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GENDER AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women & Politics

NCSW for Induction of Female MPs into Cabinet

The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has written two separate letters to the President and Prime Minister and voiced its concern and dissatisfaction for not including any female member of the parliament among the 14 recently appointed federal ministers and ministers of state. The commission expressed disappointment at the number of women in the present cabinet, which is just two, and to ignore several capable female members in the parliament. The NCSW urged the government to take immediate steps to facilitate induction of female members into the cabinet. According to the official statement of NCSW, the commission feels that women on reserved seats have been particularly marginalized, and their services to the cause of women and the nation, as well as to their party, have remained unacknowledged. Several of these women have a lifetime of struggle behind them, and are known for their capabilities and understanding of national issues. Considering them to be less worthy merely because they have come on reserved seats would be less than fair.

The NCSW highly regretted that the contribution made by female parliamentarians have not been recognized, though studies have shown that the female members in parliament have been more active and responsible, and generally performed better than their male colleagues. The commission believes that democracy and good governance will be better served if appointments are based on track record and merit, without a distinction being made between directly and indirectly elected members. It is also high time that the Political Parties Act should be reviewed, so that in addition to the reserved seats more women members are chosen to contest open elections by their political parties, or women on reserved seats are not elected indirectly but in direct constituency based elections. The National Commission on the Status of Women urged the government to look into the issue urgently and facilitate the inclusion of female members from the reserved seats into the cabinet.

[The News – June 11, 2011]

Marvi Resigns her Assembly Seat

In a dramatic and rare move, a disgruntled legislator of the PML-Q, Marvi Memon, set a new moral precedent by resigning from the National Assembly after voting against the Finance Bill and presenting a long charge-sheet against the government and her party. As soon as the final counting on the Finance Bill 2011 was made, Marvi Memon, who remained absent throughout the session except on the day when the budget was presented in the National Assembly, said “No” in a loud voice. After this, she, on a point of order, announced resigning from her party and the National Assembly. She said that she tried to prevail upon the party leadership to change their decision, but in vain. Now the only honorable course open for her was to resign from the PML membership and also as a member of the National Assembly on the occasion of vote on the budget. The PML-N legislators offered her full support by thumping their desks when she handed over her resignation to Speaker National Assembly; Dr. Fehmida Mirza. However, Minister for Religious Affairs Syed Khursheed Shah asked her as to why she did not resign when a dictator killed Nawab Akbar Bugti. PML-Q parliamentary leader and Minister for Housing and Works Faisal Salah Hayat questioned as

to on which moral ground she stood when she got a party ticket from the Punjab while keeping the domicile of Sindh. In her charge-sheet that she read out in the National Assembly prior to handing over her resignation to the speaker, Marvi Memon said it had been an honor for her to serve as a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan since March 2008. She, however, said ever since her party leadership's decision to join the federal government, it had become difficult for her to be true to her oath.

[The News - June 23, 2011]

Gender Bias Marks End of NA's Budget Session

Gender bias marked the end of a tumultuous budget session of the National Assembly when the house passed a Rs. 564 billion supplementary budget for the outgoing fiscal year but opposition manipulation blocked a pro-women resolution. The house also discussed supplementary demands for charged expenditure, which is not subject to voting, for fiscal 2010-11 ending on June 30 and approved long pending excess demands for three years — 1988-89, 1995-96 and 200-01 — as approved by its Public Accounts Committee before being prorogued after a three-week budget session. The concluding stage of the parliamentary process of the present government's fourth budget remained free of heated arguments and furors seen since the Rs. 2.76 trillion budgets for fiscal 2011-12 was unveiled on June 3, though some members of the opposition PML-N criticized the supplementary demands. Finance Minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh said the supplementary demands were a routine affair happening every year and they would amount to only Rs. 387 billion if it were not for additional expenditure necessitated by power crisis. But some unrest was visible on PML-N side when a PPP female member and a former minister of state for law, Mehreen Anwar Raja, sought to move a resolution to condemn a perceived insult of women by a PML-N member's reference to bangles - as a sign of cowardice - while speaking on the previous day about his party's tensions with the ruling PPP. The member came with a resolution that recalled the leadership of democratic struggles by the late Miss Fatima Jinnah, sister of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and Ms Bhutto and sought rejection of the use of negative language about women's jewelry and clothes.

While Speaker Fehmida Mirza put off the matter for a while, asking the mover to let PPP chief whip and Religious Affairs Minister Khursheed Ahmed Shah, who was not present at the time, to return to move a motion for taking up the resolution immediately, Mr. Rafiq and some other PML-N members were seen signaling party back-benchers, including women, to leave the house before one of them pointed out the lack of quorum. Deputy Speaker Faisal Karim Kundi, who was chairing the proceedings at the time, ordered a count, but the 342-seat house seemed far short of the required quorum of 86 members even after some more PPP members, including Mr. Shah, had come back to the chamber, leaving Dr Raja and several other PPP female lawmakers eager to move the resolution helpless. And then, without announcing the result of the count, Mr. Kundi read out the presidential order proroguing the house, signaling a dubious victory for PML-N lawmakers in defeating what female members of the PPP and allied parties seemed to have made a cause of their honor. The passage of the supplementary budget turned out to be a tedious affair as the finance minister; Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and for Finance Hina Rabbani Khar and two other ministers had to take turns to read out a total of 259 demands for grants one by one before they were put to voice vote separately.

[Dawn – June 24, 2011]

Women & Law

Burning Question: Stronger Laws to Deal With Acid Crime Urged

Nayla Farhat, 20, and Nusrat Bibi, 25, are two among many other acid crime victims living with a hope that one day a law will be passed in the country which will provide them with justice. They want to “punish the culprits, who committed the crime with them“. They shared their ordeals at a workshop organized by Acid Survivors Foundation, in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The acid burn survivors said due to lack of proper legislation, people who threw acid on them are moving freely after ruining their lives.

Background: Nusrat, from Muzaffargarh in the southern Punjab while sharing her story said her husband along with his elder brother and sister-in-law threw acid at her on July 9, 2009. “After preparing breakfast for my family I was laying in my room and they suddenly came in. My husband threw acid on my body from front, his brother on my face and his sister attacked from back, “she said. She started screaming and later she was taken to the hospital by her neighbors. “They were threatening me since the day I refused to marry my brother with my sister-in-law as he was in love with some other girl. They said that they will teach me a lesson which I will not forget throughout my life and so they did, “said Nusrat. An FIR was registered with the local police station and a case was filed in the civil court and high court. “My husband was arrested and had to spend 10 months jails. Later he was acquitted and now he is living a happy life with his family.” She later divorced him but her husband also managed to take away their three children but later she got them back through court orders. However, the children had to go back to their father, since the mother did not have the finances to support them.

In another incident, Nayla, was an eighth grader when she was attacked by her teacher, and his friend, who wanted to marry her. The student from Layyah was “punished” for her refusal on, August 14, 2003. She filed a case against them in the civil court where the accused was fined Rs. 1.25 million and 12 years and three months imprisonment. However, this was later reduced to Rs. 1.15 million and four year imprisonment by the Lahore High Court, Multan bench. Thereafter, the dejected Nayla knocked at the door of Supreme Court where the Chief Justice retained the punishment sentenced by the civil court earlier.

Speakers at the workshop termed the existing legislation on acid burn crimes as inadequate and erroneous. They said there is no law which specifically deals with acid crimes. As a result, burn cases are treated under normal categories of ‘hurt’ which do not recognize the extremely grievous consequences of burn violence for the victims. They urged that new legislation on burn crimes should be framed on the pattern of laws in Bangladesh. They expressed concern over the lack of facilities for the treatment of burn victims. This is one of the most neglected aspects of Pakistan's healthcare system. Burn wards in some public hospital lack proper treatment facilities. The workshop was told that the incidence of acid violence was high in Pakistan. In May, this year about 36 cases were reported. It was also discussed that the issue is not given importance in the national media and as a result the policy makers did not feel compelled to take appropriate steps to control the menace. The easy availability of the acids in the open market can be one of the major reasons for the increasing incidences of the acid throwing on women.

[The Express Tribune – June 10, 2011]

Future of Women Centres

Confusion Marks Future of Women

Confusion marks the future of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women Crisis Centres as the federal government devolves the facility to provinces whereas the Punjab government is showing disinterest in adopting these centres.

Punjab Ministry of Social Welfare Secretary Shahanawaz Badar has confirmed that the provincial government has refused to the Implementation Commission from taking the additional responsibility of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women Crisis Centres due to lack of funds.

The provincial secretary said that the provincial government is already facing the shortage of funds in many of its existing projects. "It would not be possible for the provincial government to take another responsibility especially in a situation where extensive set-up to facilitate the violence victims is already functioning at district level in the form of Dar-ul-Aman," he added.

He said that the provincial government realizes the importance of having as many set-ups to help victims of violence as possible, but lack of funds is the main hurdle. "As per our knowledge, these crisis centres are run through public private partnership. We have proposed that these centres should be given to non-government organisations already managing these set-ups along with the federal government," he suggested.

Besides Dar-ul-Aman, he said that there are many other social welfare programmes that cater to women especially violence victims. "We have vocational training institutes 'Sanatzar' that work separately where violence victims are preferred, we provide legal support to violence victims through Dar-ul-Amans and we have safe homes for women who have no place to live with the name of 'Aafiat Homes'," he said.

Among 26 functional Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women Crisis Centres in Pakistan, 12 centres are located in Punjab. Already coping with the issues of lack of funds and human resource, these centres will be transferred to provincial governments after devolution. The basic objective of these centres is to provide free legal, psychological and medical help to women in distress besides ensuring temporary shelter.

On the other hand, the Implementation Commission Chairperson Raza Rabbani, in his press conference on Tuesday, has announced that promotion and undertaking of projects for providing special facilities for women has been devolved to the provinces as per schedule to the rules of business 1973. Whereas the officials of the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women Crisis Centre are also not clear about the future of these centres.

[The News – June 30, 2011]

Social Welfare: Women Try To Save Crisis Centres

The Punjab government has not allocated funds for these centres in the budget. At internal meetings, officials have argued that there is already a network of public darul amans (shelters) in the province and so the centres, which are run in partnerships with NGOs, are not needed. A crisis centre is the first stage of contact for a woman before admission to a shelter. They assess a woman's needs and the risks she faces. After full assessment, she can get access to legal advisers and counselors and then referred to a shelter, which can be a darul aman public shelter or a private shelter. There should be action to save these crisis centres before June 30, the end of the fiscal year.

There are 25 crisis centres in Punjab including 12 in Lahore. The government-run women's shelters are inadequate. There is nothing in darul amans for homeless women. All political parties should work together to save the centres from closure. There will be no healthy kids in Pakistan if there are no healthy women. Sajida Mir of the PPP said that the state had failed to protect women and there is no follow-up or record maintained of violence-stricken women. She said that a female station house officer should be appointed at each police station to handle complaints from women. She said there was also limited female participation in governance. The chief minister has assured that he will provide a better substitute for these centres. The federal government had been neglecting the centres, which had temporary staff and rented buildings.

[The Express Tribune - June 23, 2011]

Devolution of MoWD

Ministry Of Women Development: Devolution an Opportunity, Not the End

This was said by National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Anis Haroon at a seminar "18th Amendment: Opportunities and Challenges for Provinces and Women". Centre for Peace and Civil Society Executive Director Jami Chandio said that under the 18th Amendment, 102 clauses of the Constitution have been amended. The amendment has reversed the centralization of state institutions as was done by the British colonizers. This has helped give provinces autonomy, as about 21 ministries were unnecessarily being kept with the federation, while the issues they represented were predominantly of provincial nature. He said the amendment has also made some existing institutions effective and active. For example, he said, Council of Common Interest, which was a "good-for-nothing institution" that met occasionally before the 18th Amendment, now holds frequent meetings. Rehana Hashmi from Sisters Trust was disappointed that the government has still not been able to devolve MOWD to provinces, neither has it finalized the financial and administrative particulars of any independent commission on women's development. Chief Operating Officer Aurat Foundation Naeem Mirza said that some people take devolution of the MOWD as "termination", which is not true. He argued that instead of opposing the devolution the stakeholders should initiate a dialogue to frame modalities of the ministry for provinces. One of the participants, a farmer councilor, demanded the government to immediately restore the Local Government System (LGS). She was of the view that with LGS in place the devolution of various ministries and institution would be effective. Most of the participants and speakers agreed with the observation. Nayyar Shabana, National Coordinator, Legislative Watch Programme of Aurat Foundation moderated the seminar and Anis Haroon presided over it.

[The Express Tribune - June 18, 2011]

Women & Economics

Call To Include Poor Women with No Identity Cards in BISP

The event was organized by the Participatory Development Initiatives (PDI) and Oxfam GB. The participants were informed that Rs. 1,000 a month given to the head of each recipient family translated into Rs. 167 per month per person. Even at a dollar a day to the monthly income required is Rs. 2,550 per person. Giving their input, they suggested that the government introduce a simple system, and poor women without national identity cards should also be included in the programme. They said that all social protection programmes should be managed by a single

authority within the province as this would enhance capabilities of the institution to provide relief in a more efficient manner. They also observed that different initiatives under BISP, such as Waseela-i-Haq [small loan], Waseela-i-Rozgar [vocation training] and Waseela-i-Sehat [health Insurance], were too small programmes to bring a change and suggested the government give more subsidies to poor people. They also suggested that the government set up a Benazir Bank on the pattern of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh to provide relief to poverty-stricken women of the country.

They suggested that an independent umbrella social protection authority at the district level be established for the implementation of the programme. They underlined the need for a strong coordination between the relevant departments at the federal and provincial levels. They stressed that the powers and functions of the committees and officers involved be clearly defined and all BISP set-ups should be responsible to the provincial and local governments. They also called for reforms in the BISP structure to maintain its transparency and effectiveness. They questioned the identification of the poor through the National Database and Registration Authority because a majority of the poor, mostly in the rural areas, didn't have identity cards. The government is taking steps to resolve the issues confronting the poverty-stricken people and added that the complaint redress mechanism be made strong to further ensure transparency in BISP. Sindh government had decided to set up industries in the gas-producing districts of the province.

[Dawn – June 9, 2011]

HR WATCH

Women & HR

Murdered: Woman Stoned To Death

According to the neighbors, Muhammad Saeed of Girhoch village married Shazia from Barikot tehsil in Swat six months back. The couple soon developed domestic disputes, with Shazia eventually leaving her husband and going back to Barikot. Saeed was suspicious of the nature of his wife's relationship with his brother, and shot him dead in an earlier attack. Shazia left the house and escaped when Saeed opened fire on both, his own brother and Shazia. The brother succumbed to injuries and died but Shazia managed to escape, in spite of her wounds. Earlier, Saeed had called his mother-in-law, Noor Jehan, a resident of Barikot, asking her to bring Shazia back to resolve the dispute. Both Noor Jehan and Shazia came to the village. Saeed and his accomplices took Shazia to the nearby mountains and stoned her to death. The neighbors said that when they learnt about Saeed's intentions, they made an announcement on the local mosque's loudspeaker and informed all the villagers to try and rescue Shazia. They also called the local police for help but it was too late, as Saeed and his accomplices had already killed Shazia. Police said that 13 persons have been nominated by Noor Jehan, Shazia's mother, in an FIR lodged in Rustam Police Station.

[The Express Tribune - June 23, 2011]

Man Chops off Wife's Nose for Alleged Affair

Her husband chopped off her nose after accusing her of having an illicit relationship, all in the name of 'saving face'. With the case of the Haripur 'sexually abused' victim still fresh in the public memory the harrowing story of Ansar Bibi, 35, adds to the 44 cases of violence against women in Haripur this year alone. "He should have ended my life, rather than leaving me to live with the stigma of being a woman of bad character," Ansar Bibi said. The motive behind the centuries-old vicious tradition of disfigurement is hardly different from scores of other cases of violence against women accused of having relations outside their marriage. However, according to the victim, she was framed by her husband as she was unable to provide him any children and the accusations of having an affair out of wedlock was only a façade. Ansar Bibi now waits for financial assistance as her father, who is handicapped and on bed-rest for many years, cannot afford the treatment.

Background: Ansar Bibi recalled that she and her husband Muhammad Riaz, a truck driver, were married about 20 years ago, after which he transferred the rights of ownership of one kanal of agriculture land and a house in her name as dowry. They lived a comfortable life but over time her husband started being spiteful towards her because she was infertile and his family constantly pressed him to get remarried so he could have a son as his legal heir. With time Riaz's behavior became increasingly harsh, leaving her black and blue, time and again, without any reason. Then, about a year back, he went missing, only to return after six months with a new wife. Riaz did not get permission for the polygamy which is mandatory under Sharia and family laws. From then on, Ansar Bibi felt that living with Riaz was not easy and decided to file for divorce and at a local family court. However, some jirga members intervened and persuaded her to withdraw the lawsuit assuring her that Riaz would treat her equally. Instead of getting justice, Riaz reacted by trying to "get rid of her". He deprived her of all entitlements of dowry and began defaming her by calling her some of "ill-character". One night Riaz locked Ansar Bibi up in a room with his cousin Ashiq

Hussain, who was a frequent visitor at their house, and made it look as though the two were involved in an illicit relationship. The next morning, Riaz chopped off Ansar Bibi's nose with a knife and handed himself over to the police. His relatives Khalid and Sakhawat abetted him in the attack.

Statistics of Violence against Women: According to statistics collected by Human Development Organization, a Hazara-based civil society organization, 44 cases of violence against women were reported from the five districts of Hazara between January and May this year. Out of the total, 14 women were murdered, five were killed for 'honor', five were kidnapped, seven committed suicide under unexplained circumstances, and one lost her nose, while 12 were cases of domestic violence. According to a report by the Aurat Foundation, over 8,000 cases of violence against women were reported from across the country in 2010. These statistics include 2,236 cases of kidnappings of women, 1,436 cases of murder, 486 domestic violence cases, 633 suicide cases, 557 honor killings, 928 rapes, 74 sexually assaults, 32 acid attacks and 38 cases were of burn injuries, while 1,580 cases were filed under 'miscellaneous'.

[The Express Tribune - June 23, 2011]

Traumatized By Silence, Jirga Victim Speaks Up

Shaheen* will now relocate somewhere else because living with people who seemed unmoved despite seeing her being paraded naked through the streets was itself a trauma which she could not bear. On June 8, a jirga of the Neelor Bala village in Haripur district found Shaheen's son guilty of raping a local's wife. The man, along with three others, and with the blessing of the jirga, is alleged to have attacked Shaheen, stripped her and proceeded to parade her naked through the streets. Shaheen recorded a statement, along with her husband, before a Judicial Magistrate Court confirming the incident. While recording her statement under section 164 of the PPC, the victim sought strict action against all accused, who are still at large. She blamed the village's jirga for her entire ordeal as, according to her, they did not even bother to ask for any clarification or probe the allegations against her son. They just arbitrarily passed the judgment to divorce the pregnant woman and brought her disgrace publicly. Adding that if her son was at fault they would have brought him to justice but their judgment satisfied their animal instinct, for her it has created a stigma that she will have to live with.

Background: Sadia* became pregnant while her husband Shabbir* was away in Lahore. Upon returning, he enquired from her about the pregnancy and she accused Karim*, son of Shaheen, and his friend Arshad* of having raped her. Before recording her statement in court; Shaheen, 45, held a press conference at the Haripur press club, narrating details of the incident. She said four armed men; Shabbir and three of his brothers Arsalan, Manzoor and Imran, dragged her out of her home and paraded her naked in the village. The motive behind the abuse was alleged illicit relations between her son Karim and Sadia. Shabbir also torched her belongings as well as Arshad's house. Shaheen also sought the help of local NGOs and the police for the recovery of her two sons Karim and Obaid* who, according to her, have been missing since the evening of the incident. Superintendent Police Najib Bhagvi confirmed that a case under sections 34, 506, 109, 436, 427, 354-A and 202 of the PPC has been registered with the Saddar police station against the four accused as well as the jirga members. Two members of the jirga Raqeeb and Abdul Latif have been booked, while raids are underway in search of the rest of the accused.

**All names have been changed to protect identities*

[The Express Tribune - June 15, 2011]

Cutting Your Daughter into Pieces – For Speaking Up

On June 4, Shirazi used a knife to stab his 17-year-old daughter Anum Fatima while his four children watched. Disbelieving relatives went to the house to discover Anum's body lying in a pool of blood surrounded by hysterical siblings and a man who had calmly washed the knife and soaked his blood-stained clothes in a bucket. Shirazi confessed his crime to his sister and fled Sahiwal after he realized that the police wanted to question him. Abida (victim's mother) has not stopped crying since then. Her children, who cradled their dying sister as blood gushed out, have been sent away to recover. Abida speaks with almost manic energy and repeats the same question: "Why my daughter? Why would he do this?"

Background: Things started to sour soon after Dr. Shirazi and Abida Batool married in 1992 in the watta satta tradition (Shirazi's sister was married to Abida's brother). The Shirazi family insisted that the differences in faith as the Shirazis are Sunni and Abida's family is Shia would not be an issue. Shirazi constantly criticized Abida's faith. She told him that she would not practice rituals. He was suspicious of whom she met, so she cut herself off from my family. He wouldn't spend money on the house. Abida would ask her brother. But Abida Batool set aside all thoughts of divorce after Anum's birth as she thought that who would marry her daughter if she would be divorced or separated? Four more children followed. So did problems. Shirazi barely contributed to family expenses, Abida alleges. "He enjoyed depriving his children and torturing them. Influenced by elder brother Dr. Kareem Shirazi, he had no self-esteem. He would do whatever his brother said including practicing at the same clinic even though he made little money there. He barely went to the hospital he was posted at or attended to patients. The children lived in fear of him, since he could take offense at the slightest thing."

Questions about his income by Abida were answered by hurling abuse, and often, blows to her head. That same anger also applied to matters of faith. While the Shirazis say they are Bareilvi, Fazal Shirazi became avowedly anti-Shia. Members of extremist organizations were regular visitors to his clinic. While Abida says she raised her children as Sunnis, they were drawn to Shia rituals. Anum would hide from her father and pray, but he had found her out twice and threatened her with "dire consequences". Anum had witnessed her parents' turbulent marriage for 17 years. Abida recalls that Anum would comfort her, saying that once she started earning they could "escape from this hell". After several years of silence, she had started arguing with her father, especially in support of her mother's demand that Shirazi build them a house, since they were living in one loaned to them by Shirazi's older brother. Abida just wanted a house for herself and her children.

On June 3, the couple fought bitterly over the issue of the house. Shirazi rose to strike her with a water jug, but Anum locked her mother into a room to protect her from her father's rage. She defended her mother, and in response, Shirazi reportedly yelled: "I won't give you a house, I'll give you graves!" Her father made true on his promise a few hours later. Shirazi stabbed his daughter, dragging her from one room to another. Her siblings, awoken from their sleep, screamed at their father to stop. A servant, who lived upstairs, watched silently as the man "cut his daughter to shreds", according to Anum's grandmother. By then, Abida had moved to her mother's house for the night, so that Shirazi's rage wouldn't affect Anum, who was studying for her first-year examinations.

Shirazi confessed his murder to his sister, but according to one account, he has been telling relatives that Anum was talking to a man late at night, which is why he killed her. The account appears inconsistent with investigations carried out by the police and family members. In the last few minutes before Anum died, she was studying for an Islamiat exam. Her books were scattered around her room when relatives found her body. Whether her father was riled by her faith, or her defense of her mother, is a secret that Anum has taken to her grave, and her father carries around with him as he eludes the police. The house – a source of such contention in the family – has been stripped bare of its belongings, but a blood stained mirror is a reminder of a 17-year-old's dying

moments. According to Abida's lawyer Mujahid Hussain, the police have been extremely cooperative in investigating the case. A legal process may have been set into motion but tears continue to roll down Abida's cheeks, which refuses to look at pictures of Anum or sift through her belongings.

[The Express Tribune - June 28, 2011]

Pakistan Ranks 3rd on List of Most Dangerous Countries for Women

India and Somalia ranked fourth and fifth, respectively, in the global perceptions survey by Trust Law, the Foundation's legal news service. Trust Law asked 213 gender experts from five continents to rank countries by overall perceptions of danger as well as by six risks: health threats, sexual violence, non-sexual violence, cultural or religious factors, lack of access to resources and trafficking.

Following are key facts on each of the five countries, ranked in order of danger

1. Afghanistan

Beleaguered by insurgency, corruption and dire poverty, Afghanistan ranked as most dangerous to women overall and came out worst in three of the poll's key risk categories: health, non-sexual violence and economic discrimination.

- Women in Afghanistan have a one in 11 chance of dying in childbirth
- Some 87% of women are illiterate
- 70-80% of girls and women face forced marriages

2. Congo

Still reeling from a 1998-2003 war and accompanying humanitarian disaster that killed 5.4 million, Democratic Republic of Congo ranked second due mainly to staggering levels of sexual violence.

- About 1,150 women are raped every day, or some 420,000 a year, according to a recent report in the American Journal of Public Health
- The Congolese Women's Campaign against Sexual Violence puts the number of rapes at 40 women a day
- 57 pct of pregnant women are anemic

3. Pakistan

Those polled cited cultural, tribal and religious practices harmful to women, including acid attacks, child and forced marriage and punishment or retribution by stoning or other physical abuse.

- More than 1,000 women and girls are victims of "honor killings" every year, according to Pakistan's Human Rights Commission
- 90% of women in Pakistan face domestic violence

4. India

Female foeticide, child marriage and high levels of trafficking and domestic servitude make the world's largest democracy the fourth most dangerous place for women, the poll showed.

- 100 million people, mostly women and girls, are involved in trafficking in one way or another, according to former Indian Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta

- Up to 50 million girls are “missing” over the past century due to female infanticide and foeticide.
- 44.5% of girls are married before the age of 18

5. Somalia

One of the poorest, most violent and lawless countries, Somalia ranked fifth due to a catalogue of dangers including high maternal mortality, rape, female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage.

- 95% of women face FGM, mostly between the ages of 4 and 11
- Only 9% of women give birth at a health facility
- Only 7.5% of parliament seats are held by women

[The Express Tribune - June 15, 2011]

Child Rights & HR

SPARC Seeks Ban on Domestic Child Labor

The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that domestic service is the single largest source of employment for girls under 16 around the world whereas another international organization, Anti-Slavery International, claims that Asia is home to about 60 per cent of domestic child laborers out of which 90 per cent are girls. This information was shared by Sajjad Cheema, regional head of SPARC in a news conference. The purpose of this news conference was to eliminate domestic child labor by creating awareness among the masses and media persons through celebrating the child labor-free week. The domestic child labor is the worst form of child labor depriving a number of children of their basic rights of health, education, livelihood and protection.

Unfortunately, this practice of hiring children for domestic work was highly prevalent in Pakistan especially in its urban settings. Every fourth household employed a child for work in Pakistan. Since January 2010, more than 12 children had lost their lives due to torture inflicted by their employers and about 95 per cent of these cases had been reported in Punjab alone, which is an alarming situation was for the rulers. Most children were made to work consistently without break, often in 12-hour shifts. They are provided with inadequate food and are deprived of their basic educational right. In addition to this they also face violence and aggressive behavior from their employer on petty issues. SPARC had launched a postcard campaign against domestic child labor in Punjab in which 5,000 postcards would be signed and sent to the chief minister of Punjab. It is imperative that the federal and provincial governments take solid measures to check the growing violence against children by notifying this social evil in the list of banned occupations under the relevant law.

[Dawn - June 13, 2011]

President Signs UN Convention on Children Rights

President Asif Ali Zardari said that the government is committed to promote and protect the rights of children in accordance with moral and ethical values as well as democratic principles. “We pledge that democracy and we will defend the rights of children. Children are our future and

whatever we do today, it will be for our future generations,” the President said after signing the Instrument of Ratification of Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The President said that as democracy derives strength from the people, therefore, it is obliged and bound to promote and protect their rights. President Zardari termed the ratification as “historic” and said child protection and their due care has become very important in the current global environment, where the world has turned into a global village. He said the government was fully cognizant of the sensitivities of child rights protection and was taking every step to ensure the same. The President called upon the Federal Government to expedite the proposed Child Protection (Criminal Law) Amendment Bill. He also called upon the Federal and Provincial governments to ensure that all provisions of the Optional Protocol to UN Convention on Rights of the Child are implemented in letter and spirit.

The President said Pakistan has joined the ranks of 118 countries that have ratified this Optional Protocol and by ratifying this important document. The President while congratulating the children of Pakistan said that it was the vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who pioneered the Summit for Children in the 1990s. He said that it was under her leadership that Pakistan was one of the six countries that initiated the World Summit on Children and signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. It was during her government that Pakistan became among the first twenty countries that signed and ratified the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child, he said. The President said that the present Government was committed to promote and protect the rights of children. The President said that in line with our religious, moral and constitutional obligations, we are mindful of our responsibilities towards our children.

The President said that the children are the real asset of the society; they should be protected from all kinds of exploitations and abuses so that they could develop full potential. He said that sale of children, child pornography and other crimes against them must be curbed. The President said that child exploitation particularly exploitation of girl child was the product of a number of inter-related factors including poverty, under development, socio-economic disparities, irresponsible attitudes and criminal behavior. Expressing hope that every concerned would live up to this shared responsibility towards the children, the President called upon the Federal and Provincial governments to review all provisions of the UN Convention and its Optional Protocol and take steps to implement them. He also complimented Capital Administration and Development division, provincial governments, UNICEF and national and international NGOs and civil society in helping make Pakistan a child friendly State.

[The Nation - June 10, 2011]

Devolution Confusion: ‘A Child Will Get Different Rights in Each Province’

A child in Sindh will be judged by the ministry of interior in case of criminal offence, will be brought to justice by the ministry of labor in case of bonded labor, will be judged upon by the Islamic law or by the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 in case of early marriage, will be looked after by the social welfare department if he or she is destitute, homeless or abused. However, the Sindh government seems confident about going ahead with devolution as officials of its social welfare department argue that this is not an issue under the merged set-up. This involves the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development (NCCWD) that was merged with three other federal departments the National Commission of Social Welfare (NCSW), the National Trust for the Disabled (NTD) and the National Council for Rehabilitation for Disabled Persons (NCRDP). This new body will coordinate work among the provinces and see to it that international conventions and treaties are followed.

As the provinces take complete charge, Sindh is starting by forming Child Protection Units and shelter homes for street children. They will look after the destitute and homeless children and more importantly provide rehabilitation that is the most needed. So far, there are three Child Protection Units running in Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur with UNICEF's help. There are plans to create more in other districts but that depends on the funding and success of the model project. There is also a helpline, 1121, which is not just for children living in extreme conditions but also caters to others. There seems to be confusion between the federal and provincial governments over many issues pertaining to child rights. Through the enactment of the 18th Amendment, a new Entry No. 32 was made in the Federal List (part I) of "international treaties, convention, agreements and international arbitration". This translates into the fact that under the Constitution, the federal government is empowered to make laws concerning all international treaties and bindings related to child rights, limiting the independence of the provinces.

Meanwhile a new problem revealed that there is absence of a concise definition of a child's age. There will be perpetual confusion on who will be called a child in this country. Pakistan is a signatory to the UNHCR agreements which define a child as an individual who is up to 16 years of age. However, Pakistan has not ratified this protocol. There are plans in the pipeline to tackle such grey areas. After the closing of books in June, her department plans to conduct a consultative meeting in the first week of July, taking all the stakeholders and NGOs on board, to design a framework. Once the process begins, it won't take much time if there are concerted and united efforts. However, devolution is an onerous task and requires many more resources than just will.

[The Express Tribune - June 27, 2011]

Conflict Watch

Rights Violations Worsen In Balochistan: HRCP

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), an independent non-governmental organization, said in its report that lawlessness in the province had proliferated at an alarming rate with a growing numbers of targeted killings, kidnappings, enforced disappearances and attacks on religious minorities. For decades, Balochistan has been facing a low-level insurgency by nationalists who want more control over the province's natural resources, which they say are unfairly exploited by the federal government. Zohra Yusuf, HRCP chairperson, said at least 140 mutilated bodies of people gone missing had been found in the past year. A very dangerous trend has emerged that those who disappeared were now found dead on roadsides. The bodies have torture marks. HRCP report says 143 people have gone missing since 2009 but the number could be much higher because the commission reported only those cases which it could verify. There was evidence to substantiate families' claims that victims were kidnapped by security forces or had been killed while in custody. Insurgents and religious extremists were also involved in killings of ethnic and religious minorities. Balochistan is Pakistan's largest and poorest province, borders Afghanistan and Iran, and has large mineral reserves, including oil, gas, copper and gold. Due to the continued violence and insecurity, most foreign and local investors avoid investing money in Balochistan, which hinders its development. The insurgency could flare up if the government continued to fail to implement a political solution to the Baluchistan situation. The Baluchistan government seems non-existent. They have surrendered their authority to security forces and are calling the shots.

[Dawn – June 30, 2011]

Karachi Extra-Judicial Killing Shocks Pakistan

Five officials of the Rangers rounded on 25-year-old Sarfraz Shah at Benazir Park in Clifton area, claiming he had tried to rob a policeman's family. A police official, who wished anonymity, said that only a toy gun had been recovered from the boy. Footage of the incident, filmed by cameraman Abdul Salam Soomro, was broadcast repeatedly on local television stations. Soomro said that he had been receiving threatening calls. Boat Basin police registered an FIR under Section 302/34 against Muhammad Asghar and Shahid Zafar of wing 33. Four other accomplices have not been nominated in the FIR. The victim's older brother Salik, who is a TV reporter, said Sarfaraz, who was initially named wrongly by police as Sabir, was a student who had been looking for work to support his poverty-stricken family. "He was a decent and mannered person with no criminal record whatsoever. Charges from the Rangers that he was a robber are ridiculous and criminal." "He went to the park to pass the time." "What we want is justice, befitting justice." Meanwhile, the Rangers director general said that the death of the youth by the firing of some Rangers personnel was an "unfortunate" incident. In a statement, the DG, while offering his condolences to the bereaved family, assured that those responsible would not be spared. He said that a high-level inquiry had been initiated.

[Daily Times – June 10, 2011]

Terrorist Incidents in June

DATE	PLACE	KILLED	INJURED
June 1	Upper Dir District / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	7	-
June 2	Upper Dir District / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	105	-
	Upper Dir District / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	72	-
June 3	Wana Bazaar Area / South Waziristan Agency / FATA	9	-
June 5	Upper Dir District / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	26	-
	Nowshera District / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	19	45
	Peshawar / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	6	11
June 6	South Waziristan Agency / FATA	18	-
June 7	Kurram Agency / FATA	6	-
June 8	Shawal Tehsil / North Waziristan Agency / FATA	24	-
	Shaheedan Dhand Area / Kurram Agency.	7	-
June 9	North Waziristan Agency / FATA	20	-
	Darawar Area / Matani Near Peshawar	4	3
June 11	Khyber Super Market / Peshawar	39	-
	Mohmand Agency / FATA	5	9
June 13	South Waziristan Agency / FATA	3	4
June 15	North Waziristan Agency / FATA	18	-
June 16	Bajaur Agency / FATA	15	-
	Bajaur Agency / FATA	12	-
June 17	Baizai Tehsil / Mohmand Agency / FATA	4	5
	Tirah / Orakzai Agency / FATA	3	2
	Sarbanda Police Station / Peshawar / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	4	-
June 18	South Waziristan Agency / FATA	5	-
	Bismillah Chowk / Panjgur / Balochistan	3	17
June 19	Mohmand Agency / FATA	29	-

June 20	Kurram Agency / FATA	12	-
	Mohmand Agency / FATA	6	∞
	Mathani, A Suburban Locality Of Peshawar	3	5
June 22	Orakzai Agency / FATA	6	-
	Sarbanda / Peshawar / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	5	-
	Akhtarabad Area / Quetta	3	9
June 23	Khyber Agency / FATA	5	3
June 23	Pirangabad Area / Mastung District	3	4
June 24	Kurram Agency / FATA	10	-
June 25	Orakzai Agency / FATA	15	-
June 25	Dera Ismail Khan District / Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	10	5

This Information Has Been Obtained From the Website Of South Asia Terrorism Portal

Minority Rights

Targeting Minorities: No Friend to Ahmadis in Faisalabad

Pamphlets labeling members of the Ahmadiyya community “Wajibul Qatl” (‘liable to be murdered’), and inciting people to publicly attack followers of the faith, are being openly and widely circulated in Punjab’s textile industry hub Faisalabad. Even more startling is the fact that the pamphlet contains a list of names of Ahmadi industrialists, doctors and businesses. The pamphlets bear the name of the All-Pakistan Students Khatm-e-Nubuwwat Federation and are being handed out at all main shopping plazas and important commercial centres of the city. The pamphlet says: “To shoot such people is an act of jihad and to kill such people is an act of sawab.” Reacting sharply over distribution of such literature, Umooor-e-Aama Jama’at Ahmadiyya, Faisalabad, said that the propaganda campaign being carried out unhindered by some fanatic religious groups under patronage of law-enforcing agencies and the provincial government. The jama’at has also blamed the Punjab government for ignoring myriad protests lodged by the province’s Ahmadiyya community. It says that such religious fanatics are being encouraged by inaction on the part of government agencies.

The jama’at’s secretary Mahmood Ahmad, in an email addressed to the province’s home secretary and police chief, and Faisalabad’s regional police officer said that they have time and again approached police authorities against hate literature but nothing has been done so far. This collapse of law and order can be traced to the cowardice, inefficiency and incompetence of law enforcement agencies. Ahmad points out that it is easy to trace the pamphlet’s source as even its publisher’s mobile number is brazenly given in print. This also shows the publisher’s disdain towards Pakistan’s laws and agencies enforcing them. Corroborating the view expressed by Ahmad, police officials seemed reluctant to take the matter seriously. City police chief Rai Tahir Hussain also said he had no information about the pamphlets. Faisalabad DSP Mian Khalid also pleaded ignorance on the matter, and said that the Kotwali SHO would have the information. When contacted, SHO Malik Muhammad Shahid said that since no complaint has been made, there was no question of taking action.

[The Express Tribune - June 9, 2011]

Minority within a Minority: Scheduled Caste Hindus Seek Equal Rights

Chairperson of the Schedule Caste Hindu Rights Movement (SCRM), Ramesh Jaipal demanded legal protection of their fundamental rights, particularly of Hindu marriage registration, land ownership, equal political participation and protection of religious places and graveyards. For Hindu families, lack of marriage registration mechanism is a matter of a serious concern. It's been more than four years but the demand has only fallen on deaf ears so far. Despite assurances by a number of political and government officials nothing has happened. "Lower caste" Hindus in Pakistan are officially known as the "scheduled casts" and frequently described as "*achhoots*" or untouchables. They face dual discrimination, as a minority in a Muslim country and as member of a "lower caste" among fellow Hindus. They are typically employed in less respected jobs such as fishermen, cobblers, brick makers, and sweepers. Their jobs are usually inherited through generations. Pakistan's attitude towards "lower caste" Hindus has for long been a case of double standards and denial. But this discrimination is not officially recognized. Hence, there is no legislation against it. And, as a consequence, impunity is widespread.

Lack of computerized identity cards (CNIC) and marriage registration has resulted in many domestic, social and psychological problems for the Hindu families, especially the female segment. Hindu married couples face numerous problems in travelling and lodging outside of their place of residence. Due to an absence of CNICs and marriage registration mechanism, Scheduled Caste Hindu women do not get any share in their husbands' property, and their access to health facilities and participation in social, economic and political processes is also minimal. According to them, for years they have been forcibly converted to Islam and married to Muslim men while they were already married to a Hindu. Since there is no documentation to prove the earlier marriage, the woman's husband or families are unable to take up the issue on legal grounds. Pakistan is home to 3.4 million schedule caste Hindus, a minority of 0.25 per cent in a nation of mainly Muslims.

[The Express Tribune - June 15, 2011]

Minority Rights for Hindu Community, Asylum May Be the Only Option

Tausiq Kumar applied for asylum in India after his relative Ramesh was murdered for resisting a kidnapping attempt on February 6. Even before Ramesh's killing there was a palpable fear among the beleaguered Hindu community in Balochistan. Kumar traces the insecurity among 27,000-strong Hindu community as having started only in the last few years and painfully points out that Hindus have generally had their rights respected in the province, even after the Babri Masjid was destroyed in India in 1992. Ramesh's killing was the final straw that convinced Kumar he would be better off moving to India. Kumar said he first became scared when a priest Maharaj Laxmichand Gujri was kidnapped and never found. He was highly respected in Hindu community and after that Hindus couldn't ignore what was happening. After his relative's murder, Kumar got in touch with the Indian High Commission, filed his application and waited. A couple of months passed by and he didn't hear back. So, he decided to come to Islamabad and is now living in a guest house trying to expedite the process. Kumar knows of five people from the town of Mastang, close to Quetta, who have already migrated to India and is hopeful he will be able to move soon. Although statistics are hard to come by, Saeed Ahmed Khan, the Balochistan director for the federal human rights ministry, says that he knows of more than two dozen Hindu families that are looking to migrate from Balochistan. Quetta-based journalist Abdul Wahab says that at least 43 Hindus have been kidnapped in Balochistan in the last three years, three of whom were later found dead. He adds that whenever the provincial assembly has debated the issue, parliamentarians have either taken a head-in-the-sand approach to the issue or blamed the intelligence agencies for the kidnappings and killings. Kumar says Hindus felt safer when Akbar Bugti was alive because he provided religious

minorities the protection they needed. He also says that Hindus generally felt safer in the Baloch areas of the province as opposed to the Pakhtun areas.

[The Express Tribune - June 11, 2011]

Labor Rights

1.3 Million Youths among 3.2 Million Jobless

According to the annual plan released with the 2011-12 budget, the country's labor force is estimated at 58.4 million. Out of it 45.1 million or 77 percent are males and 13.3 million or 23 percent are females and 3.2 million of them are jobless. The youth population is estimated at 36.2 million and 16.2 million of them are in the category of labor force. Only 14.9 million youths are employed while the remaining 1.3 million or 8.4 per cent are jobless. Unemployment among the youth has not only a social dimension but also shows wastage of trained and young population of the country. The government is cognizant of the youth unemployment situation and has taken a number of steps to contain it. The government is trying to invest in education and vocational training for employability of youth and a number of projects are being implemented in the field of education and vocation training. But the annual plan did not envisage any specific plan to provide jobs to unemployed youths.

The government plans to boost overseas employment to reduce pressure on domestic job market. Micro-credit facilities through small and medium enterprises and Khushali Bank, president's rozgar scheme and investment in water resources and skill development programme through the National Vocational and Technical Education Commission have also been listed as programmes to create employment. These programmes have been pursued for the past few years but failed to arrest the rising rate of unemployment. The NIP could enlist only a small number of graduates for a short period of time which could never guarantee a permanent employment. According to the annual plan, the female employment situation is very depressing. Females are 48.6 percent of the population, but only 13.3 million or 23 per cent of them are in the labor force. Only 12 million females are employed as compared to 42.2 million males. As many as 1.2 million women are jobless. Of the employed workforce, 45 per cent is engaged in the agriculture sector, 13.2 per cent in manufacturing, 6.7 per cent in construction, 15.2 per cent in wholesale and retail trade, 5.2 per cent in transport/storage and communication and 11.2 per cent in community and social services.

[Dawn – June 6, 2011]

'Improve Labor Standards for Domestic Workers'

Government, worker and employer delegates at the 100th annual Conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO) adopted a historic set of international standards aimed at improving the working conditions of millions of domestic workers worldwide. Conference delegates adopted the Convention on Domestic Workers (2011) by a vote of 396 to 16, with 63 abstentions and the accompanying recommendation by a vote of 434 to 8, with 42 abstentions. The ILO is the only tripartite organization of the UN, and each of its 183 member states is represented by two government delegates, and one employer and one worker delegate, with an independent vote. The two standards will be the 189th convention and the supplementing 201st recommendation adopted by the labor organization since it was created in 1919. The convention is an international treaty that is binding on Member States that ratify it, while the recommendation provides more detailed

guidance on how to apply the convention. The new ILO standards set out that domestic workers around the world who care for families and households, must have the same basic labor rights as those available to other workers: reasonable hours of work, weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours, a limit on in-kind payment, clear information on terms and conditions of employment, as well as respect for fundamental principles and rights at work including among others freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

Recent ILO estimates based on national surveys and/or censuses of 117 countries place the number of domestic workers at a minimum of 53 million, but experts say there could be 100 million in the world, considering that this kind of work is often hidden and unregistered. In developing countries, they make up at least 4 to 12 percent of wage employment. Around 83 percent of these workers are women or girls and many are migrant workers. The convention defines domestic work as work performed in or for a household or households. While the new instruments cover all domestic workers, they provide for special measures to protect those workers who, because of their young age or nationality or live-in status, may be exposed to additional risks relative to their peers, among others. According to ILO proceedings, the new Convention will come into force after two countries have ratified it. Bringing the domestic workers into the fold of our values is a strong move, for them and for all workers who aspire to decent work, but it also has strong implications for migration and of course for gender equality. Effective and binding standards are needed to provide decent work to our domestic workers, a clear framework to guide governments, employers and workers. The collective responsibility was to provide domestic workers with what they lacked most: recognition as workers; and respect and dignity as human beings.

[Daily Times – June 18, 2011]

GOVERNANCE WATCH

Political Governance

Federal & Provincial Governments

Legislative Business

Punjab Cabinet: Six Amendment Bills Approved

At a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, the cabinet approved amendments to the Punjab Agricultural Pesticides Ordinance 1971 (amended up to 1997), the West Pakistan Industrial and Commercial Employment (Standing Orders) Ordinance 1968, the West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance 1958, the Workers' Children (Education) Ordinance 1972, the Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 and the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act 1992. The cabinet also gave approval to a website for Danish Schools and formed a committee to come up with recommendations for the promotion of "e-government", or the idea that government can deliver services to the public more efficiently and cheaply via the internet.

[The Express Tribune - June 08, 2011]

Devolution of Ministries

Implementing 18th Amendment: Cabinet Approves Devolution of 7 More Ministries

The devolution marks the third and final phase of the implementation of the 18th amendment and brings the total number of devolved ministries to 17. It has been decided to retain federal ministers of devolved ministries. Ten federal ministries were earlier devolved to the provinces in two separate phases on the recommendation of a high-powered parliamentary commission to ensure the implementation of the 18th amendment that envisaged more administrative and financial autonomy for the federating units. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, who chaired the cabinet meeting, called the move an "unprecedented and historic" step to strengthen democracy from which the devolution would be effective, as the provincial autonomy day. Ministries to be devolved in the third phase are that of women development, minority affairs, sports, environment, health, food and agriculture, and labor and manpower. Portfolios of federal ministers heading these ministries might be changed but they will continue working, supervising several attached departments which still remain under supervision of the federal government. Rabbani announced that the commission had completed its task as 17 ministries had been devolved to the provinces under Article 270AA of the constitution. This is biggest-ever restructuring since 1947, while felicitating the country's political leadership over the implementation of the 18th constitutional amendment. Devolution will empower provinces to provide relief to their people. Constituted on May 4, 2010, the commission was assigned the task to complete the devolution process within a year. It held 68 formal meetings besides several informal sessions to take provincial governments and other stakeholders into confidence. With the completion of the devolution process provinces had been empowered to take good care of their people.

[The Express Tribune - June 29, 2011]

Devolution: Over 30 Projects on Chopping Block

More than 30 education, tourism and poverty alleviation projects of different ministries on the concurrent list of the Constitution will be devolved by June 30. The Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) division issued the directives to the cabinet division at a recent meeting. The division directed the devolution cell to take steps to end projects that are on the concurrent list by June 30. The IPC also asked the division to provide funds for these projects to clear their liabilities, before their assets are taken over. Twenty of these projects are in the education sector, five in tourism, eight in livelihood and dairy development, and one project is related to culture. The biggest of these projects is "Establishment and Operation of Basic Education Community Schools". Around 15,000 community schools are running under this project nationwide and giving free-of-charge education to around 50,000 students. The provinces are not ready to adopt this project due to pending liabilities, high levels of corruption and nepotism. A large number of political appointees hold senior positions in this project, whereas teachers have not received their salaries for the last nine months. Other education projects which will be shut down include "Education for All", "Enhancing Partnership in Education through Targeted Conditional cash Transit Program", construction of cadet colleges, model schools for girls and boys, libraries and other projects aimed at increasing primary education in the country. The tourism projects that are being canned include extension and rehabilitation of various Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation facilities.

Lists of projects to be cancelled:

- Education for All
- Enhancing Partnership in Education through Targeted Conditional cash Transit Program
- Construction of cadet colleges at Shigar, Pishin, Gwardar, at Shigar, Ziarat, Bolan, Upper Dir, Lakhi, Swat, Charsadda and Chitral
- Establishment of seven model schools for girls and seven for boys at FATA
- Punjab School Libraries project under German Debt Swab
- Grant for Sustainability of Community Schools under National Education Foundation
- Promotion of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Pakistan,
- Strengthening of Monitoring and Evolution Cell Ministry of Education
- Construction/Renovation and Repair of Building of Curriculum Wing and Hostel
- Financial Management for Good Governance
- Education Leadership and Institutional Management
- Promotion Children Literature Phase-IV
- Promotion of Science Education through Public Private Partnership with INTEL Corporation by Organizing Science Olympics are also being wound up

Tourism Division:

- Extension and Rehabilitation of PTDC Motel at Taxilla
- PTDC Roadside facility at Ali Wanao, DI Khan
- Repair and renovation and up gradation of Existing Facilities of PTDC Motel at Ayubia
- Extension of PTDC Motel at Bahawalpur

- PTDC Tourist Resorts at D I Khan are also in the list to be abolished
- Livestock and Dairy Development Division:
- Poverty Reduction through Livelihood and Dairy Development
- Improving Reproductive Efficiency of Cattle and Buffaloes in small holders production System
- Strengthening of Livestock Services for Livestock Diseases Control in Pakistan
- Prime Minister's Special Initiative for Livestock
- Milk Collection/Processing and Dairy Production

One project of the cultural division- Strengthening of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Cell would also be abolished

[The Express Tribune - June 01, 2011]

Political Parties' News

MQM Ministers Submit Their Resignations

Both the MQM and PML-N criticized the government for its handling of the elections to the AJK Legislative Assembly – albeit for slightly differing reasons. While both accused the PPP of abusing its influence as the party in office in the federal government, the MQM's concerns had to do primarily with the postponement of the elections for the seats representing the Kashmiri Diaspora in Karachi, whereas the PML-N seemed to take issue with the electoral rolls and alleged vote fraud. "The PPP used fake ballot papers to get the desired results in the AJK general elections. This exercise has damaged the two Kashmir's cause of self-determination." alleged PML-N leader Saddiqui Farooq. The party does not appear to have made a decision as to its future course of action yet. "We have decided to chalk out a new strategy for holding fresh elections for the Legislative Assembly of AJK," said former AJK prime minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan of the PML-N. Meanwhile the MQM appears incensed over what they see as a repeated betrayal on the part of the PPP, which had been a coalition ally until MQM leader Altaf Hussain called for his party to resign their positions in the government and join the opposition benches at both the Sindh and federal levels.

[The Express Tribune - June 29, 2011]

PML-N, Likeminded Join Hands Ex-Servicemen Call on Nawaz

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (Likeminded) have agreed to pursue a joint strategy inside and outside parliament. This was decided at a meeting presided by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The four senators of the Likeminded group held an over 90-minute-long meeting with Nawaz Sharif here at Punjab House. Nawaz was assisted at the meeting by Senator Ishaq Dar, Senator Raja Zafarul and Khwaja Muhammad Asif. Nawaz Sharif said the doors of his party were not closed to those who had supported Pervez Musharraf as long as they now repented doing so. On the occasion, it was decided that a four-member committee be constituted comprising two members from each party to hold further consultations on the matter of reunification and other issues of mutual interest. PML-N leader Senator Parvez Rashid, who was also present at the meeting, said the two sides held a discussion on the non-implementation of the

resolution passed during the in camera session of the parliament following the Abbottabad incident. The leaders also expressed concern over the government's inability to fix responsibility after episodes like the attack on Mehran base. Members from the Likeminded group told Nawaz Sharif they had been sitting for the last two years on opposition seats allotted by the Senate chairman himself but were now being deprived of their right of vote in the election of the opposition leader. They assured their full cooperation to the PML-N in efforts to get the election process reversed.

[The News - June 15, 2011]

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Facts & Figures

War on Terror Cost Pakistan \$67.9 Billion

Pakistan's economy has suffered direct and indirect losses of up to \$67.93 billion since 2001 due to its role as a frontline state in the 'war against terrorism'. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2010-11, the events that transpired in Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks in the US adversely affected the security situation in Pakistan. The war had affected the country's exports, prevented foreign investment, hampered the privatization programme and slowed down the overall economic activity. It reduced demand for imports and tax collection, caused an expenditure overrun on additional security spending, damaged the tourism industry and destroyed military and civil physical infrastructure, job opportunities and increased unemployment. Pakistan's investment-to-GDP ratio has declined from 22.5 per cent in 2006-07 to 13.4 per cent in 2010-11 with serious consequences for the job creating ability of the economy. In 2008, the ministry of foreign affairs set up an inter-ministerial committee to assess the direct and indirect cost of the war. The economy was subjected to enormous direct and indirect costs which continued to rise from \$2.669 billion in 2001-02 to \$13.6 billion by 2009-10, projected to rise to \$17.8 billion in the current financial year and moving forward, the direct and indirect costs to the economy are most likely to rise further.

[Dawn – June 20, 2011]

Unjustified Expenditure: Major Irregularities Surface in Armed Forces' Accounts

According to the Audit Report 2011 on accounts of defense services, irregularities occurred due to negligence, ineffective internal controls, embezzlement and misuse of authority by officers of the armed forces. The auditor-general of Pakistan has unearthed massive financial irregularities amounting to Rs. 56.5 billion in the accounts of the armed forces during fiscal year 2011. Around 330 contract agreements were concluded from 2008 to 2010 without following the procedure laid down in the Public Procurement Rules 2004. Auditors found that the Pakistan Army blocked Rs. 3 billion in funds due to unnecessary procurement and inappropriate storage of 1,385 new vehicles at the Central Ordnance Depot, Karachi. The vehicles have not been used for the last three years. The report discovered excess transfer of funds to the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) for procurement of bullet-proof jackets. Out of the Rs. 424.2 million allocated for them, the FWO has to refund some Rs. 385 million in addition to the loss it incurred on account of risk and expense contracts after the supplier, Musterhaft Pvt. Ltd, failed to provide more than 1,000 jackets. The expenditure incurred on building material purchased for renovation by the military is unaccounted for since there is no record of the quantity procured and its subsequent use. The irregularities amount to Rs. 52.7 million in Kharian, Sialkot and Lahore cantonments. Auditors stated that executive authorities could not prove that repair work was carried out on self-help basis. Irregularities in purchase of pre-fabricated accommodation for UN missions amounted to Rs. 92 million, in addition to payment of Rs. 14.6 million as General Sales Tax, which needs to be recovered from the supplier.

Irregularities amounting to Rs. 6 billion surfaced in the Pakistan Aeronautical Complex, Kamra, on account of irregular conclusion of contracts and procurement of goods during the current fiscal

year. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) lost Rs. 102 million due to non-recovery of five per cent rent on flying allowance from General Duty Pilots in the past 20 years. The record was not provided on request. Auditors observed that this amounts to blatant disobedience and ineffectual administration. Failure to deposit rent in the government treasury caused a loss of Rs. 14.6 million by the PAF Academy, Risalpur. The navy failed to transfer 50 per cent accommodation charges paid by foreign trainees in the government treasury, resulting in the loss of \$65,516. Auditors also observed that Rs. 6 million incurred on excess issue of food items in PNS Bahadur and PNS Mehran for the year 2009-10 needs to be reimbursed. An amount of Rs. 76 million has still not been recovered by the Military Accounts General after irregularities were discovered on account of unauthorized payments to reemployed officers of the Pakistan Navy in 2009-10. Military Lands and Cantonment inflicted a loss of Rs. 181 million to the cantonment fund due to irregularities in awarding lease. Cantonment Board, Lahore lost Rs. 30 million due to its failure to revise the tax rate on immovable property. Fraud and embezzlement caused a loss of Rs. 68 million to Cantonment Board, Rawalpindi in 2008. Failure to recover Rs. 97 million in dues added to the losses incurred by various boards. The auditors pointed out the irregularities and observed that their replies were not satisfactory.

[The Express Tribune - June 06, 2011]

Home Remittances Hit Record, But what's The Future?

Over the first 11 months of fiscal year (FY)-2011 July-May, the overseas Pakistanis have sent home a total of \$10.09 billion, which is up by \$2.031 billion or 25.2 percent as compared to the same period of FY 2010 when the amount was \$8.064 billion, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reports. The full-year remittances for FY 2010 were \$8.906 billion. Overseas workers transmitted more than \$1.0 billion a month during March, April and May. The monthly inflow for the current 11-month is \$917.85, which is up from \$733.13 million in the same period of FY 2010; reflecting a growth of 25.2 percent. The quantum of future inflows is crucial because, after exports, home remittances sent by Pakistanis working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Gulf, Saudi Arabia, U.S.A and UK are the second largest source of support to the generally precarious external balances of Pakistan. Workers' remittances also play a crucial role in stabilizing the rupee against the greenback and other currencies. The government estimates foreign aid inflows equivalent to Rs. 287 billion, while the foreign debt repayments will be Rs. 279 billion in FY 2012 that starts on July 1, 2011. Pakistan has to worry over external balances particularly because the international prices of imported oil and commodities are going up. In case the unit value of export of textiles, which contributes more than 60 percent to all export earnings declines, as the recent business deals indicate, the balances will be adversely hit.

The turmoil in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) region has also contributed to the rise because several Pakistanis are withdrawing their invested savings in the region and sending the cash home for investment on a small scale, besides a significant chunk is going into consumption. Analysis of the remittances for July-May period of FY 2011 indicates that Saudi Arabia topped the count with an inflow of \$2.37 billion. It was followed by United Arab Emirates with \$2.32 billion, United States \$1.86 billion, GCC countries, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, \$1.18 billion, United Kingdom \$1.09 billion and EU \$320.93 million. Remittances sent by Pakistanis from Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, Japan and others totaled to \$926.86 million, which was up from \$740.96 million in FY 2010. The rupee is forecast to stay stable against the greenback and other currencies due to rising exports and high inflow of home remittances, thanks to the overseas Pakistani, particularly those using official banking channels. Simultaneously, there is a rapid growth in exports. The government-set target for exports in FY 2011 \$22 billion, was, later, revised upward

to \$24 billion, but business forecasts export to rise to more than \$25 billion by June 30. The boost in exports is due to a significant growth in demand in UAE, United States the EU, the Far East and Japan.

[Daily Times - June 21, 2011]

Government Policies

GB Development: Government Allocates Rs. 19.2 Billion for 15 Projects

The funds will be spent on five projects in the water and power sector, seven projects of the information ministry and eight of the interior ministry. The major chunk of the fund, Rs. 18 billion, has been allocated for the construction of Diamer-Basha dam. Besides that, Rs. 650.956 million have been set aside for Bunji hydro-power project, Rs. 50 million for Phander hydro-power project, Rs. 50 million for Basha hydro-power project and Rs. 20 million for the Harpo hydro-power project in Gilgit. The funds earmarked for the Higher Education Programme, which amount to Rs. 115 million, will be spent on the construction of three hostel blocks for the Karakoram International University in Gilgit. The interior ministry has allocated funds to Northern Areas (NA) Scouts, 113 Wing, for construction of residential units in Gilgit. About Rs. 24.397 million have been set aside for the construction of residences for both single and married JCOs (junior commissioned officers) and officers at their Headquarters (HQ). The ministry has earmarked Rs. 23.375 million for the construction of quarter guard's wing office, JCOs Mess and officers' mess in Gilgit. Force headquarters and NA Scouts will be provided Rs. 15 million for construction of residential units and Rs. 20 million for non-residential buildings and other facilities. Funds have been allocated for various projects in Skardu as well. A sum of Rs. 45.735 million has been allocated for the construction of a mosque and other allied facilities. About Rs. 20 million have been allocated for the construction of residential and non-residential buildings for NA Scouts of 112 Wing. In Chilas, Rs. 30 million has been allocated for headquarters of the NA Scouts 114 Wing and Rs. 30 million has been set aside for their accommodation. An amount of Rs. 13.333 million will be spent on the construction of a hospital building for NA Scouts garrison at Minawar on the outskirts of Gilgit. The ministry of information has earmarked funds for setting up rebroadcasting stations in various districts in G-B, out of which Rs. 25 million have been allocated for Chilas, Diamer District, Rs. 20 million for Gahkuch in Ghizer District, Rs. 29 million for Khaplu in Ghanche District, Rs. 3.269 million for Joglot in Gilgit District, Rs. 5 million for Astore District, Rs. 3.47 million for Aliabad/Karimabad and Rs. 24 million for Shigar in Skardu District.

[The Express Tribune - June 08, 2011]

Punjab Eying Rs. 20.5 Billion Foreign Money

The latest revelation comes on the heel of the provincial government's demand from the federation to allow it to borrow from international lenders, which has not been accepted due to serious financial consequences. Official documents show that the Punjab government has estimated to receive Rs. 20.5 billion in foreign assistance in financial year 2011-12 against actual disbursements of Rs. 7.8 billion in the outgoing financial year. The estimated amount is Rs. 12.8 billion or 163 per cent more than this year's assistance. Out of Rs. 20.5 billion, the provincial government is estimating that it will receive Rs. 18.6 billion in loans and Rs. 1.9 billion in grants. Punjab's Chief Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif denounced foreign aid, terming it an act amounting to compromising sovereignty of the country. He announced that he would break the "begging bowl". Senator Pervaiz

Rasheed, chief spokesman for the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, defended his party's decision to borrow money that Punjab government would not accept any loan or grant that is attached with political strings but it is open to all types of foreign assistance that is not linked with conditions. A close look at the projects show that the Punjab government is accepting nominal assistance even for projects that otherwise could be managed domestically.

Loans: The Punjab government would take Rs. 2.5 billion in loans from the International Development Agency, the concessionary loan arm of the World Bank (WB), for Land Records Management and Information System Programme. The WB's commercial loan arm would also extend Rs. 3.5 billion – Rs. 2.3 billion for rehabilitation and modernization of Islam head works and Rs. 1.5 billion for Punjab Municipal Services. Another multilateral donor, the Asian Development Bank would extend Rs. 6.2 billion in loans and a major chunk of Rs. 4.2 billion would go for Punjab Irrigated Agriculture Development project. For the outgoing fiscal year, the ADB had committed a total of Rs. 5.8 billion but gave only Rs. 2.2 billion. For sustainable livelihood in Barani areas, Rs. 650 million has been committed by the ADB. For government efficiency programme, a Rs. 200 million installment would be released next year. For renewable energy development programme, a Rs. 870 million commitment is on the table. The Punjab government would also take Rs. 3.5 billion loan from Japan. The money is sought for two projects – Lower Chenab System Rehabilitation project and improvement for irrigation system. The provincial government is eyeing Rs. 2.3 billion loan from France for water resources in Faisalabad and construction of waste water treatment plant in Lahore. An amount of Rs. 180 million is to be obtained from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries for establishment of government institute of emerging technologies at Raiwind Road, Lahore.

[The Express Tribune - June 08, 2011]

ELECTION WATCH

ECP Related Updates

ECP Fully Functional As Judges Appointed

The 18th amendment to the Constitution, passed last year, had changed the nomenclature of the ECP, under which rather than serving judges, retired judges of High Courts from each of the four provinces would serve as members of the commission. Under the new law, the powers of the chief election commissioner have been transferred to the commission as a whole, which includes four members and one chief commissioner. The appointment of members of the commission had been a contentious issue since last year. The government claimed that the delay in these appointments was due to differences with the opposition since a parliamentary body with equal representation from both the treasury and the opposition has to approve the nominations put forward by the prime minister. Quite recently, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had given the government an ultimatum to complete the commission immediately and warned that further delay would raise serious questions over the government's intentions. A Parliamentary Committee on the appointment of the chief as well as the members of the election commissioner in its meeting on June 1 confirmed the names of the four retired judges as members of the ECP. President Zardari has also appointed new members to the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). Like the ECP, CII is also a constitutional body meant to recommend amendments to laws to make them in conformity with Shariah laws.

[The Express Tribune - June 10, 2011]

Cabinet Okays Draft Bill to Give Legal Cover to By-Polls

Chief Election Commissioner has conducted 23 by-elections after the passage of the 18th Amendment which requires the Election Commission comprising the CEC and one member each from the four provinces to hold such polls. Four members of the ECP ceased to hold office after the passage of 18th Amendment. Under the Peoples Representation Act, elections for vacant seats of national and provincial assemblies are to be held within two months. An official statement, issued after the cabinet meeting presided over by Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, said the draft constitutional amendment bill had been prepared in accordance with the directives of the Supreme Court after the formation of Election Commission and appointment of its members. The cabinet also approved the draft Counter-Insurgency (In Aid of Civil Power) Regulations 2011 for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA) in terms of Article 247 (5) and Article 247 (4), respectively. The regulations will provide legal cover to actions against terrorists. The meeting noted that it was of paramount importance for the state to curb terrorist activities and bring terrorists to justice. The cabinet decided to reconsider and revisit a proposal for commercial import of non-prohibited bore arms and ammunition in consultation with all stakeholders. Acting Finance Secretary Dr Ghulam Hussain informed the meeting that prices of food items remained unchanged while those of non-food items showed some increase. Inflation, he added, might see a downward trend in coming months.

[Dawn - June 16, 2011]

EC Allows 14 New Parties to Contest Elections

The application for registration of All Pakistan Muslim League (APML), pending for more than a year, was not on the agenda of the new commission's first meeting because of two objections. The first objection has been raised by a person who claims that his party with the same name was registered with the ECP in 2006. The second objection is from the Pakistan Freedom Party which claims that the symbol of "eagle" sought by the APML has already been allotted to it. Documents submitted by 14 parties were found to be in conformity with the provisions of the Political Parties Order, 2002, and were ordered to be retained on record in accordance with the law. About the issue of by-elections conducted by the chief election commissioner after the passage of the 18th Amendment, the commission said that since the matter was pending before the Supreme Court and the attorney general had already said the status of these elections could be validated through an amendment to the Constitution, the ECP should wait for a final decision in the matter. The commission agreed to the revision of electoral rolls in collaboration with NADRA in the light of a decision taken by it on June 14. It also approved a proposal for the appointment of retired judges of high courts or district and sessions courts as heads of election tribunals for speedy disposal of election petitions in accordance with the provisions of Section 67 of the Representation of the People Act, 1976. The judges will be appointed on contracts, it was decided.

[Dawn - June 16, 2011]

AJK Polls

PPP Secures Majority in AJK Elections

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has secured majority in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly by securing 19 seats in elections on Sunday. According to unofficial results of 34 seats so far, Pakistan Muslim League (N) stood at second position by grabbing nine seats, Muslim Conference got third position with four seats besides two independents.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate and former Prime Minister of AJK Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry from LA-3 (City Mirpur-III) and President PPP AJK Ch. Abdul Majeed LA-2 (Chakswari Mirpur-II) have won their seats.

Among the other PPP winners were Afsar Shahid LA-1 (Dadayal Mirpur-I), Syed Azhar Hussain Gillani (LA 39, Valley-4), Sardar Yaqoob (LA 19 Rawalakot-3), Afsar Shahid (LA-39, Valley-4), Chaudhry Akbar Ibraheem (LA-34 Jammu-Gujarat), Abdul Salam Butt (LA-40, Valley-5) Sardar Qamar Zaman (LA-14, Bagh-II), Chaudhry Abdul Majeed (LA-2, Mirpur), Sardar Ghulam Sadiq (LA-18, Ponch-II) and Mian Abdul Waheed (LA-23, Neelum-1) Mutloob Inqalabi and some others.

President Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan (LA-13, Bagh-1) and central PML(N) AJK Raja Farooq Haider also won their seats.

[APP – June 26, 2011]

Responses over Polls

Wattoo accuses Punjab Government of Rigging

Federal Kashmir Affairs Minister Mian Manzoor Ahmad Wattoo accused the Punjab government of casting bogus votes in connivance of police and local administration in AJK elections on various

refugees' seats. Addressing a press conference here, the federal minister said that returning officers were "held hostage by the area police offices and bogus voters had been cast in the presence of Rangers who were seeing all this as silent spectators". He also charged the PML-N activists with uprooting the election camps of the PPP candidates in several areas besides restricting Samina Ghurki and Leader of Opposition in Punjab Assembly Raja Riaz to visit polling stations in Lahore. Rapping the Punjab government for "breaking all records of rigging", Wattoo alleged PML-N accomplished their rigging plan in Sialkot and Jhang where the PPP activists were not only harassed but were also assaulted and intimidate.

[The Nation – June 27, 2011]

PML-N Resorted to Violence to Avoid Defeat: Firdaus

Federal Minister for Information Dr Firdaus Ashiq Awan said that the Punjab government's rejection of orders of the chief election commissioner (CEC) for the deployment of Rangers at polling stations clearly showed its negative intentions with regard to elections in the AJK.

[APP – June 27, 2011]

Government Stabbed MQM in the Back: Altaf

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain has lashed out at the PPP-led government for postponing the election on three constituencies of the Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly and urged the judiciary to take notice of the "undemocratic, unethical and illegal act". Addressing a workers' convention by phone from London on Sunday, Mr Hussain said that by "deceiving" its true ally the government had started the beginning of its own destruction. The MQM had announced boycotting the AJK polls after elections on three constituencies were postponed. The workers' conventions were held in various parts of Pakistan to seek their opinion in the wake of present circumstances.

[Dawn – June 27, 2011]

PPP Fled Away after Defeat Signs, says Hamza

Central leader of PML-N, Hamza Shahbaz Sharif has said that the federal government has damaged the cause of Kashmir by rigging Azad Kashmir elections, while it got the polling in Lahore postponed after seeing a sure defeat of its party in the City. Addressing a news conference after the announcement of postponement of polling process of Azad Kashmir in Lahore constituency, Hamza said that the Election Commission of AJK also ignored the decision of Azad Kashmir High Court declaring voter lists incorrect, and thus played the role of PPP election office.

Speaking on the occasion, Khawaja Saad Rafique alleged that the President and Prime Minister Houses used their pressure and influence for getting engineered results in Azad Kashmir elections. "How a government which changed the mandate of the voters of Azad Kashmir would plead the case of plebiscite of Kashmiris", he questioned, adding if the results of election were high-jacked, it would be very dangerous for the freedom movement of Kashmir.

[The Nation – June 27, 2011]

REGIONAL POLITICS

Pakistan's Foreign Relation

Pak, India Can Increase Trade Volume Up To \$10 Billion

Pakistan and India can increase trade volume up to \$10 billion by removing barriers and reducing additional costs and also reduce dependence on other global sources of trade which are relatively costly. The International Economic Forum is one of the world's leading discussion forums, bringing together prominent politicians, corporate executives and experts to deliberate on key issues of the global economy. During the meeting both the sides agreed to resolve the major defiance of illegal trade between the two countries. The trade which is taking place through informal channels adds additional costs to the traders which are ultimately borne by the end consumers of both the countries. The reluctance of business community's interaction is due to the misperceptions which are impeding such direct contacts which should be cleared through encouragement to the business communities by the leaders of both sides. The visa policies should also be revised to facilitate and encourage the investors. The BOI head stated that the trade communities of both sides should have a closer interaction with each other to explore the opportunities in the field of trade and investment. Business communities were encouraged to realize that Pakistan has revised its long positive list of imports other than smaller negative list thereby increasing the opportunities of trade with India. Economic prosperity in two countries would bring peace and India wants to see Pakistan a stable and strong country. The BOI chief invited the Indian Commerce Minister to visit Pakistan and encourage Indian business community to come to Pakistan. In the end both sides assured that the initiatives taken by both side in the field of investment and trade will be realized with enthusiasm and warm response.

[The News – June 20, 2011]

'Water Issues Could Sweep Away Indo-Pak Peace Processes

Even if India and Pakistan could resolve the Baglihar and Kishanganga projects, there are several more hydroelectric dams planned for Indian Kashmir that might be questioned under the IWT (Indus Water Treaty). Both Baglihar and Kishanganga projects are on the Chenab River, one of the three 'western rivers' to whose waters Pakistan has exclusive 'consumptive' rights under the IWT and which have been the source of long festering disagreement between the two neighbors. Matters in "this politically charged impasse" would not spiral into "Islamabad's worst case scenario that India's dams in J&K (Jammu and Kashmir) have the potential to destroy the peace process or even to lead to war. The Baglihar Dam construction issue, which Pakistan took into arbitration in 2005 after six years of unproductive talks with India, was eventually settled through a World Bank-appointed 'neutral expert' in early 2007, mostly in favor of India's position. Although Pakistan agreed to respect the results of the arbitration, further disagreements arose in 2008 over the unauthorized filling of Baglihar and Pakistani demands for compensation for reduced flows, which are detailed in three further cables from that year. In a cable dated November 3, 2008, then US ambassador to Pakistan, Anne W. Patterson pointed out that Pakistan was "facing a 34 per cent water shortage" that year because of a reduction in water flows in the Chenab, translating into "lower crop yields for winter" and "extended blackouts across the country due to reduced hydropower production". She also claimed in her communications that "Officially, India dispels Pakistani claims but, unofficially, the Indian side admits that 'structural constraints of Baglihar Dam

and weather constraints' have resulted in a reduction of Pakistan's share of water." She noted that the dispute had "already resulted in increased anti-India sentiment among the local population".

The current focus, however, seems to be on the under-construction Kishanganga Dam on the Neelum River, which Pakistan contends will impact its own under-construction Neelum River hydropower project by reducing flows as well as lead to environmental degradation of the Neelum Valley. This matter has already been admitted for hearing by an independent arbitration court as a "dispute" – a more serious terminology than Baglihar which was accorded the status of "differences" – under the terms of the Indus Water Treaty. Under the treaty, existing downriver projects have priority but since both Kishanganga and Pakistan's Neelum project are still under-construction, there is disagreement between experts whether the treaty terms have been violated. According to independent water expert Arshad Abbasi, water from Kishanganga is also going to be diverted to another hydropower project known as Uri-2 on the Jhelum River, which has been nearly constructed without apparent Pakistani objections.

[Dawn – June 22, 2011]

Pakistan to Work with SCO States for Regional Peace

President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan would work together with member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for maintaining regional peace, spreading shared prosperity and defeating terrorism. Addressing a summit of the SCO at its 10th anniversary in the capital of Kazakhstan, President Zardari said that Pakistan looks forward to working together with SCO countries for achieving shared prosperity and peace. Pakistan has made great sacrifices in the fight against terrorism that poses common threats to the region. Pakistan is committed to combat terrorism, extremism and separatism. Zardari said that Pakistan looked forward to enhancing its cooperation with the SCO to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the region. Likewise, he said, drug trafficking and its production was not only harming the peoples, but also fuelling terrorism. These are serious threats to the security and well-being of our societies. The president expressed the hope that Pakistan's application for full membership would be processed expeditiously. In the meantime, Pakistan intends to fully associate with all SCO programmes for peace and development. Pakistan wishes to participate in SCO's initiatives in promoting regional and trans-regional connectivity and trade. Pakistan wishes to cooperate with countries in the region in financial and banking sectors and for joint ventures in energy, infrastructure and education, scientific and technological development programs." Zardari praised the SCO for making significant contributions towards peace and development of the region in the last decade.

[Daily Times - June 16, 2011]

Afghanistan Poll Fraud & Political Crisis

Afghan MPs ask for Help over Poll Court Ruling, UN Urges Caution

The United Nations urged the Afghan parliament not to take any action that might provoke unrest after election officials rejected a ruling by a specially appointed court that threw out a quarter of lawmakers elected last year.

The court, established by presidential decree after fraud-marred parliamentary elections, ordered on Thursday that 62 lawmakers elected in the September poll vacate their seats in the 249-seat house over fraud concerns. The ruling has been condemned as unconstitutional and illegal by

Afghan officials and international poll observers. Staffan de Mistura, the UN special representative in Afghanistan, said the disagreement over the disputed election must be resolved in accordance with the Afghan constitution. "Parliamentarians should act responsibly in making their constitutional demands, and not resort to sit-ins, protests or other actions which could provoke public unrest," de Mistura said in a statement. The court was set up by President Hamid Karzai last year after weeks of infighting over the election, in which Karzai's rivals made major gains. Critics have said the court was set up to further Karzai's political agenda and silence opposition. The deepening political crisis comes at a worrying time for Afghanistan, with violence at record levels and NATO-led forces preparing to hand over security to Afghans in several areas at the start of a gradual process that will end with all foreign combat troops leaving by the end of 2014.

[Reuters - June 27, 2011]

Afghanistan Warns Against 'External Interference' Over Poll Dispute

The Afghan government warned the international community not to interfere in a deepening political crisis after lawmakers appealed for help over a specially formed court that overturned results for a quarter of the seats in parliament.

The special poll court, established by a presidential decree after fraud-marred parliamentary elections last year, ordered that 62 lawmakers elected in the September poll vacate their seats in the 249-seat parliament. The ruling has been condemned as unconstitutional and illegal by Afghan officials and international observers. Critics have said the court was set up to further President Hamid Karzai's political agenda and silence opposition. The deepening political uncertainty comes at a worrying time for Afghanistan, with violence at record levels and NATO-led forces preparing to hand over security to Afghans in several areas at the start of a process that will end with all foreign combat troops leaving by the end of 2014.

Karzai's court announced its new election findings only hours after US President Barack Obama detailed the beginning a US drawdown, with 10,000 troops to return home by the end of this year. The ruling, and the timing of its announcement, angered several Western diplomats in Kabul and further strained ties between Karzai's government and its Western backers.

Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission, which ran the internationally funded POL, also rejected the court's ruling on Sunday, describing the manipulation of results as "unprofessional and non-transparent". Watchdog Democracy International, which deployed a large team of observers during the poll, has called the court "ill-advised and illegitimate". Karzai, re-elected after a similarly tainted presidential election in 2009, has often been accused of treating parliament as a rubber stamp.

[Reuters - June 27, 2011]

Afghan Court Overturns 25 percent of Parliament Poll

A special Afghan court set up by President Hamid Karzai after fraud-marred parliamentary elections last year threw out results in about a quarter of the seats in the assembly on June 23, raising fears of a constitutional crisis. The court ruled that 62 lawmakers elected to the 249-seat lower house of parliament would have to vacate their seats and be replaced by new members because of alleged poll fraud.

Karzai's critics have said the court was set up after the disputed 2010 election, in which Karzai's rivals made major gains, to further his political aims rather than serve justice. "Are we heading for a

constitutional crisis? I'm totally flabbergasted," one Western diplomat said after he watched court officials painstakingly announce revised results for dozens of districts live on national television. "The question it raises is whether you have a constitutional democracy or not. What are we doing here?" Armed soldiers stood behind the special court judges as they read out the new results, with cheering and applause coming from newly declared winners and their supporters.

The announcement of the new results came just hours after US President Barack Obama set his timetable for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, part of a gradual transition to Afghan authority that will end with all foreign combat troops leaving by the end of 2014.

[Daily Times – June 24, 2011]

Political Situation of Myanmar

Myanmar Border Clashes Spark Fears of Wider Conflict

Myanmar troops clashed with ethnic Kachin militias for a seventh day near two Chinese-built hydroelectric dams rising fears that fighting could spread to other areas on the heavily militarized border. Light infantry units of Myanmar's "Tatmadaw" army fought with guerillas of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) who had cut some road and communication links to try to keep troops at bay. There were explosions and gunfights and the KIA has destroyed two bridges and cut telephone cables. They had no idea about casualties. The fighting has killed at least four people and forced about 2,000 people to flee towards the Myanmar-China border. Some experts warned it could destabilize the mosaic of ethnic enclaves and alliances across a region vital for China's growing energy needs. As well as the dams, China is building oil and gas pipelines that will span its Southeast Asian neighbor. Ceasefire arrangements have previously been made allowing a degree of self-rule, but those deals were torn up last year when the bigger armies refused a government order to disarm and form political parties to run in a general election. Repeated efforts by the SSA, UWSA and KIA to negotiate with the government have failed and their fighters have long been preparing for an all-out offensive by the Tatmadaw. Most analysts say Myanmar's 10-week-old government is not ready to go to war with the militias but is under pressure to secure the dams and pipeline construction sites to appease China, its biggest political and economic ally. Some suggest the KIA, which was shut out of lucrative energy deal between the two countries, might have escalated tensions to force the government to negotiate and offer some financial incentives, such as protection money. It was likely China would use its diplomatic clout with both the rebels and the Myanmar government. The Chinese government has good contacts with both sides and will ask them to maintain the security of the frontier lands. Neither Myanmar's government nor its media mouthpieces have commented on the fighting but sources in the region said it centered on control of the dams. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao last month told new Myanmar President Thein Sein that China wanted "smooth progress" on the oil and gas pipelines projects and President Hu Jintao pressed his counterpart to ensure stability at the border.

[Daily Times – June 16, 2011]

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