



**PAKISTAN
GOVERNANCE
FORUM**

An

Initiative of The Researchers

January 2011

VOLUME V, EDITION XI

Contents

Gender & Women Empowerment

Women & Politics

Punjab Assembly: Women MPAs Walk Out Over Uplift Funds

Women & Laws

Women Protection Act 2006: SCBA Member to Challenge FSC Decision in Supreme Court

Promotion of Freedom, Security for Women at Workplace Sought

Provinces Urged to Take Steps for Swift Implementation of Legislation

Women & Economics

Women Face Discrimination in Job Opportunities

20pc Seats for Women in All FDIs

Display Centre Plan for Women Entrepreneurs Finalized

BISP Updates

Gender Equity Programme

\$40 Million USAID Grant to NGO

HR Watch

Women & HR

Rights for Children, Women Detained in Jails Demanded

Alarming Increase in Incidents of Honour Killing: Aurat Foundation

Agreement Inked to Improve Functioning of LCUs

Childs' Rights

UNICEF Holds Seminar on Child Rights

Draft bill for Child Protection Authority Okayed

Rights Violations: Poverty, Social Taboos Main Causes of Child Abuse

Minorities' Rights

Kidnappings: Hindus Continue to be Targeted

Hindu Lawmaker Resigns, Settles in India

Blasphemy Law

Aasia's Fate Uncertain After Taseer's Murder

Thousands Rally Against 'Changes' in Blasphemy Law

PA Asks Centre not to Touch Blasphemy Law

Blasphemy Law: Rally Threatens Long March

Victims of false Blasphemy Cases in Pakistan - 1990 to 2011

Blasphemy Cases in Muslim Countries

Conflict Watch

Violence in Karachi Spikes by 288pc

Chehlum Attacks: Karachi, Lahore Hit Again

Targeted Operation in Karachi on Cards

Governance Watch

Political Governance

Federal and Provincial Governments

Govt Bows to Opposition Demands
MQM Back to Treasury Benches
Latif Khosa Appointed Punjab Governor
New Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Appointed
NA Committee Concerned Over Balochistan Package

Legislative Business

Upper House of Parliament: Senate Passes Amended Ogra Bill
Language Bill: Political Parties Urged to Evolve Joint Strategy
Deweaponisation Bill: Weapon-Free Pakistan?

ECP & Election Related News

Opposition Parties Submit Nominations for Parliamentary Body
PML-N Pushing for Neutral ECP, CEC
Four More MPAs Face Legal Action Over Fake Degrees
PML-Q Wins Shangla By-Elections

Political Parties News

MQM, Q PML-Q, MQM Agree to Form Electoral Alliance
Dissatisfied with Progress on 10-Point Agenda

Judiciary Updates

15 HC Judges Dropped
Islamabad High Court Starts Functioning Again
Nizam-e-Adl Regulation: Top Sharia Court Set Up in Swat

Economic Governance

Facts & Figures on Economy

Remittances Rise 17% to \$5.3bn in First Half of FY11
Budget Deficit Likely to Increase to Rs 1 Trillion
Economic Growth Target to Fall to 2.5% of GDP: Senate
Financing the Revenue Gap: Provinces Refuse to Bail Out Federation from Financial Trap
Govt to Further Cut Development Budget: Finance Minister

Foreign Assistance & Pakistan's Economy

Pak-China Trade Jumps by 28 Percent to \$8.7 Billion
WB Approves \$285 million for KP, FATA Development
Pak, ADB Ink \$242m Agreement for Power Distribution System

I

Regional Politics

Pakistan Foreign Relations

State of the Union Address: Finally, Obama Cuts Pakistan Some Slack
India to Share Information on Samjhauta Blast with Pakistan: Chidambaram
Islamabad, Kabul Exchange Transit Trade Documents

Indian Politics

Indian Cabinet Changes Could Give Hint on Reform

Domestic and Foreign Issues of Afghanistan

US Won't Cut and Run from Afghanistan in 2014: Biden
Karzai, Afghan Lawmakers in Poll Court Stand-Off

Afghan Security Plan 'At Risk': US Official
Foreigners Behind Afghan Parliament Crisis: Karzai
Karzai Again Complains of Foreign Interference

Political Scenario in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Tries 800 Soldiers for Mutiny
US to Help Bangladesh Conduct War Crime Trials
Bangladesh Opposition Gains in Local Polls

Political Crisis in Nepal

Nepal Communists Give Up Control over Ex-Fighters
Nepal Peace Under Threat as UN Pulls Out
Nepal Attempts to Get Leader by Changing PM Election Rules

Myanmar – Post Election Scenario

Pressure Grows for End to Myanmar Sanctions
Myanmar Court Rejects Suu Kyi Party Appeal

Gender & Women Empowerment

Women & Politics

Punjab Assembly: Women MPAs Walk Out Over Uplift Funds

The house echoed with slogans on January 19 as PPP women MPAs protested against their party's policy of reconciliation with the PML-N and being denied discretionary development funds. The members at one stage walked out to show their lack of confidence. Led by Minister Neelam Jabbar, the PPP women criticized the government for not allocating development funds for them. Opposition member Samia Amjad joined their cause. She was particularly harsh on the law minister for his 'sarcastic smiles' and jibes at the opposition. Law Minister Rana Sanaullah invited them over to the Chief Minister's Secretariat to discuss the matter over a breakfast. Samuel Kamran of PML-Q rejected the proposal saying that we do not want to meet the chief minister over breakfast. We want the matter resolved here. **Speaking on a point of order, PPP's Saghira Islam said that women members were not being provided funds for the last three years. She said that women MPAs were equal and a part of the house so that ignoring them was unacceptable. She said that the law minister had promised to issue them funds several times but had always later backed out.**

[The Express Tribune – January 20, 2011]

Women & Laws

Women Protection Act 2006: SCBA Member to Challenge FSC Decision in Supreme Court

A lawyer has decided to challenge the decision of the Federal Shariat Court (FSC) on the Women Protection Act 2006 in the Supreme Court. **Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Executive Member Aslam Ghumman said the FSC order was illegal because it had no authority to determine its jurisdiction. He said that under Article 199, it is the power of high courts to declare the validation of laws.** He said only objective of the FSC was to examine and determine whether a law is in conformity with Shariah, adding that the FSC did not touch those sections of the WPA 2006 which he had earlier challenged. He said the FSC ruling was silent on sections 5, 6 and 7 that he had challenged. The FSC declared the several sections of the Women Protection Act 2006 as violations of the Shariah. According to the judgement, sections 11, 25, 28 and 29 of the act are contradictory to the article 203DD of the constitution because these provisions annul the overriding effect of the Hudood Ordinance, 1979.

[Daily Times – January 04, 2010]

Promotion of Freedom, Security for Women at Workplace Sought

In the backdrop of Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (Section 509), a seminar-cum-book launch was held on January 10 to make the effective implementation of law possible at all levels at a local hotel. International Labour Organization (ILO), OXFAM, Alliance against Sexual Harassment-AASHA and Mehargarh (an NGO) jointly organized the seminar titled **'Leaders of Change – Implementation of Anti-Sexual Harassment Legislation'**. AASHA Executive Director Fouzia Saeed; Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Samina Fazil; ILO Country Representative Margaret Reade Rounds; Wilson Lee of National Endowment for Democracy and Mehfooz Elahi of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry spoke on the occasion. To promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, the two booklets were launched at the event that discusses the anti-sexual harassment policies. Focusing on the significance of healthy and productive workforce for a country, Ms Rounds said that any kind of harassment is a violation of the worker's right whether male or female.

The first booklet titled 'Leaders of Change' (drawing lessons from case studies of organisations with anti-sexual harassment policies) by Sadaf Ahmad highlights the processes through which the work and environment can be transformed into a more dignified, professional and productive space. It also draws attention to the mechanism that need to be put in place to address any violations of human dignity. The second booklet titled 'A Base line study on Anti Sexual Harassment Policies in public and private sector' (situation before 2010) by Fouzia Saeed and Maliha Husain documents the situation before the enactment of anti-sexual harassment legislation, which has been recently passed by the current democratic Government of Pakistan.

[Daily Times – January 11, 2011]

Provinces Urged to Take Steps for Swift Implementation of Legislation

Speakers on January 08 urged the provincial governments to take steps for swift implementation of legislation to protect women against sexual harassment. Speaking at a seminar arranged by Alliance Against Sexual Harassment (AASHA), a coalition of around a dozen civil society organizations working to eliminate sexual harassment and promote women's rights called upon the provincial chief ministers to immediately appoint ombudsmen in their respective provinces under the law to hear and decide the complaints of women against their harassment at workplace. They also asked the CMs to issue directives to all ministries, divisions and departments to enforce the law that is a ray of hope for women of the country struggling for decades to get their just rights. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Fouzia Saeed, Chairperson of the National Implementation Watch Committee formed to oversee the progress on compliance of the law, said she was pleased with the pace of implementation. She remarked that no other law has been accompanied by such awareness campaign and community efforts and therefore we have seen visible results in a short time period. She said almost all the federal ministries have implemented the law and a few remaining were in the process of doing the same. She said that chief secretary Punjab had already issued directives to all the government departments to implement the law, form three member committees to probe into complaints of women against harassment and display code of conduct at the respective workplaces at conspicuous places. She said that Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra), Higher Education Commission (HEC) and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) had already implemented the law and written letters to the organizations that operate under them to enforce the law.

[The News – January 10, 2011]

Women & Economics

Women Face Discrimination in Job Opportunities

Despite increase in the overall percentage of women in the workforce, women continue to face discrimination in the formal and informal economy with growing numbers in the latter as more of them participate as family earners to sustain their families. These views were expressed at a national consultation organised by International Labour Organization (ILO) on January 06. A group of 70 participants from government, employers and workers, NGOs, research organizations, academia, media and civil society participated in the consultation. The consultations were organized to discuss the trends, opportunities and development gaps for equal and decent employment of poor rural and urban women in textiles, hospitality and amongst coastal and riverine communities identified in the field researches carried out under the ILO project funded by CIDA Promoting Gender Equality for Decent Employment. The consultation was opened by National Project Coordinator ILO Frida Khan who explained the project objectives and the research findings. She said that women's economic empowerment is perhaps the single most important step towards gender equality in the personal and social sphere and that is why the project promoting gender equality for decent employment aims to improve working conditions and employment opportunities for women in selected economic sectors in order to improve gender equality and decent work.

The findings were predominantly focused on gender situation analysis in areas including employment trends, decent work opportunities, training needs and institutional capacity assessments in the textile and hospitality sector and coastal and riverine communities. According to the findings, textile industry is a huge contributor to the overall manufacturing output in Pakistan, generating about 8.5 per cent of total GDP and providing for more than 15 million jobs in the manufacturing sector. Within this sector, clothing and home textiles is where women are highly concentrated and they work in stitching, sewing machine operations followed by finishing and packing. Current situation and apparent trends indicated in the research show that coastal communities are facing a downward spiral. While men are primarily responsible for fishing, women are heavily involved in pre-fishing and post-fishing activities, e.g. preparation of food, repairing and cleaning of net and fishing tools. Men are out fishing up to 20 days per month, leaving women to manage all household and communal responsibilities. Despite their significant contribution women have weak bargaining positions in the household, little involvement in local resource management, and are essentially excluded from decision making both at the household and community levels.

[The News – January 07, 2011]

20pc Seats for Women in All FDIs

Chairperson LCCI Women Empowerment and Advocacy Forum MNA Shireen Arshad Khan on January 8 said that a proposal was under consideration to allocate 20 per cent seats in all Fashion Designing Institutes (FDIs) working under Ministry of Commerce for poor skilled women.

The MNA was speaking at a seminar on the "Importance of Fashion and Trend Forecast in Apparel Business" organised by the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry on January 08. LCCI President Shahzad Ali Malik, Vice President Sohail Azhar, MPA Mrs Ghazala Saad Rafique, Principal Pakistan Institute of Fashion Design Ms Hina Tayyaba, Chairman Skill Development Council Rehmatullah Javaid and renowned designer Yasir Waheed also spoke on the occasion. Shireen Khan said that the proposal for imparting training to needy skilful women was prepared because the talented women were unable to make a mark in the international market. This was because they did not have a certificate from any reputed institution, a pre-requisite to enter world market, she stressed. Stressing the need for promoting branding culture in Pakistan, she said the private sector would have to work out methodology to this regard to wear off the intensity of present day economic meltdown. The MNA said that women constitute more than half of our population but their natural creative abilities are not unutilized therefore there is a dire need to encourage them to join mainstream economy. Their participation in business will change complexion of society and perception of the country, she added. Speaking on the occasion, Shahzad Ali Malik said that in recent years government has been focusing more on the development of women entrepreneurs in the country but due attention is needed by offering focused opportunities in export of goods to international market. She said that the products prepared by women entrepreneurs should be allowed concession in taxes.

The Nation – January 09, 2011]

Display Centre Plan for Women Entrepreneurs Finalized

Federal Minister for Women Development Firdous Ashiq Awan has said plan has been finalised to establish a sizeable and well-equipped Display Center exclusively for women entrepreneurs in Lahore. The project with an objective to strengthen the role of women for the economic development of the country will provide opportunity to them to showcase their products. Speaking at a seminar on Way Forward for Economic Empowerment of Women organised by the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) and Ministry of Women Development on January 24 she said the Centre would also attract foreign buyers. She said the government was making all out efforts for the economic empowerment of the women. She urged the women to learn more about modern business methodologies and techniques as at global marketplace ample opportunities do exist for them. LCCI president Shahzad ali Malik called for social empowerment, legal empowerment, political empowerment and economic empowerment of women for bringing a positive change in society. He urged the State Bank of Pakistan to provide collateral free loaning facility to the women entrepreneurs so that they could be able to perform to their fullest potential. He said though the TDAP was playing a commendable role in promoting business activities overseas especially encouraging women entrepreneurs to take part in international business delegation as well as trade fairs.

[Daily Times – January 25, 2011]

BISP Updates

PPP Fulfilling BB's Commitment by Serving Poor: Farzana

Benazir Income support Programme (BISP) Chairwoman Farzana Raja said on January 2 that it was a commitment of Benazir Bhutto towards the poor and downtrodden segments of the country that she would never leave them alone and now the Pakistan People's Party is fulfilling the same commitment by serving the poor and by striving hard to make Pakistan a social welfare state. She made these comments while addressing a gathering at DG Khan. The BISP chairwoman distributed cheques under the Waseela-e-Haq initiative among 120 families. The BISP chairwoman said the government wished to empower women and give them their due status in society according to the dreams and wishes of Benazir Bhutto. She said that life insurance for beneficiary families had already been introduced by the government and health insurance would be offered to them soon which would provide the families with an annual coverage of upto Rs 25,000. Farzana said that all the steps were aimed to reduce poverty and improve the lives of the poor. She added that at present 75,000 families from the DG Khan Division have been registered with the BISP.

[Daily Times – January 03, 2011]

1m BISP Beneficiaries Entitled for Life Insurance

One million registered beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), who have lost bread earners, are being given compensation of Rs100,000 under Life Insurance scheme. **Talking to this agency, BISP Chairperson Farzana Raja said that all-out efforts were made for social and economic empowerment of deserving women being identified through BISP's nationwide poverty survey.** The BISP would reach five million families under the survey being simultaneously conducted in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which would be completed by June this year, she said adding that the survey had already been completed in compliance with Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan in the province. Farzana said that the survey would enable registered families to get benefit from monthly cash grant, vocational training, returnable loans under 'Waseela-e-

Haq' and Life Insurance. Moreover, Health Insurance facilities would be offered soon to the registered beneficiaries, she added. She said that the BISP has launched an improved delivery system through Mobile Phone Banking and around 150,000 beneficiaries in 'Musakhel', Layyah, Batgram and Larkana are being provided free mobiles in the first phase. By using Mobile Phone Banking facility, the beneficiaries will be able to receive cash grant in a most convenient and transparent way.

[The News – January 18, 2011]

Gender Equity Programme

\$40 Million USAID Grant to NGO

Reacting to the grant for women's development given by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to a non-governmental organization under Gender Equity Programme (GEP), the National Assembly Standing Committee on Women Development has suggested that the government should do accountability of the programme. In a meeting held on January 06, the committee has also expressed its dissatisfaction over the grant given by the USAID under the Kerry Lugar Bill to the Aurat Foundation for the Gender Equity Programme. The meeting of the standing committee was held in the Parliament House under the chairpersonship of MNA Bushra Gohar. MNAs Shakeela Khanam Rashid, Qudsia Arshad, Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, Ishrat Ashraf, Nisar Tanveer, Shaheen Ishfaq, Chairman Standing Committee on Economic Affairs Malik Azmat Khan and other officers and officials from Ministry of Women Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Revenue and Ministry of Economic Affairs attended the meeting. Under Kerry Lugar Bill, Aurat Foundation has received 40 million dollars (over 3 billion rupees) grant from the USAID-Pakistan for a five-year gender equity programme that aims at advancing women's human rights and empowerment in Pakistan. Aurat Foundation, as primary recipient of the grant, and the Asia Foundation, as its sub-contractor, will work together to award over 400 small, medium and large grants to local civil society organizations, concerned government gender entities, policy think tanks, academic research and training institutions, professional, business and media associations. The volume of grants will range from 20,000 to \$ 200,000 dollars in a grant cycle starting on a quarterly basis every year through competitive applications.

[The News – January 07, 2011]

HR Watch

Women & HR

Rights for Children, Women Detained in Jails Demanded

Prisons in Pakistan are overcrowded and the basic life facilities provided are scarce, children and women behind the high walls of prisons are at the mercy of the state for all guarantees and basic human rights, participants at a workshop organised to discuss and finalise the toolkit on human and child rights of juvenile detainees in prisons by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) at a local hotel on January 02. In this regard, Justice (R) Nasira Iqbal said the law prohibits sending female juveniles to prisons, however dozens of female juveniles are detained in different prisons of the country. Women prisoners are harassed in prisons in different ways. She lamented that children detained in madrassahs are being treated as prisoners and are not allowed to live their lives. Therefore, the government needs to act against the confinement of children in madrassahs. He advised the organisers of the workshop to phrase the text of the toolkit in an indigenous language. He said that not only international, but national laws also strictly prohibit prison officials from inflicting torture on prisoners and treating them badly. Local laws give rights of adequate standards of living, adequate food and drinking water, clean clothing and bedding and health services. National Academy for Prison Administration (NAPA) Principal Masood Khan said that there was a need to stress on the non-custodial measures so that children do not end up in prisons, and at the same time, each provincial government could establish a borstal institute under the JJSO with facilities of education and training for mental, moral and psychological development of children who become anti-social. SPARC Executive Director Arshad Mahmood said there was a dire need to introduce minimum standards of human rights and the right of juvenile detainees all over the country.

[Daily Times – January 03, 2011]

Alarming Increase in Incidents of Honour Killing: Aurat Foundation

Ashfaq Mengal, programme coordinator of the Aurat Foundation, a women's rights organization, said that the ratio of incidents involving killing of women in the name of honour has increased to alarming proportions in the country, as some 36 women were killed for honour in the past year. Speaking at a news conference at the Quetta Press Club on January 04, Mengal said that more incidents of violence against women were being reported to the Aurat Foundation. He claimed that police and law enforcement agencies had stopped providing data to the foundation due to which it had to collect details through district coordinators. About 76 cases of violence against women were registered during the last year. He said that although there was a decline in such cases, but incidents involving murder of women for honour increased to alarming proportions. Giving further details, Mengal said that cases about abduction of two women, suicide by eight, and rape of six, burning alive of one, acid attack on five and torturing to death of four women were reported in 2010. Twenty-three such cases had so far been reported in Balochistan alone during the last sixth months; he informed the reporters and added that his organisation would share its report with the government to eliminate violence against women.

[Daily Times – January 05, 2011]

Agreement Inked to Improve Functioning of LCUs

Islamabad police and GIZ Gender Responsive Policing (GRP) Project have entered into an agreement regarding Ladies Complaint Units (LCUs) to improve their functioning and take prompt action in case of any violence against women. Islamabad Police Additional Inspector General (AIG) Establishment Ashraf Zubair Siddiqui and GIZ-GRP Project Principal Advisor Dr Khola Iram signed the agreement on behalf of Islamabad police and GIZ respectively. Islamabad Inspector General of Police (IGP) Syed Kaleem Imam, DIG (Headquarters) Kamal Uddin Tipu and Women Police Station House Officer Sadaf Basharat David were also present on the occasion. This agreement between the Islamabad Capital Police and GIZ-GRP Project has set forth certain understandings with respect to the LCUs established by GIZ-GRP Project in three police stations. According to this agreement, GIZ-GRP Project shall be responsible for installing fully equipped cabins (with split AC units and furniture) at the three police stations. The SHO of police stations concerned will coordinate with the project staff to get the cabins after their installations. GIZ will not provide any maintenance costs. As per the defined role of LCUs mentioned in the police SOP approved by all IGP's, the units will deal with only women complainants and investigate crimes of violence against women.

[Daily Times – January 06, 2011]

Childs' Rights

UNICEF Holds Seminar on Child Rights

UNICEF Pakistan and Social Welfare Department (SWD) of the government of Punjab organized a seminar on the 20th anniversary of The Convention on the Rights of Child' (CRC) on December 31. The theme of the seminar was "All children in Pakistan have the rights to protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation," and it was held at a local club. SWD Punjab Director General Akhtar Nazir Warraich was the chief guest of the event. Children from more than thirteen educational institutions were provided with the opportunity to express their views, concerns, hopes and aspirations in the presence of their parents, teachers and policy makers. Many children said that education was their basic right, if education was denied, children would be deprived of their rights, which would lead to their exploitation. They said that if children were educated today, they would take the responsibility tomorrow to ensure a better future for our country. Young artists expressed their views through paintings and sketches depicting their fear and hopes in a subtle and creative manner. UNICEF representative Shagufta Hameed Bhatti and Director Programme Qadoos Akhtar addressed the event. The speakers focused on child rights, abuse, exploitation and determination to make the world a better place. They said that by signing the CRC in 1989 and ratifying it the following year; Pakistan came fully onboard with the United Nations in recognising the rights of children and implementing them with punitive authority. They further said that laws were enacted for child protection and the process of making them more stringent and judicious continues.

[Daily Times – January 02, 2011]

Draft Bill for Child Protection Authority Okayed

The Sindh cabinet on January 29 unanimously approved a draft bill for creating a child protection authority. It also approved a proposal for necessary legislation for a witness protection programme and a revision of penalties for vehicles, and reviewed various development programmes and food situation in the post-flood situation. Briefing newsmen after the cabinet meeting, which deliberated on a 13-point agenda, Chief Minister's Adviser on Information Sharmila Farooqui said the cabinet was of the view that the law about child protection should be revisited and an authority set up. She said that this was done because of the incidence of different types and violence against children in our society. At the meeting, she said, Sindh Home Minister Zulfikar Mirza placed on record a summary pertaining to the witness protection programme in the province because he felt the role of witnesses was of crucial importance in the trial and an indispensable aid in the judicial system of any civilized society.

[Dawn – January 30, 2011]

Rights Violations: Poverty, Social Taboos Main Causes of Child Abuse

Poverty, social and religious taboos are the major causes of child abuse and violations of their rights that can be checked by strengthening the social protection system of the country. These were the consensus views put forward by speakers at a two-day national workshop on child rights, organised by the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman) in collaboration with Sahil, a non-governmental organization. The speakers further said that in case of natural disasters and calamity, women and children were the most affected. Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Sitara Ayaz said the government had taken a number of initiatives to address various issues related to child rights. She added that the steps are being taken to remove obstacles through a collective approach. **The newly established provincial ombudsman will play a vital role in this regard, she maintained, adding that there may be a lack of resources but not of will and the system is there to work for the protection and welfare of children.**

[The Express Tribune – January 06, 2011]

Minorities' Rights

Kidnappings: Hindus continue to be Targeted

In yet another incident of kidnapping in Balochistan, the son of a well-known Hindu trader was abducted by a group of armed men in Naushki on 10 January's evening. Sixteen-year-old Rajiv Sagar had just closed his warehouse and was returning home, when a group of men whisked him away at gun point. Police say it is a case of kidnapping for ransom. Earlier on January 8, a Hindu shopkeeper Dilip Kumar was kidnapped from Sohbatpur. As many as five people from the Hindu Community are still in the captivity of kidnapers, including the Maharaja of the Historic Kali Mandir of Kalat, Luckmi Chand Garji.

[The Express Tribune – January 12, 2011]

Hindu Lawmaker Resigns, Settles in India

It has been learnt that a Hindu lawmaker from an opposition party has resigned from his seat reportedly after receiving threats and has shifted to India. Ram Singh Sodho was a member of the current Sindh Assembly on a reserved seat for minorities on a ticket of the Pakistan Muslim League led by the Chaudhrys of Gujrat. The Times of India reported that Sodho received threats and moved to India, from where he sent his resignation to Speaker Nisar Ahmed Khuhro. The resignation was accepted with immediate effect. However, sources told The Express Tribune that Sodho had handed his resignation to Arbab Ghulam Rahim, chief of the PML-Q Likeminded Group in Sindh, before leaving the country. The Election Commission of Pakistan acted immediately and notified the election of Chettan Mal, the next candidate on the party's list of non-Muslim candidates on reserved seats. Family members said that Sodho, who belongs to Mithi, in Tharparkar district, had been receiving threats for the last two years. But his party colleagues denied there were any threats to Sodho's life. Razzaque Ramho, deputy parliamentary leader of the PML-Q Likeminded Group in the Sindh Assembly said that there were no threats to his life.

[The Express Tribune – January 30, 2011]

Blasphemy Law

Aasia's Fate Uncertain After Taseer's Murder

The fate of Aasia Bibi, a 45-year-old Christian woman, already condemned to death by the district and sessions court of Sheikhpura on November 09, 2010 for allegedly committing blasphemy, hangs in balance, especially after the assassination of the Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, who was vigorously seeking a presidential pardon for her. The murder of Aasia's chief supporter, Salman Taseer has left her simply terrified in the Sheikhpura district jail where she is simply at the mercy of prison guards, amidst renewed fears that some other person in police uniform could kill her anytime, as had happened with the Punjab governor. Aasia's husband, Ashiq Masih says his wife feels extremely insecure after the murder of Salman Taseer and fears for her life. Although, Salman Taseer had forwarded Aasia's clemency appeal to the Presidency shortly after his meeting with the accused at the Sheikhpura district jail on November 20, 2010, no action could be taken because of a restraining order issued by the former chief justice of the Lahore High Court (LHC) Khawaja Muhammad Sharif, directing the Presidency on November 29, 2010 to abstain from pardoning the Christian woman before the court ruled on her appeal.

[The News – January 06, 2011]

Thousands Rally Against 'Changes' in Blasphemy Law

Thousands of people rallied on January 09 against the attempts to reform the blasphemy law that had also led to the murder of Governor Punjab Salmaan Taseer. They vowed to continue their campaign throughout the country till the government announces its "clear-cut" policy in this regard on the floor of the house. The participants of the rally, organised by Tehreek-e-Namoos-e-Risalat (TNR) at the Tibet Centre, were carrying banners in support of Mumtaz Qadri whom they declared as a hero of Islam. The speakers said that those who declare the blasphemy law as a black law should also be punished for insulting the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Governor Taseer was himself responsible for his murder and anyone who would try to amend the blasphemy law would meet the same fate, as Qadris would come out from every home to defend the law. They also asked Nawaz Sharif and Altaf Hussain to make their stance clear on the blasphemy law. In his strongly worded speech, Maulana Fazlur Rehman declared that the protest rally has sent a clear message to the entire world, particularly the US, that anyone who dared to change the blasphemy law would have to meet the same fate (as that of Governor Taseer) as every person would become a Mumtaz Qadri.

[The News – January 10, 2011]

PA asks Centre not to Touch Blasphemy Law

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on January 7 through a unanimous resolution asked the federal government to stay away from amending or repealing the blasphemy law. Both liberal and religious parties showed unity in the House on the resolution. Lawmakers of the ruling Awami National Party, Pakistan People's Party and opposition parties including Mutahidda Majlis-i-Amal, both factions of Pakistan Muslim League and Pakistan People's Party (Sherpao) moved the joint resolution. Minority lawmaker of MMA, Kishor Kumar, was also among the movers. MPA Mufti Kifayatullah tabled the resolution on behalf of treasury and opposition benches. The joint statement said that this House is getting honour to ask federal government to refrain from amendments or repealing the blasphemy law. Namoos-i-Risalat remains the most sensitive issue for the Muslims and presently there is uncertainty among Pakistanis.

[Dawn – January 09, 2011]

Victims of False Blasphemy Cases in Pakistan - 1990 to 2011

Blasphemy data from 1990 to 2011 has been collected by Mr. Nafees and shared in Citizen for Democracy (CFD)

Category of Blasphemy cases	No. Of persons	Muslims	Christians	Ahmadis	Hindus	Man	Woman
Acquitted	15	4	7	4	-	13	2
Accused	11	10	1	-	-	7	4
Attacked	2	1	1	-	-	2	0
Arrested	19	6	8	5	-	19	0
Job Loss	8	-	8	-	-	1	7
Life Imprisonment -	3	3	-	-	-	3	0
Extra Judicial	23	7	15	-	1	19	4
Death Sentence	5	2	3	-	-	4	1
Imprisonment	3	2	1	-	-	3	0
Suicide	1	-	1	-	-	1	0
Threat	1	-	1	-	-	1	0
Case Dropped	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Released	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Total	93	37	46	9	1	73	20

The mentioned data is updated data on the victims of blasphemy cases in the country from the year 1990 to 2011. Mr. Nafees carried out additional search and found 13 more victims of blasphemy cases. The following is a brief detail of all these events for easy reference:

- 23 persons were extra judicially murdered
- 15 were acquitted by the court meaning that they were false cases
- 11 were accused but no further information is available
- 02 was attacked but escaped
- 19 were arrested but some of them were released by the High court.
- 08 lost their jobs
- 03 were sentenced for life imprisonment.
- 05 were awarded death sentence
- 03 were awarded imprisonment
- 01 committed suicide in protest against the misuse of blasphemy law
- 01 was threatened for life
- Of these 94 victims, 37 persons were Muslims, 46 were Christians, 9 were Ahmadis, and 1 was Hindu.
- Male & Female ratio of Blasphemy victims is 73 and 20

Blasphemy Cases in Muslim Countries

Here is some data on blasphemy cases and the punishment awarded by the courts against such cases in other Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, Afghanistan, UAE, and Bangladesh. The source is Wikipedia:

Saudi Arabia		
S.No.	Offences	
1	In 2009, Amnesty International reported that "at least 102 men and women, 39 of them foreign nationals, were executed in 2008. Many were executed for non-violent offences, including drug offences, 'sodomy', blasphemy and apostasy."	Irrelevant

2	2008: Ra'if Badawi authorities charged him with "setting up an electronic site that insults Islam."	Five years' imprisonment and \$800,000 fine, and threats to his life.	Fine/threat
3	13 June 2007: Sabri Bogday, a barber from Turkey, appeared at a General Court at Jeddah on a charge of blasphemy.	Sentenced to death. King Abdullah allowed the appeal upon his repentance and his please to Allah for forgiveness.	Acquitted
4	April 2006:journalist Rabah Al-Quwai, had criticized the strict religious interpretations of hard-line Wahabbi Islamists	Saudi authorities released him	Released
5	2005: Dr. Hamza Al-Maziani, a linguistics professor at King Saud University, guilty of "mocking religion.	Sentenced to four months in prison and 250 lashes. Crown Prince (now King) Abdullah commuted the sentence.	Acquitted
6	2005: A court in Bukairia found Muhammad Al-Harbi, a high school chemistry teacher, guilty of blasphemy	40 months in prison and 750 lashes	Punishment
7	March 2004: A General Court in Riyadh banned from teaching Muhammad Al-Sahimi. The court found him guilty of endorsing un-Islamic sexual, social and religious practices.	sentenced to three years in prison and 300 lashes.	Punishment
8	In 2003, Saudi cleric Ali bin al-Khudayr accused Saudi journalist Mansur al-Nuqaydan of blasphemous crimes.	al-Khudayr, the cleric, called for al-Nuqaydan to be killed. The authorities barred al-Nuqaydan from writing or traveling abroad.	Vigilantism
9	In 1994, an Ismaili, Hadi Al-Mutaif (also Al-Mutif), a teenager, made a remark that a court deemed blasphemous.	The court sentenced Al-Mutaif to death for apostasy. Till May 2009, he was still in prison.	Death sentence
10	3 September 1992, Sadiq 'Abdul-Karim Malallah, a Shia Muslim, was convicted of apostasy and blasphemy	Beheaded	Beheaded

Jordan			
	Offences	Punishment	
1	In October 2008, the prosecutor general of a magistrate's court in Amman charged Islam Samhan with insulting Islam and the Quran	one year in prison and pay a fine of 10,000 dinars	Punishment
2	On 1 July 2008, a Jordanian prosecutor charged eleven Danes and one Dutchman, with blasphemy and contempt of Muslims. One of the charged Danes was the cartoonist who, in 2005, drew a caricature of the Prophet Mohammed	they didn't appear for trial in Jordan.	Exparte
3	In January 2003, authorities in Jordan arrested three Jordanian journalists: Nasser Qamash, Roman Haddad and Muhannad Mbaidin for blaspheming Prophet Mohammed in Al Hilal, a weekly newspaper.	sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to six months, and closed Al Hilal for two months. [7]	Punishment

Iran			
S.No.	Offences	Punishment	
1	On 9 June 2009, the singer Mohsen Namjoo was charged for ridiculing the Quran in a song	sentenced in absentia to a five-year jail term	Imprisonment
2	In March 2009, Iranian blogger Omid Mirsayafi died in prison while serving a 30-month sentence for propaganda against the state and criticism of religious leaders.	Died in prison	Death in custody
3	Mohammad Mojtehed Shabestari, a Shia Muslim cleric, for blasphemy.	the Iranian government launched a campaign against him	Negative campaign

4	In May 2007, authorities arrested eight students at Tehran's Amir Kabir University for their association with a newspaper that committed blasphemy	Arrested	Arrest
5	In October 2006, Ayatollah Hossein Kazemeyni Boroujerdi, a senior Shia cleric who advocates the separation of religion and state, and a number of his followers were arrested and imprisoned	sentenced to death, but the death sentences were later withdrawn	Acquitted
6	In 2002, Hashem Aghajari, a member of the Shia majority, a history professor, was charged for blasphemy	Death penalty. Released on bail on 31-7-04	Acquitted
7	In 1999, Iran put on trial Abdollah Nouri, the former Minister of the Interior for blasphemy.	Sentenced to five years' imprisonment and a fine. Nouri was released on 5 November 2002.	Released
8	In 1988, Salman Rushdie published his book The Satanic Verses in UK.	Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran issued a fatwa for Muslims to kill Rushdie and all publishers of book. In 1991, the novel's Japanese translator was stabbed to death. Shortly afterward, the Italian translator was stabbed but survived. In 1993, the Norwegian publisher of the book was injured in a gun attack	

Afghanistan			
S.No.	Offences	Punishment	
1	In early November 2007, authorities arrested and detained Ghaus (also Ghows) Zalmai for publishing an unofficial translation of the Quran	Afghanistan Sentenced to twenty years in prison	Punishment
2	On 27 October 2007, police arrested Sayed Pervez Kambaksh, a student at Balkh University after he allegedly distributed writing posted on the Internet by Arash Bikhoda (Arash the atheist). Bikhoda's writing criticizes the treatment of women in Islamic societies.	Afghanistan Sentenced to death and later commuted to imprisonment for 20 years. In Aug 2009, he was granted "amnesty" by President Karzai.	Acquitted
3	Journalists Sayeed Mahdawi and Ali Reza Payam were charged of blasphemy.	Afghanistan In August 2003, the Afghan Supreme Court upheld death sentences	Death sentence

United Arab Emirates (UAE)			
S.No.	Offences	Punishment	
1	In 2008, three Filipino workers were jailed in the Emirate of Sharjah allegedly for ripping a page out of the Quran	The government revoked the workers' permits to work.	Punishment
2	In 1993, after an appeal, two of ten Indian expatriates convicted in 1992 of blasphemy f	their sentences extended from six years to ten years.	Punishment

Bangladesh			
S.No.	Offences	Punishment	
1	On 18 September 2007, Alpin's cartoonist Arifur Rahman was arrested and jailed, and editor Sumanta Aslam was dismissed.	The court sentenced Rahman to two months in jail with hard labour and a fine of 500 taka (US\$7.40).	Punishment
2	In 2005, Mohd Rafiqul Islam Rony MP laid a	Unknown	Unknown

	complaint against professor Ali Asghar for causing hurt to religious sentiment		
3	In January 2004, the government banned all Amadhi religious publications.	In December 2004, the High Court put a stay on the ban.	Banned
4	In 2003, Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, editor of the tabloid The Weekly Blitz rankled Bangladeshi authorities by publishing articles that opposed the persecution of religious minorities,	charged with sedition, treason, blasphemy, and espionage. Attackers from the Awami League raided the office of The Weekly Blitz for the fourth time since 2005. A radical mufti threatened Choudhury and, on 5 July 2009, two bombs went off in the office of The Weekly Blitz.[Vigilantism
5	In 2003, vigilantism against Ahmadis resulted in the death of an <i>imam</i> and the injury of others. ^{[8][7]}	Death of an Imam by vigilantism	Killed by vigilantism
6	In 2002, the police arrested the members of an amateur theater group in Faridpur, for "causing hurt to religious sentiment" by their play.[8]	Unknown	Unknown
7	In 2002, the Bangladesh Censor Board banned Tareque and Catherine Masud's film Matir Moina because its setting (a madrassa in 1971) was deemed religiously sensitive	The Appeal Board lifted the ban.	Acquitted
8	In 2000, four senior editors of Jonokontho are sued on blasphemy	Unknown	Unknown
9	In 2000, an author, Monir Hossain Sagar, was killed by vigilantis for blasphemy	Killed by vigilantes	Killed by Vigilantes
10	In 1995, the government banned Nari (Woman) by Humayun Azad because the book analyzes religious doctrine.	Bangladesh Ban was lifted in 2000. In 2004, he was attacked by the vigilantes. Fled to Germany	vigilantism
11	In 1993, Taslima Nasreen released Lajja (Shame), a novel.	The government banned the novel. Islamist groups announced a bounty on Nasreen's head. In October 2002, a court sentenced Nasreen in absentia to a year in jail for her. In 2008, her books were openly sold by street hawkers in Bangladesh, but Nasreen dared not go there.	vigilantism
12	In 1992, Dr. Ahmad Sharif faced charges under sections 295A and 298 of the penal code because Inquilab, a daily, published remarks that were critical of Islam.	Unknown	Unknown
13	In 1974, Enamul Haq published a leaflet which made reference to Prophet Mohammed's wives.	Protests ensued. Haq spent some time in protective custody.	Public protest
14	In 1973, Daud Haider published a poem in which he allegedly insults Prophet Mohammed, Jesus Christ, and Gautama Buddha	The police took Haider into protective custody. He fled to India in 1974 or 1975. Later, he moved to Germany.	Public protest

Conflict Watch

Violence in Karachi Spikes by 288pc

A think tank said that Pakistan gained ground against militant violence in 2010, but urban "terrorism" is a growing threat and military success will not bring stability unless a comprehensive strategy is developed. A report from the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) to be released on January 17 says that the number of incidents of "violence and terrorism" in Pakistan fell by 11 percent in 2010 compared with the previous year. PIPS said that the number of suicide attacks fell by 22 percent to 68 in 2010, compared with 87 in 2009. PIPS said that the South Asian country has yet to come up with a sound, long-term strategy to tackle militancy. It said that a total of 2,113 militant,

insurgent and sectarian attacks were reported across the country in 2010, killing 2,913 people. PIPS said in its annual Pakistan security report that better coordination among intelligence agencies, capacity building of law enforcement agencies, curbs on terrorism financing, and most importantly, adequate measures to prevent banned militant groups from operating across the country remained persistently lacking. Pakistan's military has launched a series of anti-Taliban offensives in the militant-infested northwest that have disrupted their activities. PIPS said that a sharp rise in US drone strikes also contributed to the decrease in militant attacks. Still, sustainable security remains elusive because of the "less than impressive performance of a weak political administration beset by chronic challenges of poor governance," said PIPS. Security crackdowns have focused on the northwest but instability in country's biggest city and commercial capital Karachi is a growing concern.

[The Nation – January 18, 2011]

Chehlum Attacks: Karachi, Lahore Hit Again

Officials said that terrorists targeted mourning processions marking the Chehlum of the martyrs of Karbala in Lahore and Karachi within two hours on January 25, killing at least 17 people and wounding scores more. In Lahore, a teenage suicide bomber attacked the first cordon of police which was set up to monitor the queue towards Karbala Gamay Shah where the Chehlum procession was to culminate. Thirteen people, among them three policemen, were killed and at least 80 wounded over 15 of them critically. Two police vehicles and a car were also damaged in the attack. An emergency was declared in government hospitals throughout the city. Constable Nadeem Akhtar, driver of DSP Imran Karamat's damaged vehicle, told The Express Tribune that the attacker was aged 14 to 15 years and was carrying a briefcase.

[The Express Tribune – January 26, 2011]

Targeted Operation in Karachi on Cards

Following the recent spree of target killings, which claimed more than 30 lives, the Sindh government decided on January 17 to launch a selective operation in some 120 localities to maintain peace in the city before local election. According to sources, this selective operation, which would be targeted against the criminals, is aimed at stopping the unabated target killing incidents and armed clashes between land mafias. They said the Sindh government, after successful negotiations with its coalition partners, has decided to start the operation. The government has planned to engage Rangers, special force, police, ladies personnel and commandos for door-to-door search operation to root out the culprits in the most affected areas, the sources said. Moreover, they said that law enforcement agencies have made a list of most affected areas of the city and selected 120 localities for the launch of first phase of operation.

[Daily Times – January 18, 2011]

Governance Watch

Political Governance

Federal and Provincial Governments

Govt Bows to Opposition Demands

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on January 09 bowed to the opposition's demands and lured Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif to once again come into the fold of 'friendship' by assuring that he had accepted the challenge of implementing the PML-N's 10-point charter of demand. Premier Gilani talked to Nawaz on the telephone a day before the expiry of the provisional deadline given by the PML-N to express his will that the government would take appropriate measures in line with the recommendations to improve governance, the economy and to eradicate corruption in the country. Addressing a hurriedly called press conference at the PM's house, Gilani said that before calling the PML-N chief, he had taken President Asif Ali Zardari into confidence, while all of the political leadership, including Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Fazlur Rehman, Altaf Hussain, Pir Pagara, Munir Khan Orakzai and Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao had assured him of their complete solidarity and support. He said the PML-N chief had categorically denied the announcement of a 45-day ultimatum for the implementation of his 10-point agenda.

[Daily Times – January 10, 2011]

MQM Back to Treasury Benches

Following the visit of Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) headquarter Nine Zero on January 07, the MQM Rabita Committee of Pakistan and London decided to sit on the treasury benches in the National Assembly and Senate. However, the MQM will not join the federal cabinet. This was announced by Minister for Information Technology and Rabita Committee member Raza Haroon after a marathon meeting between the prime minister and the MQM Rabita Committee members for more than two hours on January 07. The announcement by the MQM means that the PPP-led coalition government will survive. The PPP circles claimed that it was because of the efforts of President Zardari, who held a series of meetings with Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ebad and negotiated with the MQM chief on phone. The Premier, on his first visit to Nine-Zero, was accompanied by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, Governor Dr Ishratul Ebad Khan and Interior Minister Rehman Malik.

[The News – January 08, 2011]

Latif Khosa Appointed Punjab Governor

President Asif Ali Zardari, on Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani's advice appointed Sardar Muhammad Latif Khan Khosa as the Punjab governor. The president signed the summary of Khosa's appointment, forwarded to him by the PM to appoint the senator as the new Punjab Governor on Tuesday night, president's spokesman Farhatullah Babar said.

[Daily Times – January 12, 2011]

New Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Appointed

Pir Syed Karam Ali Shah, a veteran politician of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and a close associate of the Prime Minister, has been appointed as the governor of Gilgit-Baltistan. There were reports of differences in the PPP camp over this appointment as the acting governor Wazir Baig, who is also the speaker of the legislative assembly, was considered a strong candidate for the post. The president's camp opted to refrain from commenting on the new appointment. However, a spokesperson for President Asif Ali Zardari said that the appointment of the governor of Gilgit-Baltistan was to be announced by Manzoor Wattoo. The post of the Governor had fallen vacant after the death of Dr Shama Khalid, the first Governor of the area, who died of cancer on September 15 last year.

[The Express Tribune – January 27, 2011]

NA Committee Concerned Over Balochistan Package

The National Assembly's (NA) Standing Committee on Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) on January 19 expressed its dissatisfaction over the slow implementation on the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan package. The committee, which reviewed progress of implementation on the package and the 18th Amendment, recommended the quarters concerned to show seriousness towards early accomplishment of all the proposals inscribed in the package. IPC Deputy Secretary Aziz Jamali told the committee that 20 out of 27 proposals sent by the provincial

assembly of Balochistan had been accepted by the federation while the remaining seven were still under consideration. He said that 5,000 people, who had been recruited by the Balochistan government in the education sector, would be paid by the federal government for the next four years. Other members of the NA body included Surraya Asghar, Haji Rozuddin, Dr Muhammad Ayub Sheikh, Ahmad Mehmood Zahid.

[Daily Times – January 20, 2011]

Legislative Business

Upper House of Parliament: Senate Passes Amended Ogra Bill

On the first day of its new session the Senate passed the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Bill of 2010. The bill amends some clauses related to the appointment of the chairman regulatory authority. Under the new law the chairman shall be an eminent professional of known integrity and competence, with a minimum of twenty years of related experience in law, business, engineering, finance, accounting, economics, petroleum, technology, public administration or management. The National Assembly had already passed the bill and once the president gives his consent it will become a law. The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill of 2011 was introduced in the house and subsequently sent to the concerned committee. Under the proposed bill, production of computerized national identity card (CNIC) by the voter will be mandatory for the person's registration as a voter and for casting his/her vote. The proposed law also suggests imprisonment of up to five years or a fine up to five million rupees or both for an employee of the Election Commission who discloses secret information or data. Advisor to the prime minister on political affairs presented to the House the Federal Public Service Commission's annual report for the year 2009.

[The Express Tribune – January 29, 2011]

Language Bill: Political Parties Urged to Evolve Joint Strategy

The PPP, PML-N, PML-F, PML-Q and MQM have been urged to evolve a joint strategy on language issue. Speakers hailed MNAs for presenting a bill in the National Assembly for granting Sindhi and seven other languages national status but called for removing the weaknesses in the bill, first. The Culture Department arranged a seminar on "Sindhi language as national language" at the Dr N.A. Baloch Hall of the Sindhi Language Authority (SLA) on January 28. Speakers called for raising a joint voice for granting Sindhi, status of national language as it was centuries old and a forceful medium of expression. Mohammad Ibrahim Joyo in his presidential address said that the bill proposes giving national language status to all mother tongues which, if implemented, would create problems as languages, other than Sindhi, were also being spoken here. Sindh Minister for Culture Sassui supporting Ibrahim Joyo's point of view asked political parties, including the MQM and the PML-F to take a clear stand on the issue and demand for declaring Sindhi as the national language. The provincial government was planning of launching an awareness campaign to mobilize public opinion for grant of national status to Sindhi language. She said that the committee formed under the lead of Ibrahim Joyo had already prepared recommendations and a delegation would soon go to Islamabad for apprising the Speaker and members of the National Assembly about the sensitivity of the issue. The MNAs who introduced the National Languages Bill had been urged to rethink about their strategy and re-write the entire bill as its present form will weaken case of the historic languages to become national languages of Pakistan, said the Sindh Democratic Forum (SDF), a think-tank working on the issues faced by the province.

[Dawn – January 30, 2011]

Deweaponisation Bill: Weapon-Free Pakistan?

In the backdrop of fresh violence in Karachi, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) submitted on January 17 an elaborate and ambitious draft bill in the National Assembly Secretariat seeking to rid the country of weapons. The 'Deweaponisation of Pakistan Bill of 2011', filed as private members' bill, calls for banning the production, proliferation, smuggling, import and use of firearms and ammunition and explosives "to restore public order in the country". Yet, experts and analysts are skeptical about the fecundity of the bill. Highlighting statistics, MQM leader said that between 2006 and 2009, terrorists and criminals had struck 6,894 times using illicit arms across the country, killing 9,643 people, injuring 18,788 more, besides kidnapping thousands of citizens for ransom. The bill, if passed, will be applicable in four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) but it would not apply on arms, ammunition in the possession of armed forces and law-enforcement agencies working under government control.

[The Express Tribune – January 18, 2011]

ECP & Election Related News

Opposition Parties Submit Nominations for Parliamentary Body

To restructure the Election Commission of Pakistan in the context of the 18th Amendment, the Lower House of parliament on January 10 received nominations by opposition parties as required for the formation of a 12-member parliamentary committee to bring reforms in the EC. Sources in the NA told Daily Times that NA Secretary Karamat Hussain Niazi received four names, including Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Begum Tehmina Daultana and Abdul Qadir Baloch, from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) nominated by opposition leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan. While PML-Quaid leader Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi nominated Engineer Ameer Muqam, not a single name from the treasury benches was received by Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani. The NA speaker, through a letter to the leaders of both houses of parliament, the opposition leader in the Lower House and parliamentary leaders of major political parties, had sought the nominations for a parliamentary committee on appointment of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and members of the EC. As such, four members had been taken from the Senate – two from the opposition, including Professor Khurshid of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Haroon Akhtar Khan of the PML-Q – as well as two from the treasury benches, including Haji Muhammad Adeel of the Awami National Party (ANP) and Islamuddin Sheikh from the Pakistan People's Party.

After completion of Phase-I as required nominations for the committee, the body would choose the chairman after mutual consultation in its first meeting held at the end of this month, however, the rules of business for the committee concerned would be drafted after it becomes functional. The committee will perform its functions under Article 213-2A, 2B for the appointment the CEC, while for appointment of members of the EC, the committee will follow Article 218 of the constitution. According to Article 213-2A of the constitution, the PM shall, in consultation with the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, forward three names for appointment of the CEC to a parliamentary committee for hearing and confirmation of any one person.

[Daily Times – January 11, 2011]

PML-N Pushing for Neutral ECP, CEC

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is eager to prevail upon the government to have a nonpartisan, neutral and independent Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) by inducting an impartial chief election commissioner (CEC) and get new election laws enacted before the next parliamentary polls. A senior party leader told The News that if the PML-N succeeds in having a powerful and nonaligned CEC as well as ECP, not only it but also no opposition would face any disadvantage on the eve of and during next elections. He said that leader of the opposition in the National Assembly Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan was in a position as per the 18th amendment to have a good say in key appointments of the CEC and ECP members. The PML-N leader said that his party was fearful of the repeat of 1977 if the government was not checked through an empowered ECP. In this connection, he said, the enactment of new election laws being prepared by the ECP is equally important. He said being a weak person incumbent CEC Justice (retd) Hamid Ali Mirza was unlikely to assertively act. He said that an apt example is the inaction of the ECP under him to prosecute the proven fake degree holding MPs. The PML-N leader said that his party was conscious of the fact that the present CEC's three-year tenure was guaranteed under the constitution which could be terminated only if the Supreme Judicial Council removed him on charges of misconduct etc as was provided for a superior court judge.

[The News – January 25, 2011]

Four More MPAs Face Legal Action Over Fake Degrees

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has referred cases of four more lawmakers having bogus degrees to the concerned district police officers (DPOs) for initiation of criminal proceedings against them. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Justice (Retd) Hamid Ali Mirza referred cases of Sardar Ali, MPA (PK-34), Haji Nasir Mehmood, former MPA (PP-111), Ms Safina Aziz, MPA (PP-reserved seat) and Ms Safina Saima Khar, MPA (PP-reserved seat) to the concerned DPOs for registration of criminal cases against them under section 78(3)(d) of the Representation of the People's Act, 1976. Their involvement in corrupt practices under the Representation of the People's Act is a cognizable offence under section 94 of the act. In the absence of an Election Commission, the Supreme Court has asked the CEC to decide referring of cases to the police.

[The News – January 06, 2011]

PML-Q Wins Shangla By-Elections

The Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) retained its provincial assembly seat January 29 when its candidate Muhammad Rashaad Khan won the Shangla by-poll by securing 18,342 votes. He defeated the ruling Awami National Party (ANP) candidate Mohammad Yar Khan, who was polled 12,332 votes according to unofficial

results. It was the second defeat for him in the constituency as he had lost in 2008 election also to Muhammad Rashaad's father Mohammad Zahir Shah, whose death necessitated the by-election. The ANP candidate was supported by another ruling party PPP, which withdrew its nominee Dr Afsarul Mulk in Mohammad Yar's favour in a bid to defeat the PML-Q man. However, the two parties could muster 12,332 votes only compared to about 19,000 that their two candidates had obtained in the 2008 election. The win was stated to be PML-Q's first electoral victory in Pakistan since the 2008 general election.

[The News – January 30, 2011]

Political Parties News

PML-Q, MQM Agree to Form Electoral Alliance

The Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) have reached an understanding to convert their strategic relationships for Sindh and Punjab into an election alliance, while a formal announcement in this regard would be made at an appropriate time. Sources in both the parties were of the view that the understanding of evolving a strategic relationship has been a result of months' long deliberations at the highest level. PML-Q leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Mushahid Hussain recently visited Karachi and met the MQM leadership. They said the decision to convert the strategic relationship into an election alliance has deliberately been withheld on two counts. Firstly, the leadership of the two parties needed to have a complete picture of the constituencies in Punjab and Sindh where they can benefit from each other's support base. Secondly, the time was not ripe to announce this decision as this could trigger an atmosphere of snap elections, which would not be suitable to the existing political and economic situation of the country. The sources said the strategic relationship has been carefully designed to enhance the electoral potential of the two parties and to dent the support base of their common political foe, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

[Daily Times – January 24, 2011]

PML-N Dissatisfied with Progress on 10-Point Agenda

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on January 27 expressed dissatisfaction over the progress on the implementation of 10-point agenda by the PPP government. PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, who chaired the party's consultative meeting at the Punjab House, directed the four-member committee, headed by Senator Ishaq Dar, to ensure that all points of the agenda were implemented within the 45-day deadline. He maintained that any extension to the deadline of implementing the agenda will not be in national interests. The meeting was attended by Leader of the Opposition in National Assembly Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Raja Zafarul Haq, Sardar Mehtab Ahmad Khan, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Ahsan Iqbal, Abdul Qadar Baloch and others. It reviewed the progress made so far on the implementation of the 10-point agenda. The meeting observed that there were some points in the agenda on which concrete steps could be ensured, but neither any progress in this regard was seen and nor any announcement had been made by the government. The PML-N spokesman said the meeting participants observed that progress on implementation of the agenda was very slow. The meeting directed the committee members to work day and night and give priority to the agenda and ensure that all demands of the PML-N were met in letter and spirit. The party leaders also asked the committee members to pressurize the government to make public the list of those who got their loans written off on political basis and recover the same from them.

[The News – January 28, 2011]

Judiciary Updates

15 HC Judges Dropped

The Judicial Commission on January 22 recommended two senior most judges of Sindh High Court - Chief Justice Sarmad Jalal Osmany and Justice Amir Hani Muslim, a senior judge - for elevation to Supreme Court, while Justice Mushir Alam has been nominated as Chief Justice of SHC. The sources told that 24 out of 34 judges of Lahore High Court have been given one-year extension, while the names of 10 judges have been dropped. The LHC judges who were given extension included Justice Asad Munir, Justice Saghir Ahmed Qadri, Justice Nasir Saeed Sheikh, Justice Sheikh Najam-ul-Hassan, Justice Khawaja Imtiaz Ahmed, Justice Manzoor Ahmed Malik, Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Chaudhry Mohammad Tariq, Justice Sheikh Ahmed Farooq, Justice Chaudhry Shahid Saeed, Justice Rauf Ahmed Sheikh, Justice Ijaz Ahmed, Justice Khalid Mehmood Khan, Justice Shahid Hameed Dar, Justice Mohammad Yar Ali, Justice Mohammad Anwarul Haq, Justice Sardar Mohammad Shamim Khan, Justice Memon Rashid Sheikh, Justice Mohammad Farrukh Irfan Khan, Justice Mohammad Qasim Khan, Justice Saeed Mazhar Ali Naqvi and Justice Mazhar Iqbal Sindhu.

The names of judges who were dropped included Justice Mansoor Akbar Kokab, Justice Abdur Rehman Ansari, Justice Tariq Javed, Justice Naseem Akhtar Khan, Justice Muhammad Anwar Bahor, Justice Mian Shahid Iqbal, Justice Shaukat Omar Pirzada, Justice Ikhtlaq Ahmed, Justice Waqar Hassan Mir and Justice Hassan Raza Pasha. The sources said that out of seven judges of Khyber Pukhtunkhawa only two judges namely Justice Syed Sajjad Hassan Shah and Justice Yahya Afridi have been given extension, while names of the remaining five have been dropped. Balochistan High Court's additional judges, including Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Tahira Safdar, Justice Muhammad Noor Meskanzai and Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mengal, have already been given extension in December. The JC also decided that after the approval of Justice Mushir Alam as Chief Justice Sindh High Court by the Parliamentary Committee the Commission will take up the issue of SHC's additional judges in its next session.

[The Nation – January 23, 2011]

Islamabad High Court Starts Functioning Again

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on January 04 started functioning again, over 17 months after it was declared unlawful by Supreme Court as it was earlier established through a presidential ordinance under the provisional constitution order (PCO) of 2007. Justice Iqbal Hammedur Rehman, the chief justice of the IHC, administered oath to Justice Anwar Kansi and Justice Riaz Ahmad Khan as judges of the court. A large number of lawyers, judges of the superior courts and representatives of bar councils received the IHC chief when he arrived at the court premises. A contingent of Islamabad police presented guard of honour to Justice Rehman who later hoisted the flag of Pakistan in the building.

[Dawn – January 05, 2011]

Nizam-e-Adl Regulation: Top Sharia Court Set Up in Swat

Speaking at the inauguration, Hoti called it a day of rejoicing for the people of Malakand division who have long been calling for sharia law in the region for speedy dispensation of justice. A proud Hoti said that today our joy knows no bounds. The government has fulfilled a long-standing demand of the people. Terrorists successfully exploited this issue because people can tolerate everything, but not injustice. The chief minister was referring to obscurantist Taliban, led by fugitive cleric Maulana Fazlullah, who had launched a bloody campaign for the enforcement of their version of hardline Islam until they were defeated by the military in 2009. Hoti defended the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation despite widespread criticism from liberals. he said that we respect detractors. But at the same time it's a fact that a record numbers of cases – 27,000 civil and 39,811 criminal – have been decided after the implementation of the new act, last year. Critics say that the Nizam-e-Adl will establish a parallel judicial system in the country. And the Taliban would seek to export their system of sharia to other regions of the country. The chief minister credited political parties and the people of Malakand division with the establishment of Darul-Qaza. He said that this court will ensure cheap and speedy justice, which was the basic demand of the local people. Provincial Law Minister Arshad Abdullah called it a landmark achievement of the ANP-led provincial government which established Darul Qaza despite criticism from home and abroad. Abdullah told that the international community is now satisfied. And now people in other areas of the province are also demanding a similar judicial system. The Qazis and magistrates are bound by the NAR to follow established principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah and recognized opinions of scholars of Islam. But the cases of non-Muslims in matters of adoption, divorce, dowry, inheritance, marriage, usage and wills shall be decided in accordance with their respective personal laws.

[The Express Tribune – January 19, 2011]

Economic Governance

Facts & Figures on Economy

Remittances Rise 17% to \$5.3bn in First Half of FY11

Remittances sent home by overseas Pakistanis continued to show a rising trend as an amount of \$5,291.41 million was received in the first half (July-December) of the current fiscal year 2010-11, showing an increase of \$761.23 million or 16.80 percent when compared with \$4,530.18 million received over the same period of the last fiscal year. The monthly average of remittances for the July-December 2010 period was \$881.90 million as compared to \$755.04 million during the same corresponding period of the last fiscal year, registering an increase of 16.80 percent. During last month December 2010, remittances from UAE, Saudi Arabia, USA, GCC countries (including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman), UK and EU countries amounted to \$210.33 million, \$208.06 million, \$156.36 million, \$95.99 million, \$81.08 million and \$24.53 million, respectively as against \$167.67 million, \$137.56 million, \$141.22 million, \$97.57 million, \$74.30 million and \$18.89 million in December 2009. Remittances

received from Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Japan and other countries during December 2010 amounted to \$86.76 million from \$60.33 million in the same month last year. **It may be pointed out that the State Bank of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis had undertaken a joint initiative called 'Pakistan Remittance Initiative (PRI)' with a view to facilitate the flow of remittances through formal channels.** This initiative has started to materialise and remittances through formal channels are showing considerable growth.

[Daily Times – January 12, 2011]

Budget Deficit Likely to Increase to Rs 1 Trillion

Senate Standing Committee on Finance on January 04 was informed that country's budget deficit is expected to increase to Rs 1 trillion whereas the Finance Ministry has predicted that budget deficit will reach slightly over the revised (upward) figure of Rs 852 billion in the current fiscal year 2010-11 — subject to 1% budget surplus to be created by the provinces. State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Ministry of Finance have expressed divergent views on new figure of budget deficit during the current fiscal year 2010-11. SBP says budget deficit could reach 6% of the GDP — whereas Finance Ministry predicts that it would remain less than 6% — however, would increase from 4.7% of the GDP to over 5%. Giving presentation on state of economy, Governor SBP informed the Committee that keeping in view the budget deficit trend in the Q1 of the current fiscal year, the SBP estimates suggest that budget deficit will reach 6% of the GDP or Rs.1 trillion by end June 30, 2011. However, Secretary Finance Dr Waqar Masood Khan informed the meeting that budget deficit is been projected to be Rs 852 billion or 4.7% of the GDP during the current fiscal year. He said budget deficit should have been Rs 426 billion by the end December 2010; however, he further informed that actual budget deficit has been recorded 0.15% of the GDP over and above Rs 426 billion. The Secretary informed the Committee that final figures that would arrive by January 15 — it is expected that budget deficit will be 2.9% of the GDP for the first half of the current fiscal year 2010-11. The Secretary Finance informed the meeting that against the budget deficit during the first half of the ongoing fiscal year, the things have shown improvement.

[Daily Times – January 05, 2011]

Economic Growth Target to Fall to 2.5% of GDP: Senate

The Senate Standing Committee on Finance was informed on January 04 that the economic growth target of 4.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) would be missed and the estimated growth during the ongoing fiscal year 2010-11 is expected to come down to 2.5 percent of the GDP. Secretary Finance Dr Waqar Masood Khan informed the committee which met at the Parliament House with Senator Ahmed Ali in the chair, that the GDP growth target was fixed at 4.5 percent, however, due to the floods, power and gas shortages and less than expected performance of the agriculture sector, the GDP would grow by 2.5 percent of the GDP.

[Daily Times – January 05, 2011]

Financing the Revenue Gap: Provinces Refuse to Bail Out Federation from Financial Trap

In another setback to the ailing economy, the four provincial governments on January 19 said that they cannot save Rs167 billion from their budgets to finance the gap between income and spending of the federal government. A senior finance ministry official said that a firm 'no' from the four federating units will further spoil Pakistan's case with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has suspended a \$11.3 billion bailout programme since July 2010 due to Islamabad's inability to deliver on key conditions. In the federal budget 2010-11, the government had announced that it would restrict the budget deficit to 4 per cent of the size of the economy, or Rs685 billion, on the assumption that the four provinces will save Rs167 billion (1 per cent of GDP). The failure to reform the energy sector, levy reformed general sales tax, and check defence spending and non-issuance of 3G licences has already jeopardized the fiscal plan. Officials have already told Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani that, incorporating all these factors, the budget deficit may touch 7.5 per cent of GDP or Rs1.28 trillion. The official who attended the meeting said that the absence of the provincial surplus may push the budget deficit even beyond 8 per cent, provided the government does not take any corrective measures.

[The Express Tribune – January 20, 2011]

Govt to Further Cut Development Budget: Finance Minister

Finance Minister Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh on January 22 said that the development budget has been reduced from Rs 280 billion to Rs 180 billion and more curtailment in it would be made in the coming days. Talking to businessmen at the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce Industry (FPCCI), he said the country was facing grave challenges like hike in oil prices, impact of floods on economy and deteriorating law and order situation. He said that unnecessary expenditures of the government would also be slashed, adding that the decision had been taken in the larger national interest. Dr Hafeez said that rise in oil prices in international market posed a real threat to the country's economy. Increase in oil prices was the last option that the government had. He said the government would stick to its "best national interest" stance in dialogues with the International

Monetary Fund (IMF). He said that it is in our own interest to also fulfill our international commitments. We are continuing dialogue with IMF and they are our development partners. He said that a historic decision was taken under the National Finance Commission Award to increase grant of the provinces to provide basic amenities to the masses, including health, education and clean drinking water. The centre had agreed to provide Rs 300 billion to the provinces in this regard. Dr Hafeez constituted a committee to resolve the issues of income tax and sales tax refunds facing members of the Overseas Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

[Daily Times – January 23, 2011]

Foreign Assistance & Pakistan's Economy

Pak-China Trade Jumps by 28 Percent to \$8.7 Billion

In the past one year 2010 Pakistan-China bilateral trade has registered an overall growth of 28 percent and touched the figure of \$ 8.7 billion, while in 2009, the volume of the two sides trade was \$ 6.7 billion. Masood Khan, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, while welcoming the swift increase in the volume of bilateral trade said that the most remarkable growth had been in Pakistan's exports which increased last year by 37.44 percent; while imports from China also grew by 25 percent. The ambassador attributed the growth in Pakistani exports to the enhanced market of cotton yarn and mineral products in China. **Pakistan and China have resolved to increase their trade to \$ 15 billion in the shortest possible time. The recent trend of growth in Pakistan-China bilateral trade has put the two countries on a fast track to achieve this target.** In 2010, the biggest spurt in Pakistani exports to China has been in cotton yarn, home textiles, garments, ores and mineral products, copper and copper scrap, leather goods, fish products, electrical goods, and medical and surgical instruments. Furthermore, during Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Pakistan last month, the two sides decided to launch in the first quarter of this year the second phase negotiations of Pak-China FTAs with the objective to enhance trade liberalization and to promote economic and trade growth of the two countries. Pakistan has requested China for unilateral tariff concessions for 268 of its product lines. If these concessions are agreed, Pakistani exports to China will increase even more rapidly. From China, Pakistan imports, polyester and silk fabrics, polyester staple fabrics, fertilizers, tyres, mobile communication equipment, gas turbines, motorcycle parts, combustion piston engines, electrical appliances, iron and steel products, and various other forms of machinery. Pakistan has also proposed to China for the development of an efficient Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to realize the full potential of the FTAs.

[Daily Times – January 29, 2011]

WB Approves \$285 million for KP, FATA Development

The World Bank on January 21 approved credit worth \$250 million to assist the country's recovery efforts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. The Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) will co-finance the project through an additional grant of \$35 million. This combined support comes at a critical juncture in order to assist the poor and vulnerable households to cope with the militancy crises in KP and FATA. The KP and FATA Emergency Recovery Project is a fast-disbursing financing project to assist target households in recovery and promotion of human development through safety net support grants. It will provide immediate relief to the affected population in the region and support the initiatives undertaken by the federal and provincial governments in response to the militancy crisis. Rachid Benmessaoud, the World Bank's Country Director for Pakistan said that KP and FATA face a huge challenge of rehabilitation of households affected by the ongoing crisis. The project will be implemented by the Provincial Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Settlement Authority in partnership with the FATA Secretariat and other stakeholders. The cash grants will assist households to reestablish themselves and prepare for the post-crisis long-term rehabilitation programme by covering basic consumption and any other short-term basic needs.

[Daily Times – January 22, 2011]

Pak, ADB Ink \$242m Agreement for Power Distribution System

Pakistan and Asian Development Bank (ADB) on January 28 signed an investment agreement worth \$242 million in order to improve power distribution system in the country. The loan is meant for Tranche-2 of the Power Distribution Enhancement Investment Programme under Multi-tranche Financing Facility (MFF). The ADB's total MFF programme is of \$810 million (\$800 million OCR and \$10 million ADF). The programme is comprised of multi-tranches and the same will be implemented in ten years. The objective of the project is to rehabilitate, augment and expand power distribution systems and remove system bottlenecks in the project area. After completion of this project, it would add 3380 mega volt amperes (MVA) of transformer capacity, 387 km of new distribution lines, and improve security of supply to customers by moving toward compliance with regulatory security standards governing planning and operation of the distribution system and reliability improvement on the lower voltages.

Speaking on the occasion, the ADB's country director said that energy conservation and energy efficiency was the

fastest and cheapest way of increasing electricity supply. "This project will not only reduce electricity lost during delivery to the customers but also improve the quality of service by helping to get rid of technical bottlenecks", he added. The first tranche of \$252 million (\$242 million OCR and \$10 million ADF) was released on January 13, 2009. The ADB has invested \$2.9 billion in the power sector in Pakistan. The programme includes Power Distribution Enhancement Investment Programme, Power Transmission Enhancement Investment Programme, Renewable Energy Development Sector Investment Programme and Energy Efficiency Enhancement Programme.

[Daily Times – January 29, 2011]

Regional Politics

Pakistan Foreign Relations

State of the Union Address: Finally, Obama Cuts Pakistan Some Slack

President Barack Obama on January 25 said that al Qaeda's leadership was under more pressure in Pakistan now than at any time since the 9/11 attacks and that the US-led war in Afghanistan would deny the network sanctuary there. Nearly a decade since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Obama portrayed al Qaeda as the top security threat facing the country in his State of the Union address, touting progress in efforts to counter the network. Obama's reference to the Arabian Peninsula underscored the rising threat posed by al Qaeda's branch in Yemen, which has been blamed for recent plots against US targets. His vow to pile pressure on al Qaeda comes after a dramatic increase in US unmanned drone strikes in northwest Pakistan near the Afghan border, a key battleground in the fight against the Taliban and al Qaeda. Missile attacks doubled in the tribal areas last year as the covert campaign was stepped up, with more than 100 drone strikes killing over 670 people in 2010, compared to 45 strikes that killed 420 in 2009, according to an AFP tally. The strikes are deeply unpopular among the Pakistani public, which sees foreign military action on Pakistani soil as a violation of national sovereignty. Pakistan's government tacitly cooperates with the bombing campaign but has yet to launch an offensive against insurgents in North Waziristan, despite repeated appeals from Washington. In a speech devoted mainly to reviving the economy, Obama credited counter-terrorism operatives for foiling al Qaeda plots but also sought to reassure American Muslims that there would be no backlash against them.

[The Express Tribune – January 27, 2011]

India to Share Information on Samjhauta Blast with Pakistan: Chidambaram

Indian Home Minister P Chidambaram has said "some evidence" has emerged in the 2007 Samjhauta blast case and India will share the information with Pakistan. A private news channel reported him as saying that we have not said that we will not provide evidence. These are early phases of investigation; once the investigation is complete, we will share the evidence with the Pakistani authorities. Chidambaram said he had conveyed India's position to his Pakistani counterpart Rehman Malik. He told the Indian TV that we had no indication (earlier) as to who may have been behind the attack. Now we have some evidence. A couple of people are suspects. He said the right-wing group Abhinav Bharat member Swami Aseemanand had confessed to his involvement in the Samjhauta case and also in the Malegoan blast case before a court.

[Daily Times – January 30, 2011]

Islamabad, Kabul Exchange Transit Trade Documents

The instruments of ratification regarding Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) were exchanged at a ceremony held in Afghan Foreign Ministry in Kabul on January 12. The Pakistan side was represented by Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq and the Afghan side by the Minister for Commerce and Industries Dr Anwar-ul-Haq Ahadi. Speaking on the occasion, Pakistani Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq said that the agreement would be effective after thirty days of the exchange ceremony. He termed the agreement as an important step towards boosting of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The ambassador said that APTTA would create numerous job opportunities for the people of both countries. The agreement would not only facilitate Afghan traders but also help Pakistani traders to export their goods to the Central Asian countries, besides Afghanistan, he added. Afghan minister appreciated the sincere cooperation of the government of Pakistan in finalizing the APTTA in shortest possible time.

[Daily Times – January 13, 2011]

Indian Politics

Indian Cabinet Changes Could Give Hint on Reform

Government sources said on January 11 that India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh may reshuffle his cabinet this month, in a move that may reveal how much support he is giving to some reformist ministers. Singh, facing the toughest time of his second term in office amid accelerating food inflation and corruption scandals, needs to fill several vacancies, some which came about as a result of the departure of ministers over graft accusations. Singh could just make cosmetic changes to fill vacancies or he could reshuffle some controversial ministers, such as Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh. Ramesh is seen as a reformist who has been criticised in business and

political circles for blocking major industrial projects over green concerns. The reshuffle could show the direction the government will take, either to back reformist ministers or bow to political expediency and industry pressures, in the run-up to important state elections this year and a general election due by 2014. Singh held a meeting on January 08 to discuss cabinet changes and more meetings were likely in coming days, said another government official. Ruling Congress party spokesman Manish Tewari declined to comment on the possibility of a reshuffle, except to say that reshuffle is in the domain of the prime minister, he can do it any time. Any ministerial reshuffle will also need the nod of Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi, seen as the power behind the government and regarded as further to the left than the prime minister. Ministerial vacancies have been created by the resignations of Sashi Tharoor as junior foreign minister and Andimuthu Raja as telecommunications minister, the latter over a link to a \$39 billion telecoms scam. Several elderly and powerful ministers have been criticised for scuttling new thinking in government, frustrating efforts toward faster reform, such as opening up the retail sector to foreign investors after a resounding election victory in 2009.

[Daily Times – January 12, 2011]

Domestic and Foreign Issues of Afghanistan

Karzai, Afghan Lawmakers in Poll Court Stand-Off

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has so far failed to give a clear answer to increasing calls from lawmakers and his Western backers for a resolution to a constitutional stand-off delaying parliament's opening. The two sides are arguing over the legality of a Supreme Court special tribunal, supported by Karzai, which is charged with ruling on cases of electoral fraud during parliamentary polls four months ago. Karzai wants the winning candidates to accept the tribunal's authority as a condition for his inaugurating the new parliament on January 19, but many MPs fear it will throw some of their number out and insist it is unlawful. The situation is being watched anxiously by the international community in Afghanistan as the war against the Taliban enters its tenth year and with foreign troops due to start limited withdrawals in July. The United States and UN have endorsed the election's official results and condemned in strong terms last week's announcement by Karzai that he would delay opening parliament for a month. Lawmakers claimed on January 23 that an agreement had been struck between the two sides which would see Karzai open parliament on Wednesday, following pressure from the United States and United Nations. But further tensions emerged as lawmakers held talks on the details of the deal on January 29, which seemed to put the agreement in jeopardy. They sent Karzai a written list of their demands which the president has now referred to the Supreme Court for its opinion, his office said. But presidential officials were not available to comment further on the situation. Mohammad Sarwar Usmani, who is acting as the temporary speaker of the new parliament, told AFP that we have sent him our last decision which is not changeable for us.

[Daily Times – January 25, 2011]

Foreigners Behind Afghan Parliament Crisis: Karzai

President Hamid Karzai on January 25 said that 'foreign hands' were responsible for a crisis over the inauguration of Afghanistan's new parliament that has pitted lawmakers against the US-backed president. Karzai's statement came after he made a U-turn earlier this week, agreeing to open the parliament on January 26 despite fraud accusations by losing candidates in September's election, having previously said he would delay it by a month. His reversal came amid pressure from the United Nations, United States and other Western backers who have welcomed election results and called for a swift inauguration of parliament. The statement quoted the president saying that some foreign hands questioned our decisions and started instigation to create crises in our country, Karzai was quoted as telling the losing candidates in a statement from his office. They "kept provoking candidates (winning MPs) that they should inaugurate the parliament without the president's participation and that we will support you. Karzai defended his U-turn and his insistence that the tribunal will stand. His statement said that to save the country from foreign interference and crisis we decided to meet with the winning candidates and make them acknowledge that after the inauguration of the parliament they need to accept the ruling of the court. He claimed that winning MPs had given him a written acceptance that they will acknowledge the decisions of the court.

[Daily Times – January 26, 2011]

US Won't Cut and Run from Afghanistan in 2014: Biden

US Vice President Joe Biden said on January 11 that America will not cut and run in 2014, when the US-led military coalition plans to hand over control of security to Afghan forces. Speaking after a meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Biden said training and aid would continue even after responsibility for security is handed over. He added that both sides share a common goal of a stable, sovereign Afghanistan. The vice president said a day after arriving in the country for a surprise visit that if the Afghan people want it, we won't leave in 2014. Tensions have surfaced between the Obama administration and an increasingly nationalistic Karzai, whose

government is plagued by charges of corruption. Biden's visit could be aimed in part at smoothing things over with Karzai. Just ahead of their news conference, Karzai said they had worked on the transition, a reference to the decision taken last November at a NATO summit in Lisbon to transfer responsibility for the security of the country to Afghan forces within four years. Biden tried to reassure Afghans at the news conference that it "is not our intention to govern or to nation build" and that United States had "moved into a new phase in Afghanistan which relates to the transition of security responsibility to Afghans." Biden said he was last in Afghanistan two years ago and that much had changed since then. "We have a strategy and the resources in place to accomplish the goal of a stable and growing and independent Afghanistan able to provide for its own security.

[Daily Times – January 12, 2011]

Afghan Security Plan 'At Risk': US Official

The US official charged with overseeing the rebuilding of Afghanistan said on January 24 that poor planning and weak management are undermining the effort to build up the Afghan army and police while putting billions of US tax dollars at risk. Arnold Fields, special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, told the Commission on Wartime Contracting that it is not clear how US military authorities are going to construct enough bases and training facilities by late 2013, when the Afghan forces are supposed to assume responsibility for the country's security. He said that there are 884 projects valued at \$11.4 billion planned for completion over the next two years, but as of November only 133 have been finished, Fields told the commission, which was created by the US Congress to examine spending in Afghanistan and Iraq. Another 78 were under construction and 673 had not been started. He also said the projects his office had audited so far have been seriously behind schedule. That makes it doubtful construction will keep pace with the goal of recruiting and training 240,000 Afghan soldiers and 160,000 Afghan police. Major Gen Jeffrey Dorko, deputy commander of the Army Corps of Engineers, told the commission that violence and corruption in Afghanistan were the primary reasons for schedule delays and cost overruns. He also said the corps continued to face challenges in finding enough qualified people to properly oversee all of the work being done.

[Daily Times – January 26, 2011]

Bangladesh Political Scenario

Bangladesh Tries 800 Soldiers for Mutiny

Some 800 shackled Bangladeshi soldiers crammed into a specially-built Dhaka court on January 05, accused of murder and other serious offences during a mutiny in which scores of officers were massacred. During the 2009 uprising, 74 people — including 57 senior army officers — were killed at a military base in the city. The handcuffed defendants, who include about 20 civilians, shuffled silently into the huge courtroom after being transported from jail in a fleet of prison vans. The temporary building has been erected on land normally used as a playground, with long benches installed to accommodate the 800 accused. Judge Jahirul Haq will hear about the 30-hour mutiny in which Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) soldiers turned on their commanders, hacking them to death, torturing them and burning them alive before hiding their bodies in sewers. Haq adjourned the case until February 03, saying 'on that day we will read out the charges against all the defendants in full'. The mutineers stole an estimated 2,500 weapons and broke into an annual meeting of top BDR officers before shooting them at point blank range. The BDR's head, Major General Shakil Ahmed, was among those killed.

[Daily Times – January 07, 2011]

US to Help Bangladesh Conduct War Crime Trials

A visiting US envoy said on January 13 that The United States will help Bangladesh stage "open and transparent" trials for crimes against humanity committed during the 40-year-old Bangladesh war for independence. Bangladesh last year arrested six people, including five leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, the principal ally of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), charged with various war crimes. Stephen Rapp, US ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues, told a news conference that the US government will help Bangladesh hold an open and transparent war crime trial with the rights of defence for the accused. He said that US officials would advise how to ensure the right to defence.

[Daily Times – January 14, 2011]

Bangladesh Opposition Gains in Local Polls

Results showed on January 19 that Bangladesh's main opposition party made a strong showing in nationwide mayoral polls just two years after suffering its worst ever general election defeat. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by two-time ex-premier Khaleda Zia, won elections in 92 municipalities, edging out the ruling

Awami League party, which managed 88 wins. The remainder of the 243 seats went to independent candidates, although a number of seats were left vacant due to violence or other irregularities. The week-long elections, seen as a key mid-term popularity test for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ended on Tuesday. The polls are meant to be non-partisan, with only independent candidates allowed to run, but both the main political parties routinely flout this rule and field candidates. The next general election is set for 2014.

[Daily Times – January 20, 2011]

Political Crisis in Nepal

Nepal Communists Give Up Control Over Ex-Fighters

The head of Nepal's former communist rebels handed command of his fighters over to the government on January 22 as part of a peace deal that ended the Himalayan nation's decade-long conflict. Nepal's Prime Minister and the Communist Party of Nepal, known as the Maoists, reached the deal earlier this month for a special committee to monitor the 19,000-strong ex-rebel force, just as a UN peace mission was ending its watch. Communist chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal said, before joining the Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal in releasing balloons during a ceremony at one of Nepal's 28 camps for former fighters, said that from today onward, all the members of the Maoist combatants have formally come under the special committee. A group of 64 monitors — selected from the army, police and political parties including the Maoists — will now watch the seven major camps and 21 small camps where the former fighters have lived since 2006, when they gave up an armed revolt that had left more than 13,000 people dead.

[Daily Times – January 23, 2011]

Nepal Peace Under Threat as UN Pulls Out

A UN mission set up to oversee Nepal's post-war transition will close later this week, as fears rise that a failure to fulfill pledges made at the end of the conflict is threatening lasting peace. The UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was created in 2007 with a temporary mandate to monitor progress towards durable peace after a decade-long conflict between Maoist insurgents and the state in which at least 16,000 people died. The UN Security Council urged Nepal's political leaders to reach agreement before January 15 on the fate of the 19,000 members of the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) confined to military camps since the end of the war. However, the issue remains unresolved, and no arrangement has been put in place for the monitoring of the two rival armies and their weapons after UNMIN leaves. The caretaker government says the Nepalese army should no longer be subject to monitoring, and wants supervision of the PLA camps to be handed over to a specially formed cross-party committee. But the Maoists say that would go against the 2006 peace agreement and have asked the UN to extend its mission by another four months—a request experts say is unlikely to be granted. **The country has been without a government for more than six months and political leaders appear further than ever from reaching agreement on forming a new coalition after 16 failed attempts to vote in a new prime minister.**

[Daily Times – January 10, 2011]

Nepal Attempts to Get Leader by Changing PM Election Rules

Nepal's parliament on January 25 approved a change in the rules for electing a new leader in an effort to break a deadlock that has left the country without a government for almost seven months. Lawmakers have voted 16 times to try to elect a new prime minister since former leader Madhav Kumar Nepal stepped down in June under pressure from the opposition Maoist party. The troubled country's three biggest political parties have each proposed candidates in elections to succeed him, but none managed to win the necessary absolute majority in parliament, with many lawmakers abstaining. The only remaining contender withdrew from the race earlier this month, paving the way for fresh elections, although the parties have not yet put forward fresh candidates. Under the new rules, no lawmaker will be allowed to abstain, attendance will be mandatory, and the house speaker will be able to disqualify candidates after three failed rounds of voting.

[Daily Times – January 26, 2011]

Myanmar after Parliamentary Elections

Pressure Grows for End to Myanmar Sanctions

Calls are growing for an end to Western sanctions against Myanmar, but experts say a shift in policy is unlikely without progress on human rights and the support of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi's release in November following Myanmar's first election in 20 years has reignited debate over the effectiveness of the punitive measures, enforced by the United States and the European Union in response to the junta's human rights abuses. A Bangkok-based Western diplomat said that there's a lot of internal debate going on among

policymakers and a previously established and longstanding consensus increasingly seems brittle. Critics of the policy say sanctions, which have largely kept Western companies out of a resource-rich corner of Asia, are hindering development in what is one of the world's poorest nations. But the iron-fisted regime must still provide, a Myanmar analyst Aung Naing Oo said that something that is considered substantial, a step in the right direction, before the West — highly critical of the election — will remove them. Two of the main pro-democracy parties which took part in the November election have called for the lifting of all sanctions on the grounds that they do not benefit the wider population.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which includes Myanmar, and a group of the country's main ethnic political parties have also urged an end to the measures, ahead of the new parliament's opening on January 31. A diplomat, who did not want to be named, said that it will be difficult to ignore all these calls for a change of policy. Even Suu Kyi appears to have softened her stance and her party is reviewing its position on sanctions after years of firmly supporting them. Suu Kyi told AFP in an interview last month that she wanted dialogue with the junta on sanctions. She said that I don't look at sanctions as a bargaining chip but as a way of trying to improve the situation. Critics of the measures say the willingness of other Asian countries to invest without conditions is precisely why sanctions are not working. Myanmar economics expert Sean Turnell said the West was likely to face pressure to reduce broad economic sanctions — the import and investment bans — while maintaining targeted financial restrictions.

[Daily Times – January 24, 2011]

Myanmar Court Rejects Suu Kyi Party Appeal

Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi's party saw its hopes for a political future dashed again on January 28 as the country's Supreme Court brushed aside its latest appeal against dissolution. The court in the capital Naypyidaw took only a few minutes to reject the National League for Democracy's (NLD) legal bid, according to Kyaw Hoe, a lawyer for the party. Suu Kyi has all but exhausted her options in the courts to reinstate the party as a political entity after it was dissolved by Myanmar's ruling junta last year ahead of controversial elections. But Kyaw Hoe said they could keep fighting. Court verdicts in the military-ruled country rarely favour opposition activists and a series of appeals by Suu Kyi against her house arrest - before it expired in November - were rejected. Shortly after Suu Kyi's release, the Supreme Court refused to hear her lawsuit against the junta for dissolving the NLD. She had unsuccessfully filed an earlier suit with the same court aimed at preventing its abolition.

[Daily Times – January 29, 2011]