayun said the total outlay of the supplementary budget was Rs 35.530 billion. He said the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, huge recruitments in the police department and the purchase of equipment for the police, an increase in salaries, and the internally displaced persons were major reasons for the increase in expenditure during the outgoing fiscal.

[Daily Times – June 13, 2010]

PA Passes Rs294.2b Budget for 2010-11

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly passed the Rs294.2 billion budget for 2010-11 when all the demands for grants were approved amid jokes and laughs in a pleasant assembly session. The assembly also passed the Finance Bill piloted by Minister for Finance Engineer Hamayun Khan. The legislators, who had debated performance of various departments on their cut motions during the last two days, agreed to the government and speaker's proposal to withdraw all their motions to enable the government pass the budget within its scheduled time.

During their two-day debates, the legislators were able to pass only 17 demands for grants but the remaining 41 demands for grants were approved within shortest and one of the pleasant sessions amidst jokes and laughter. The speaker quoted relevant rules and the members agreed with suggestions to approve the budget without debating it through cut motions. Later, the ministers presented demands for grants for their respective departments and the house approved it with voice vote. The speaker was also enjoying the situation and questioning ministers as to why they were demanding such meagre or huge amounts. Amidst thumbing of desks and cheers, the ministers had to do the explaining. Earlier, the lawmakers had been withdrawing their cut motions after describing the ministers with honorific such as decent, honourable, respectable and senior-most. Minister for Agriculture Arbab Ayub Jan, the senior most member, was the first to present demands for grants. Almost all the opposition members withdrew cut motions but each one of them appreciated the Minister for his best performance and attitude except the JUI-F's Syeda Nasira Batool. She said every member praised the Minister and there was no doubt in it but there were irregularities and corruption in the agriculture department under his watch. She pointed out that since a secretary was supervising the agriculture, livestock and other departments, it was impossible for him to run the affairs smoothly. There was neither monitoring nor any planning in it, she remarked. All opposition members withdrew their cut motions except the PML-Q's Qalandar Lodhi, PML-N's Javed Abbasi and PPP's Noor Sehar. In their brief speeches, the lawmakers termed Minister for Forests Wajid Ali Shah as one of the finest ministers. They suggested ban on deforestation, concentration on tree plantation and saving the national exchequer from destruction. The minister assured to take action against violators and improve the forest department with support of members.

[The News – June 24, 2010]

Balochistan Budget

Balochistan Budget

The last of the federal and provincial budget, that of Balochistan, is in. Provincial Finance Minister Mir Asim Kurd Gailoo did the honours when he presented a Rs 152 billion budget, with a development component of Rs 26.7 billion, to the Balochistan Assembly, on June 22, with a deficit of Rs 7.1 billion. As expected, the salaries of government servants were increased to match the increase given by the federal government. The police and levies had their basic salaries doubled, a measure taken separately because of the war on terror. While the Balochistan police and levies are engaged in the war, and the raise was thus appropriate, the province could only afford them because the recent National Finance Commission Award had enabled it to afford the extra cost. The Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan package announced by the President was represented, not just because of the money received under it from the federal government, Rs 12 billion along with the grant under the NFC, or the creation of 5792 new jobs. It may well be true that a PPP-led government is in office, while the package was announced by a PPP federal government, but there should not have been created a link between the package and 5000 jobs in teaching as has been done. One aspect in which the province has proved a holdout has been in the field of austerity measures. Whereas the federal cabinet had forgone the increase in salaries, the Balochistan cabinet apparently made no gesture in that direction, and quietly decided to become an even bigger burden on the people of the province. Thus, with the cabinet not setting an example, the question of making some saving by putting a freeze on other departmental spending, as done by other governments, did not even arise. The probability is thus multiplied of governments reneging on their promises, using the example of Balochistan as a readymade excuse. The Balochistan government still has time to rectify the flaws in its budget, including the absence of austerity measures, and bring the budget in line with the needs and aspirations of the people of the province.

[The Nation – June 23, 2010]

Balochistan Budget Passed Unanimously

The Balochistan Assembly unanimously approved, on June 28, the Rs152 billion provincial budget for 2010-11. The session presided over by Speaker Aslam Bhootani approved 52 demands for grant moved by Finance Minister Mir Asim Kurd. Concluding the budget debate, Mr Kurd termed it 'people friendly' and the largest ever budget of the province. He said the government had tried to resolve the province's financial crisis and succeeded in getting maximum resources for development. Mr. Kurd said the first budget of Balochistan presented by the late Mir Ahmed Mawaz Bugti in 1972 was of Rs158 million and it was a deficit budget. He said previous governments had not given adequate funds to the province for education, health, drinking water, agriculture and other sectors and, as a result, it remained backward. He said the coalition government headed by Nawab Aslam Raisani had tried to get rid of Rs23.5 billion overdraft. After its first year, the provincial government paid Rs5 billion to the State Bank and later the federal government wrote off Rs17.5 billion. Another important success of the government was getting its demands accepted in the 7th National Finance Commission Award. He said the due share received from national resources through the award, including gas development surcharge, arrears and royalty, had created a lot of opportunities for the province to achieve progress and prosperity. Mr. Kurd thanked President Asif Ali Zardari,

Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and former federal finance minister Shaukat Tarin for the role they played in this regard. He said Rs1 billion had been allocated for procuring medicines and no one would now complain of shortage of drugs in government hospitals and health centres. He said Rs12 billion had been earmarked for investment in income-generating projects in the minerals and other sectors in consultation with an Investment Board set up in the province. The minister said the government had increased the salary of police, Levies and other provincial forces by 100 per cent that would cost Rs17 billion. He expressed the hope that this and other initiatives would help to improve the law and order situation in Balochistan. Mr. Kurd said a 50 per cent raise for other employees would help curb corruption. He said the government had regularised 6,000 employees.

[Dawn – June 29, 2010]

Regional Politics & Election Watch

Pakistan's Foreign Relations

Pakistan, China Pledge to Boost Defence Ties

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani held a meeting with the Chinese Defence Minister on June 17, in which both sides pledged to strengthen defence ties. Kayani, who is currently on a five-day official visit to China, said Pakistan valued its defence and security ties with China, noting that cooperation in the defence sector had been very 'fruitful' in recent years, according to the Xinhua news agency. "Cooperation between the Chinese and Pakistani armed forces is exemplary and has been fruitful," Chinese Defence Minister Liang Guangli said during the meeting held at the Diaoyutai State Guest House. He said China would join hands with Pakistan to bring defence cooperation to a new high. Later, Kayani met Chinese Minister for Public Security Meng Jianzhu, top Chinese legislator Wu Bangguo, and the Vice Chairman of China's Central Military Commission, Guo Boxiong. Bangguo said Beijing would work towards promoting a strategic cooperative partnership with Pakistan. He spoke highly of the cooperation between the two neighbours' armed forces, saying that joint efforts to combat the "East Turkistan Islamic Movement" bore testament to the fact that Pakistan-China relations are on track.

[Daily Times – June 18, 2010]

Pakistan, India Pledge New Chapter in Relations

Moving ahead towards a new phase in bilateral ties, Pakistan and India agreed to open a new chapter in their relations to address all critical issues. Brushing aside the existence of the trust deficit, foreign secretaries of the two countries agreed to solve all outstanding issues through dialogue. Addressing a joint conference with Pakistani Foreign Secretary Salman Bashir at the Foreign Office, Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao said the two countries have been expressing commitment to a serious, sustained and comprehensive dialogue to get fragile relations back on track and deny terrorists space to derail the reconciliation process.

[Daily Times – June 25, 2010]

Joint Declaration Signed on Pak-Afghan Mutual Progress

Pakistan and Afghanistan on June 25 signed the "**Joint Declaration on Next Steps in Afghanistan-Pakistan Comprehensive Cooperation**", which would provide a solid basis for multi-disciplinary cooperation. This step to further improve bilateral relations, was taken during the maiden visit of Afghan Foreign Minister Dr Zalmay Rassoul to Islamabad. Rassoul met the Pakistani leadership, and together with his counterpart Shah Mahmood Qureshi expressed satisfaction over the current state of bilateral relations but felt that various institutional frameworks needed to be evolved to give further impetus to bilateral cooperation in various areas. Both countries focused especially on the treatment of terrorism, extremism and militancy, bilateral cooperation in political and economic fields, and regional and international issues of common concern. According to a joint statement issued by the Foreign Office, both sides have agreed to establish the following institutional frameworks: - The two countries enjoyed cordial relations, which needed to be sustained through leadership and official-level contacts at regular intervals. In this context, the foreign ministers would meet twice a year while additional secretary/deputy foreign minister-level meetings may also be held twice a year for more detailed discussions.

- Parliamentary exchanges complement political-level interaction and promote people-to-people contacts as well as build mutual trust and confidence. The ministers agreed that parliamentary exchanges should be encouraged to the extent possible.

- The ministers agreed that the two countries enjoyed substantial cooperation in the field of education. They decided to establish a "Joint Education Commission" to facilitate and coordinate bilateral cooperation in the field of education. The commission will be co-chaired by ministers of education on annual basis.
- The ministers agreed to establish a "Joint Commission on Border Cooperation and Visa Regime" to facilitate and oversee the cross-border movement of humans and vehicles. The ministers of interior will co-chair this commission once a year.
- Pakistan and Afghanistan share immense cultural commonalities. In order to facilitate the exchange of visits of journalists, poets, writers, musicians and artistes, they agreed to establish a "Pakistan-Afghanistan Information and Cultural Foundation" to be co-chaired by the information ministers.
- Taking a cue from a decision reached during President Karzai's visit to Pakistan in March this year, the ministers agreed to operationalise the "Silk Route CEOs Forum" through the meeting of the chambers of

commerce and industries and the private sectors of the two countries on the sidelines of the next high-level visit from either side. The forum could be expanded further at a later date.

- The ministers also agreed to operationalise, in pursuance of a decision reached during President Hamid Karzai's visit to Pakistan, a "Pakistan-Afghanistan Reconstruction Consortium" through the first meeting in Islamabad of the boards of investment and chambers of commerce and industries of the two countries. The forum could identify the reconstruction projects in Afghanistan for funding by Pakistan out of the amount pledged by the government for this purpose. The two countries could jointly explore other ways and means for funding such projects.

[The News – June 26, 2010]

New Rail Freight Link between Turkey and Pakistan

A new rail freight link between Turkey and Pakistan via Iran will begin operations in August. Pakistan's Minister of Railways, Haji Gholam Ahmed Billour, said the first cargo train would leave Istanbul for Islamabad on 1 August 2010. As reported in IFW in January, the three countries have embarked on a five-year, US\$20bn plan to upgrade the 6,566km rail line between Islamabad and Istanbul to create a high-speed freight link between Asia and central Europe, designed to cut transit times from 11 days to 3-4 when complete.

[The News – June 15, 2010]

Security, Trade Accord Signed with Spain

Pakistan and Spain expressed their joint commitment to fight terrorism and signed a broad agreement for enhancing cooperation in security, trade and other fields. The agreement was formalised at a meeting between Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, who is on a visit to Spain. "The commitment by both governments in the fight against terrorism is a commitment to collaborate," Mr Zapatero, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the EU, said at a joint news conference after the meeting. "I am very grateful to Pakistan and thank you for the efforts you have made to confront radicalism and terrorism in the region," he said, adding that Pakistan could count on Spain in its efforts for stability. Mr. Gilani said that Spain and Pakistan "have both been victims of terrorism, and both countries are cooperating to root out this menace". Mr. Gilani said the two countries signed a framework of cooperation agreement "covering diverse fields from trade and finance to science and technology, from defence and security to cultural and people-to-people contacts". They also signed a deal to avoid double taxation, which Mr Zapatero said "opens up a whole array of economic relations in the future". The Spanish Prime Minister said his country would support efforts to increase trade with Pakistan.

[Dawn – June 3, 2010]

Iran-Pakistan (IP) Gas Pipeline

US Cautions Pakistan on Iran Pipeline

Pakistan should be wary of committing to an Iran-Pakistan natural gas pipeline because anticipated US sanctions on Iran could hit Pakistani companies, the US special representative to the region said on June 21. Richard Holbrooke told that new legislation, which targets Iran's energy sector, is being drafted in the US Congress and that Pakistan should "wait and see". "Pakistan has an obvious, major energy problem and we are sympathetic to that, but in regards to a specific project, legislation is being prepared that may apply to the project," he said, referring to the pipeline. "We caution the Pakistanis not to over-commit themselves until we know the legislation." Pakistan is plagued by chronic electricity shortages that have led to mass demonstrations and battered the PPP-led government. US Senator Joseph Lieberman said last week he expected Congress to finish shortly the legislation tightening US sanctions on Iran that would include provisions affecting the supply of refined petroleum products to Tehran, and add to sanctions on its financial sector.

[Reuters – June 21, 2010]

PPP, PML-N & PML-Q greet IP Deed Signing

Major political parties welcomed the agreement signing of Iran, Pakistan (IP) pipeline project and urged the government to resist all sorts of pressures that may affect the project implementation. This would be the second occasion that the major political parties of the country are on the same page after they had agreed on 18th Constitutional Amendment package while also they had given a unanimous vote of confidence to Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani in April 2008. However, leaders of the mainstream political outfits called for an early implementation over the project which they said would be a service to the national cause.

[APP – June 22, 2010]

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

SAARC Moot Resolves to Rid Region of Terrorism

The member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) reiterated their commitment to strengthen the SAARC regime against terrorism. They reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen cooperation to fight and eradicate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

According to the SAARC Ministerial Statement on Cooperation Against Terrorism issued at the conclusion of the four-day SAARC Interior Ministers' Conference, the member countries should extend cooperation to each other against terrorism while remaining within the purview of their national laws, following the principles of non-interference and non-intervention in each others' affairs. They also underscored their commitment to apprehend and prosecute or extradite people connected with the commission of acts of terrorism. Addressing a press conference after the moot, SAARC Secretary General Sheel Kant Sharma said the SAARC conference expressed deep concern at the continuing scourge of terrorism afflicting the region, which had caused extensive loss of human life as well as destruction and damage to property. He said Pakistan and India had always shown maturity in keeping intact the SAARC platform despite their differences, adding that both the countries had supported SAARC decisions. He said the next meeting of SAARC interior/home ministers would be held in Bhutan next year, prior to this meeting the technical sessions would be held at the end of this year.

The proposal for setting up a SAARC Regional Police Force (SAARCPOL) on the pattern of Interpol would remain a proposal until the next meeting as the conference could not move forward on the Sri Lankan proposal due to differences on modalities among member states.

[Daily Times – June 27, 2010]

Kyrgyzstan's Ethnic Violence

Kyrgyz Ethnic Violence Rages, Russia Mulls Action

Russian officials debated possible intervention in Kyrgyzstan after days of ethnic clashes that have killed at least 124 people and left cities in the Central Asian state's volatile south in flames. The violence between Kyrgyz and Uzbek residents in the southern cities of Osh and Jalalabad began late on Thursday and escalated over the weekend. Witnesses said gangs with automatic rifles, iron bars and machetes had set fire to houses and shot fleeing residents.

Thousands of ethnic Uzbeks have fled to the nearby border with Uzbekistan or sought refuge in local villages to escape the deadliest fighting in two decades. Many said they were being targeted by Kyrgyz gangs in a "genocide" backed by local police and troops.

"Crowds of Kyrgyz are roaming around, they set our homes on fire and kill Uzbeks right in their houses," ethnic Uzbek Muhammed Askerov, a Jalalabad businessman, told Reuters. It is unclear what triggered the clashes. Some officials have pointed to a conflict at a local casino or rumours of a dispute sparked by a taxi passenger who declined to pay his fare. Others have spoken of Kyrgyz girls being raped by Uzbeks. The ethnic violence raises the risk of a civil war or even a full-blown conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. If the interim government loses control, Kyrgyzstan could disintegrate and cease to exist as a single independent country. Meeting: Moscow sent at least 150 paratroopers to Kyrgyzstan on Sunday to protect its own military facilities in the country and representatives of the Moscow-led security bloc of ex-Soviet republics known as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) gathered on Monday to discuss further steps.

[Reuters – June 15, 2001]

100,000 Uzbek Refugees Seek Safety at Border

Some 100,000 minority Uzbeks fleeing a purge by mobs of Kyrgyz massed at the border on June 14, an Uzbek leader said, as the deadliest ethnic violence to hit this Central Asian nation in decades left entire blocks of a major city burned to the ground. An Uzbek community leader claimed at least 200 Uzbeks alone had already been buried, and the International Committee of the Red Cross has said its delegates saw about 100 bodies being buried in just one cemetery. The US, Russia and the United Nations worked on humanitarian aid airlifts while neighbouring Uzbekistan hastily set up refugee camps to handle the flood of hungry, frightened refugees. Most of the refugees were women, children and the elderly, and Uzbekistan said some had gunshot wounds from their harrowing escape. Jallahitdin Jallilatdinov, who heads the Uzbek National Centre, told that at least 100,000 Uzbeks had fled for the border and were awaiting entry into Uzbekistan, while 80,000 had already crossed. An AP reporter saw at

least hundreds of Uzbek refugees stuck in no-man's-land between the boundaries of the two nations at a border crossing near Jalalabad.

[Daily Times – June 15, 2010]

Political Crisis in Thailand

Thais Appoint Political Violence Investigator

The Thai government appointed a former attorney general on June 8 to investigate recent political violence in which 89 people were killed, but the opposition rejected the nominee as biased. Anti-government protesters clashed with soldiers on the streets of the capital in April and May, raising concerns about the political and economic stability of southeast Asia's second biggest economy. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva named Kanit Nannakorn, a prominent academic lawyer, to set up a fact-finding body to investigate the violence that ended when soldiers cleared protesters from a shopping district in central Bangkok. "I have given him full independence to select a team and conduct a probe," Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva told reporters after a weekly cabinet meeting. The protesters were largely drawn from the ranks of supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, a telecommunications billionaire who won widespread support among the rural and urban poor with populist policies. Thaksin was ousted in a 2006 coup and later convicted of graft. He has lived in self-exile since 2008 and denied organising the protests in what critics saw as a bid to regain power. The Puea Thai Party, largely made up of Thaksin's political supporters and broadly allied with the "red shirt" protesters, criticised Kanit's appointment. "We maintain our call for an impartial international body to get involved. They cannot expect us to accept a panel led by someone close to the administration," said a Puea Thai parliamentarian, Anudith Nakornthap. Chalerm Yoobumrung, Chairman of the Puea Thai Party, said Kanit was an ally of Abhisit's Democrat party.

Kanit headed an investigation into accusations of the extrajudicial killing of at least 2,500 people in a "war on drugs" that Thaksin launched during his rule. Thaksin rejected the accusations of unlawful killings. The protesters camped out in the city's old quarter for three weeks and a main shopping district for six weeks demanding an election. They said Abhisit had no popular mandate and had come to power illegitimately through backroom parliamentary deals with the help of the powerful military. Protesters said authorities used excessive force.

The government has denied accusations that troops fired at unarmed civilians, saying soldiers faced shadowy gunmen it called terrorists, armed with automatic rifles and grenades, who emerged from the ranks of the protesters to attack the soldiers. New York-based Human Rights Watch accused both sides of committing "serious abuses" and called for an independent investigation. "A one-sided inquiry will undermine efforts to reach a political solution," said Elaine Pearson, the group's acting director for the region, in a statement.

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