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GENDER & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women's Empowerment & Gender Equality

10-Year Jail for Forced Marriage, Denial of Inheritance

In what can be described as a watershed moment in the struggle for women's emancipation in Pakistan, the National Assembly passed the "The Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Bill 2008" aimed at prohibiting practices leading to the exploitation and discrimination of women. The bill specifically targets forced marriages, marriages to the Holy Quran and denial of the right of inheritance. According to the bill

- Section 498A says whoever, by deceitful or illegal means, deprives a woman from inheriting any movable or immovable property at the time of opening of succession, will be punished with imprisonment for a term of up to ten years and no less than five years or with a fine of one million rupees or both.
- Section 498B says whoever coerces or in any manner compels a women to enter into marriage shall be punished with imprisonment of three to ten years or is liable to a fine of Rs. 500,000.
- Section 498C of the bill says whoever compels or arranges/ facilitates the marriage of a woman with the Holy Quran shall be punished with imprisonment of three to seven years or is liable to a fine of Rs. 500,000.

The bill was first deferred in October on a technical objection on the language though three of its five clauses were approved. On the second occasion, again in October, the bill was once again deferred after objections by PML-N legislator Ayaz Amir, PPP's Shah Mehmood Qureshi and other members from both sides of the isle that copies of the amended bill had not been distributed amongst legislators. However, the bill is finally passed despite some objections on the spellings and language of the bill. In the statement of objects, Dr Donya Aziz said there were several practices and customs in vogue in the country that were not only against human dignity but also violated basic human rights. The bill provides that customary norms which were contrary to Islamic injunctions should be done away with and persons who continue such practices be dealt with severely through penal and financial liabilities.

[The News - November 16, 2011]

House Passes Resolution on Women Domestic Servants' Rights

The Sindh Assembly (SA) unanimously passed a resolution regarding protection of the rights of women domestic servants. The House also recommended that a campaign should be launched at the union council level to register these servants to empower and protect them. Sindh Women Development Minister Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto proposed the resolution on behalf of all women lawmakers of the Pakistan People's Party. Bhutto said to fulfill the requirements of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and to empower the 8.52 million women domestic servants, a campaign would be initiated at the union council level to register these servants to ensure health and legal cover for them and to manage their work timings and wages. After a detailed discussion, SA Deputy Speaker Shehla Raza put up the resolution for voting and it was unanimously passed.

[Daily Times - November 04, 2011]

Women Complaint Cells Established

Women complaint cells have been established at three police stations to facilitate the women victims of crimes in getting their complaints registered. City Police Officer (CPO) Azhar Hameed Khokhar initially established these centers at three police stations and such cells would also be set up at all the police stations of the district later on. The women complaint cells have been established to facilitate the women victims of crimes as all the cases relating to women would be dealt by women police officers deployed at the complaint cells. At the first phase, the women complaint cells have been established at Airport, Civil Lines and Westridge police stations. Two lady police officers have been deployed at each cell to deal with the cases of women victims. The aim to establish these cells in urban area police stations was to give an easy access to the women victims as they, either victims of crime or an accused, would feel comfortable in narrating their cases to a female police officer rather than explaining them to a male officer.

Despite the police department being under staff, the two lady police officers ranking from constable to head constable would be deputed at each complaint cell and by the time such cells would be extended to all police stations. The CPO said that the objectives which could not be achieved through the existing women police station would be materialized by establishing separate women complaint cells. The presence of women police officers in the police station would play a positive role in solving women's issues. Regarding the legal powers of the lady police officers deputed at the cell, the CPO said the woman police officer would assist the women victims in getting their cases registered with the concerned police station instead of going to the women police station. The only women police station is located near the district courts which is quite inaccessible to the women residents of rural areas. A lady police officer said that since the inception of the only women police station, no case of police torture to a woman had been reported as it was because of the women arrested by the police were always kept in the lockup of the women police station under the guard of female police officials.

[Dawn - November 07, 2011]

HR WATCH

Conflict Watch

Target Killings in Balochistan

Target Killings & Other Terrorist Incidents in Balochistan during November

- 3rd November: Four bullet-riddled bodies were found in Windar Town of Lasbela District. Two of the dead were identified as Faraz and Umeed Ali.

During the regular patrolling, Police recovered three bodies from Turbat and Khuzdar Districts. The bodies have been identified to be of Abdul Samad from Khuzdar District and Gohram and Ayam from Turbat District.
- 16th November: At least seven persons, including five terrorists and two Policemen, were killed in a blast in a hi-roof van of suspected terrorists at Sea View at Clifton in Karachi, the Provincial capital of Sindh.

At least 14 personnel of the Frontier Corps, including a Major, identified as Muhammad Amir Shahzad, were killed and 16 others got injured when their convoy was attacked by a group of BLA militants near a coalfield in Bahlol Basti and Kingari area of Musakhel District. The BLA claimed the responsibility for the attack and further claimed that BLA attackers also took away the arms of the Frontier Corps soldiers.
- 21st November:

(Compiled From Different Dailies)

Terrorist Incidents in November

Date	Place	Killed	Injured
1 st November	Mohmand Agency of FATA	3	-
3 rd November	North Waziristan Agency in FATA	3	-
5 th November	North Waziristan Agency in FATA	5	3
	South Waziristan Agency in FATA	3	7
6 th November	South Waziristan Agency in FATA	3	-
7 th November	Swabi District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	3	9
10 th November	Khyber Agency in FATA	6	-
	Jhelum District in Punjab	9	-
	Rawalpindi	4	-
12 th November	Khyber Agency in FATA	6	-
	Khyber Agency in FATA	6	10
13 th November	Khyber Agency in FATA	9	6
	Khyber Agency in FATA	5	6
14 th November	North Waziristan Agency in FATA	5	-
	Mohmand Agency in FATA	7	-

15th November	Orakzai Agency in FATA	28	12
	Kurram Agency of FATA	20	-
16th November	South Waziristan Agency in FATA	18	-
	Orakzai Agency in FATA	11	-
	Khyber Agency in FATA	6	2
17th November	Orakzai Agency in FATA	22	10
	Kurram Agency of FATA	9	-
	North Waziristan Agency in FATA	8	-
18th November	Orakzai Agency in FATA	9	-
19th November	Kurram Agency of FATA	10	8
20th November	Orakzai Agency in FATA	10	4
	Khyber Agency in FATA	6	-
21st November	Kurram Agency of FATA	11	25
	Orakzai Agency in FATA	10	-
23rd November	Kurram and Orakzai Agencies of FATA	81	-
	Orakzai Agency in FATA	9	3
25th November	Kurram Agency of FATA	35	15
	Orakzai Agency in FATA	16	1
	Dabori Near Gundital Village	6	-
26th November	Mohmand Agency in FATA	25	-
27th November	Orakzai Agency in FATA	12	15

(Accessed From: <http://www.satp.org>)

Minority Rights

Minorities Protected In Pakistan

As is generally known, Pakistan is a multi-cultural diverse society where various ethnic and religious groups live together. In fact, minorities in Pakistan have a special place as the white strip on the flag of Pakistan is about them. According to one estimate, minorities form some 3 percent of the total population with Christians forming around 1.5 to 2 percent of their overall strength. Over the years, minorities have played an important role in all sectors of the country and are represented in professional spheres. They have also representation in government service and armed forces. Unfortunately, there have been some ugly incidents involving the minorities in the recent past. These incidents, including the murder of three Hindus in Shikarpur, have been highlighted in the international press besides the local media. The Shikarpur incident, which was the result of some local feud involving a girl, was strongly condemned at the highest levels of the government. It should be noted that incidents involving minorities are not part of any campaign to harass them. These are the result of either some local feuds or the global war on terror that has badly impacted Pakistan. If some churches were attacked, mosques, shrines and imambargahs were not even spared by terrorists. In fact, the deadliest attacks to hit religious places mostly took place at dargahs, imambargahs and mosques and not at worship places of Pakistani minorities. When any incident involving the minorities took place, the government of Pakistan, the respective provincial governments and law enforcement agencies has immediately taken notice of it. The Shikarpur incident was condemned by all political and religious parties while senior government officials and the leader of the opposition themselves visited the concerned family and condoled the deaths. Not

surprisingly, the policemen deputed to guard the deceased who were absent at the time of the incident were sacked.

The Constitution of Pakistan 1973 on fundamental rights and principles of policy in Article 20 talks about the freedom to profess religion and to manage religious institutions. It says (a) every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion; and (b) every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.

- The Article-21 adds that no person shall be compelled to pay any special tax the proceeds of which are to be spent on the propagation or maintenance of any religion other than his own. Similarly, the Article-22 says: Safeguards as to educational institutions in respect of religion, etc.-(1) No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own. (2) In respect of any religious institution, there shall be no discrimination against any community in the granting of exemption or concession in relation to taxation.
- Similarly, Article-25 is about equality of citizens. It says all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex alone. Nothing in this Article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the protection of women and children.

The Article-36: Protection of minorities - The State shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities, including their due representation in the Federal and Provincial services. As a nation, we should educate our youth that it is against Islam and the laws of the country to stop anyone from observing his or her religion or to kill anyone, including a member of a religious minority. The extremist groups whose ideology is hatred and against Pakistan carry out such abominable incidents that hurt Pakistan and its image among the comity of nations.

[The News - November 29, 2011]

Rising Violence against Minorities Condemned

Expressing solidarity with the Hindu community after the recent killing of three Hindu men at a clinic in Chak town of Shikarpur district, representatives of various professional, civil society and human rights organizations said that the government had failed to provide protection to citizens. CSOs said that they are not satisfied with police proceedings in the case and demanded that three suspects nominated in the FIR lodged by the local Hindu Panchayat be immediately arrested and brought to book. Over half a dozen representatives of various organizations who spoke to the media were unanimous in the opinion that the government had failed to eliminate discrimination against religious minorities and to protect their fundamental rights. Be it the forced conversion of Hindus or their victimization and harassment for extortion, insecurity has been haunting the community and its businesses for the past four years. The government and its machinery played the role of silent spectators during looting of Hindu community members' properties during the floods and their mass migration from Pakistan.

The deceased were identified as Dr Ajeet Kumar, Dr Naresh Kumar and Dr Ashok Kumar and the wounded as Dr Satyapal, who is said to be under treatment at a hospital in Karachi. Two of the four victims were practicing doctors. Sindh PMA president Dr Samrina Hashmi told that the incident was an utter failure of police to prevent the killings. The police were informed about the threats being received by the affected families and they had sought protection from the police as well. The reports of forced conversion of Hindus and faith-based violence in the country, perpetrators of such acts believed that they could eliminate any follower of a religious

minority. They and their activities must be checked forthwith, such practices tarnished the country's image around the world.

Former Sindh MPA Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, who is the patron of the Pakistan Hindu Council, said that Hindu citizens were leading businessmen, particularly dealing in rice and cotton. They were contributing a lot towards national economy but were hardly getting any support from the government. Between 1999 and 2007, the situation in the country, especially Sindh, had improved as cases of migration from Pakistan had registered a marked decline. However, the community had been experiencing increased crime, extortion, looting of property, inconvenience related to places of worship and discrimination on the basis of religion since 2007. Dr Vankwani complained that there was no genuine move for voicing of the Hindu community's concern at policy-making forums. HRCP vice-chairman Amarnath Motumal described the Chak incident as 'targeted killings' and 'bhatta (extortion) activity. Leaders of several labor, professional and women rights associations, including Noor Mohammad Baloch, Anis Haroon, Comrade Saleem Akhtar and Mehnaz Rehman, expressed their support for the initiatives taken by civil society organizations for the restoration of justice to the families of doctors and protection to the minority communities. The joint forum of the organizations urged the government to address the issues of fear, insecurity and vulnerability to crime prevailing among all religious minorities in the country, particularly Sindh. The local police should be directed to ensure that the Chak incident perpetrators' connection with political parties should in no way protect them from prosecution and punishment.

[Dawn - November 12, 2011]

HR Related Issues

'HR Violation Obstacle in Development of Country'

Human Rights violation is the biggest obstacle in the development of the country. Islamic discourse emphasizes on them more than anything else, said Senator Talha Mehmood, Chairman Standing Committee on Interior. Qaisar Siddiqui from UNESCO in his presentation on 'Basic Human Rights' said that history of human rights is as old as history of mankind itself. He said individual sovereignty is inherent in the individual human being and is embodied in the free will. He underlined the need for a firm political wisdom and will, necessary legislation and legal formation institutionalized approach and incorporation of human rights education in school curriculum to highlight importance of Human Rights in the society.

[Daily Times - November 03, 2011]

Overview of Human Rights in Pakistan 2010

2010 was a turbulent for Pakistan as the newly formed democratic government struggled to establish its authority in the face of a worsening fiscal crisis, rampant energy insecurity and deteriorating security situation. Significant political strides were made including the 7th National Finance Commission [NFC] Award which marked the initiation of a process to ensure greater provincial autonomy and reduction of distrust amongst the provinces and between the provinces and the federation and the passing of the Eighteenth Amendment on 8th April 2010 marked the most dramatic devolution of power in Pakistan since the drafting of its 1973 constitution. At the same time, the fiscal crisis in the country did not improve leading to greater social unrest. Energy insecurity reached unprecedented heights stunting industrial activity and leading to frequent power outages throughout the country. With the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and military operations in Swat and the tribal areas, acts of terrorism and violence erupted in major urban centers in the country claiming many lives and leading to a breakdown

of law enforcement. In August 2010, Pakistan was faced with its greatest challenge as floods raged in the Indus delta causing destruction of mythic proportions; leaving 20.6 million people displaced, 2 million ha of standing crops destroyed, causing irreparable damage to infrastructure and leading to an estimated 43 billion USD worth of economic losses. Although international human right organizations termed the flood relief activities by the government as being largely free of discrimination against minorities, growing distrust of the government amidst claims of corruption compelled many to turn to the nongovernmental organizations to extend support to the flood victims.

Corruption remained endemic in political and official circles with cases despite being made public could not inspire concrete action. According to revised rankings by Transparency International, Pakistan now occupies the 143rd on the corruption index from 133rd position last year by Transparency International. Efforts by the judiciary to charge officials on the grounds of corruption were met with strong resistance by the government and continue to be an issue of contention between the two institutions. The media was accorded greater rights and freedom under the democratic government thus emerged as a strong critic of government policies and operations. However voices of dissent in the media continued to be harassed and intimidated by authorities in particular the military backed intelligence agencies. As a consequence many violations by the government especially those transpiring during counter-terrorism activities were prevented from being exposed to the general public. Social policies of the government did not seek to alleviate the plight of the common man as increases in food insecurity, high unemployment rates, unprecedented rise in prices of food and basic commodities, shortages of gas and energy supplies led to grave social agitation and turmoil. At the same time, voices of religious extremism gained momentum in selected circles which were articulated not only through militancy and terrorist activities but a backlash against religious minorities which only escalated as the year drew to a close. As a developing country marred with the crisis of underdevelopment, it is no surprise that Pakistan's record on the protection and safeguard of human rights leaves much to be desired. Institutional weakness and endemic corruption, rising militancy, religious extremism along with a worsening socio-economic condition has rendered Pakistan particularly susceptible to conflict and severe human right violations.

Encouraging developments with regards to safeguarding human rights were made in the country for example no legal execution of the estimated 7500 prisoners held on death row were made in 2010. However the human rights situations remained largely disappointing with gross violations remaining endemic throughout Pakistan. The devastating floods contributed to worsening the crisis as it not only paved the way for further destabilization by overstressing the state's abilities to handle a crisis of such proportions but also made many in the population become more susceptible to human right abuses. Steps undertaken by Pakistan to ratify the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention against Torture (CAT) were welcomed as significant strides. However the initial euphoria was displaced as the government voiced reservations on the most important articles of the ICCPR and CAT which in essence negate the very spirit of these covenants. Restricting a broad application of the basic principles of these covenants has been a severe blow to ensuring a guarantee of human rights. Increased militancy and violence, discrimination and violence against religious minorities and tensions between the judiciary and the government emerged as urgent concerns in the past year amongst the persisting human rights violation in the country. Acts of terrorism and the spread of militancy did not cease this year despite government assurances to the contrary. As the war against militants continued to rage in Swat and Waziristan, cities and towns were being targeted in the rest of the country by militants. Federal and provincial capitals all witnessed the wrath of militants as suicide bombings and targeted killings increased indicating the present government's inability to effectively handle the security crisis. Counterterrorism strategies by the government and army also revealed gross violations of human rights as cases of enforced abductions, extrajudicial killings, violation of rights during the army's military operation were unearthed.

Religious intolerance marked the landscape of the country as discriminatory laws and violence against religious minorities witnessed an upward trend. An adequate response by the authorities was not fostered despite the increasing persecution and killing of religious minorities. The infamous blasphemy law became a serious bone of contention following death sentence of Aasia Bibi, a Christian from Punjab province, who became the first woman in the country's history to be sentenced to death for the crime of blasphemy. Liberal voices in the legislature and government who were pushing for a repeal of the blasphemy law were met with intimidation and threats. In early 2011, the Punjab governor was assassinated for his vocal support for Aasia Bibi and repealing the blasphemy law. The tussle between the Judiciary and the present government ensuing since the latter's ascent to power, continued as both parties oscillated between hints of reconciliation and outright confrontation. The year began with the Supreme Court declaring the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), which 'pardoned' certain individuals who had pending legal cases against them, as void and null. Some of the pardoned officials included people in the top tiers of the current government and members of the ruling party. Furthermore relations between members of the 'Lawyer's Movement' which played a prominent part in restoring the deposed Chief Justice to power significantly deteriorated prompting each side to use force against the other. The continued confrontation between the judiciary, government and lawyers was marked with severe undermining of rights and overstepping of constitutional power.

Limits on media freedom, treatment of women, child abuse, bonded labor, mistreatment of criminal suspects, violations and discrimination against Balochistan and unsolved cases of enforced disappearances reigned as other pertinent violations of human rights in the country. An estimated 1,600 lives have been claimed in terrorist and counter terrorist activities throughout the country. Suicide blasts alone which totaled 41 by the end of 2010 have led to the death of 700 people, leaving 2,000 wounded most of whom had been civilians. In 2010, 28 of the suicide attacks took place in the northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, seven in eastern Punjab, and two each in southern Sindh, southwest Balochistan and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir. With the counter-terrorist activities of the military reducing in Swat and Tribal Areas, the number of suicide attacks in 2010 decreased to about half of that in 2009 that killed over 3,000. Counter-terrorism activities undertaken in Swat and the tribal areas were marked by human right abuses. The army repeatedly refused to allow lawyers, relatives, independent monitors, and humanitarian agency staff access to persons detained in the course of military operations. There have been no definite estimates on the number of people rounded up security forces but even as generous estimates place the total in thousands, only a few have been brought to court. During the military operations in these areas, terrorist activities in major urban centers across the country became rampant. With the army gaining control in Swat and tensions diffusing, there has been a noted decrease in suicide attacks in the rest of the country. At the same time however, no actions has been taken against the extrajudicial killings and abuses by security forces in counter terrorist activities.

Moreover, killings on Pakistani territory by US forces continue to go unchecked. During this year around 900 people were killed by drone attacks the US armed forces in more than 100 attacks. However the government has not taken any action against foreign aristocracies on its soil. Counterterrorism activities by Pakistan and foreign actors have only sparked off more violent and frequent terrorist activities in the rest of the country. In a similar perspective, Pakistan has witnessed a serious challenge to state policies with the steady growth of terrorist organizations within the country. The menace of terrorism became a serious issue in the region with high number of Bomb blasts, suicide attacks, assassinations, kidnappings, hijacking and other acts of terrorism. It is reported in SATP 2010 that a total of 1796 civilians were killed in Pakistan while 1,774 were wounded. Moreover 179 people were taken hostage and 2,832 people were affected by violence during 2010. 259 children were wounded and six were taken hostage.

[Daily Times - November 10, 2011]

GOVERNANCE WATCH

Political Governance

Army Action sans Government Permission Unconstitutional: CJ

Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry has said that any action of the military without express permission of the government will be illegal and unconstitutional. Justice Iftikhar said that the Article 6 of the Constitution would be used over violations of the law (constitution). He said that coordination and harmony among the different institutions would help Pakistan to progress politically as well as economically. He said that all institutions should work within their perimeters of influence. The constitution guarantees the judiciary's independence, he said, adding that the Supreme Court has tried its best to protect basic rights of the people and curtail the misuse of power. In future, the chief justice said that no judge would be sworn in under the PCO (provisional constitutional order) and that amendments have been done in the judges' code of conduct.

[Pakistan Today – November 12, 2011]

Improved Governance Can Restore Writ of Government

Good governance could restore writ of the government. The immediate steps are called to address the issues of bad governance, energy crisis, corruption, deteriorating law and order situation, poor state of affairs in the health and education sectors, absence of civic services, deforestation and environment degradation. The good governance could improve the law and order situation, make politicians, bureaucrats, generals and judges accountable, eliminate corruption, introduce merit in all sectors and involve all stakeholders in policy-making. Conservation of nature, sustainable use of natural resources, including water, eliminating corruption, giving importance to agriculture and livestock sectors, increasing literacy rate, restoring law and order, proving maximum health and education facilities to people could guarantee prosperity and development of the country, especially Balochistan. Development process could be improved by providing basic facilities to people, including drinking water, congenial environment for living, quality education and peaceful environment. The area covered by forests in Pakistan had declined to 2.6 per cent from 22 per cent.

[Dawn - November 07, 2011]

Jl Eyeing Alliance with Imran's Party: Baloch

Amidst growing popularity of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, a right-wing party has said that it may form an alliance with the party of cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan. Liaquat Baloch, Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami intends to join hands with the PTI but obviously with priority of restoring the (defunct) Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal. He was referring to the six-party religious alliance which had fallen apart over differences to boycott the 2008 general elections. Baloch said that his party has finalized plans to launch nationwide protests against the Nato air raid in Mohmand Agency and the 'erroneous' policies of the government. The first of these countrywide protests is scheduled. Baloch blamed the government's 'sick' policies for the Nato airstrike that killed 24 security personnel. He believes that if the government had taken action against US-led Nato forces earlier, they would not have attempted to violate the country's sovereignty. US and Nato officials are now expressing concern over the bitter sentiments of the Pakistani nation. The Jl also extended full support to the government's decision of suspending

Nato supplies, boycotting the Bonn conference and forcing the US to vacate the Shamsi airbase. He added that the United Arab Emirates was not supposed to hand over the base to anyone else. The government has admitted that this is not the first time Nato forces violated Pakistan's territorial borders.

[The Express Tribune - December 04, 2011]

Sindh Government to Create Two More Ministries for Allies

In order to pacify the allies, the Services General Administration and Coordination Department Sindh have sent a summary for the approval of Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah for the creation of two new ministries. It is worthwhile to mention that ministers had already been included in the cabinet; however the government had no portfolios. Differences had started emerging in this situation. It has been stated in the summary that the Sindh Rules of Business 1986 be amended so that two new portfolios of 'science and technology' and 'special education' may be created. Against the background of this proposal, a notification had been issued by the Law Department. It is to be noted that Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani had already issued instructions to create two new ministries. In the summary the chief minister has been requested to accord immediate approval for the creation of two more ministries, which is a constitutional requirement.

[The News – November 06, 2011]

Federal & Provincial Governments

Zardari Okays Bifurcation of PPP Punjab, Says Gilani

President Asif Zardari has given formal approval for dividing the organizational structure of his party, Pakistan People's Party, in the Punjab into two sections i.e. South Punjab and the rest of Punjab. Federal Minister for Textile and Member Central Executive Committee of PPP Makhdoom Shahabuddin will be the PPP president for South Punjab, while Imtiaz Safdar Warraich will continue heading the central and upper Punjab. Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani said there were multi-pronged purposes behind dividing the PPP's organizational structure in the Punjab, including fulfillment of a long-drawn demand of the local people. He said he supported the demand for south Punjab as an independent province in accordance with the wishes of the people. The second objective behind the decision was that the province was too big to be controlled by one president. Makhdoom Shahabuddin, is the senior-most party member having a lot of spiritual following both in south Punjab and Sindh. Shahabuddin belongs to Bahawalpur and he had also served as the finance minister in the cabinet of the late Benazir Bhutto. The appointment of Shahabuddin would also bring to an end the feeler about making Bahawalpur a separate province. People were opposing south Punjab to become an independent province, had put out the feeler with the objective of causing damage to the movement by creating misunderstandings. Many of the PPP stalwarts had left it in the past but they could not cause any dent in the party as it was not possible for the party to accommodate everyone but those who were not accommodated should not leave the party.

[The News - November 05, 2011]

Devolution: Centre, Provinces Still Fighting Over Share in Assets

Eighteen months after the passage of the 18th Amendment, the federal and provincial governments are still fighting over their shares in more than Rs. 230 billion worth of financial

assets and large numbers of physical assets of various public sector corporations. The 18th Amendment and the Seventh National Finance Commission award have also given rise to serious regulatory and governance issues and made it difficult to initiate fresh revenue generation measures both at the federal and provincial levels. These are the main points highlighted in a confidential report of study funded by the Competitive Support Fund — a joint initiative of the finance ministry and USAID — and prepared by a team of experts. The team will share the report with chief ministers and the federal finance minister. The federal and provincial governments differ over the distribution of some financial assets like Workers' Welfare Fund and Employees' Old-Age Benefit Institution. The WWF's financial deposits are estimated at Rs. 81 billion while the EOBI has assets worth Rs. 148 billion. The distribution of assets owned by autonomous bodies and attached departments of devolved ministries is also proving to be contentious as provinces are demanding the equitable distribution of assets, including that of geographically immovable fixed assets. The implementation commission that was set up to facilitate devolution could not fully deliver, given the limited time available to it and the scope of its assignment as it ceased to exist. Overall, the budgeted increase in revenue transfers to the provinces due to the NFC Award in relation to the presidential order is Rs. 222 billion in 2010-11, but total transfers were diluted by about Rs. 180 billion as a result of lower-than-expected resources generation and 50 percent increase in salaries of government employees announced by the federal authorities.

Second, the provinces will not receive as large a portion of additional revenues as was originally claimed by the federal authorities due to shortfalls in federal tax collections. Third, the federal government unilaterally announced a 50 percent increase in salaries and allowances for government employees in the budget of 2010-11, which will deprive the provinces of a substantial proportion of the revenue gains. The issue of financing the additional responsibilities devolved to the provinces therefore remains unresolved and is likely to be taken by the CCI going forward. The NFC Award expanded the basis for a significant sharing of resources with the provincial governments, the 18th Amendment made only modest changes in the allocation of fiscal powers between the two levels of government. As such, the high dependence of provincial governments on federal transfers is likely to continue in the foreseeable future. The experts found that there were indications that the regulatory system will come under stress as a result of devolution in the area of social service delivery. There is already uncertainty with respect to functions of the federal government. For instance, the process of devolution has been put on hold because the decision to devolve the Higher Education Commission has been challenged in the Supreme Court. Similarly, the decision to devolve the ministry of health has raised concerns over international obligations such as commitment to the millennium development goals. The impact of devolution on the regulatory system of Pakistan has not been fully appreciated. A likely consequence is that in some areas, particularly social service delivery, there may be setbacks as the provinces begin to reflect on their own regulatory requirements and priorities. Also a possible impact of increased transfers from the centre could be reduced fiscal effort in terms of own tax revenue generation and collection by the provinces. A continuation of the imbalance in fiscal responsibility is likely to be damaging for the federal as well as provincial governments in terms of unmet fiscal targets and inadequate resource availability for improved services delivery, it is clear that centre's fiscal position will deteriorate.

[Dawn - November 21, 2011]

Local Governance

Restoration of LG Ordinance PPP, MQM Fail To Reach Consensus

The long-awaited decision on the system to be implemented in Sindh could not be after the PPP and MQM failed to arrive at a consensus on the issue, which has created differences among the

coalition partners. Earlier, an inconclusive third round of talks between the PPP and MQM at the Chief Minister's House over the proposed local government (LG) system raised the prospects for the revival of the commissionerate system and 1979 local bodies after an ordinance promulgated by the Sindh governor to revive the 2001 LG system was expected to lapse. Sindh Chief Secretary Raja Mohammed Abbas held an emergent meeting with senior officials on the situation. Three notifications were prepared by the Board of Revenue, Services and General Administration and Local Government Department, which could be issued any time, provided the authorities concerned ordered it. These notifications pertained to appointment of commissioners/deputy commissioners and revival of KMC, district councils, pertained to appointment of commissioners/deputy commissioners and revival of KMC, district councils etc. The official believes that the acts of the provincial assembly regarding commissionerate system and 1979 LB would be automatically restored. The commissionerate system and 1979 LG system should be revived in the Sindh province till final settlement of the contentious issues. It was decided to approach the legal experts to seek their opinion to avoid legal complications arising out of the lapse of LG ordinance.

The possible promulgation of modified ordinance was the third option for the coalition parties, two others were: let the ordinance be lapsed or get its period extended for more 90 days through a resolution in the Provincial Assembly of Sindh. But then it appeared that the two possible options of amended ordinance and recourse to the legislature were not exercised, paying the way for third option of letting the ordinance be lapsed. However, legal experts hold different opinion. Some said that the act of the assembly would be automatically restored after lapse of the ordinance since it was an interim statute, which becomes ineffective and unimplementable after its period ends. Others said that a void would be created till another ordinance was promulgated or an emergent session of the assembly was summoned. Section 6 of General Clauses Act provided protection to all orders taken during the period of ordinance but he thinks that the act could not get automatically restored. After the lapse of the LG ordinance, a void would be created in Sindh that could be filled by promulgating another ordinance or summoning the session of the assembly to extend the period of the LG ordinance or do legislation. The coalition parties debated about their respective proposed drafts for LG system, which they had exchanged with each other around one-and-a-half-year ago. Earlier, they had held several meetings to reach on consensus over the proposed local government system but failed to do so. The PPP leaders were expected to meet with senior legal experts and subsequently, they would inform the MQM leaders.

[The News - November 05, 2011]

Confusion over Local Government System in All Provinces

The fate of local government system hangs in the balance in all provinces and people are still without a credible replacement of the set-up introduced by Gen (Rtd.) Pervez Musharraf's government. According to a PPP leader in Sindh, the party tabled a bill in the provincial assembly. However, the provincial government is said to be facing enormous difficulties in drafting a law acceptable to coalition partner MQM and to nationalist parties which are strongly opposed to restoration of the local government system. The PPP and MQM will sit together and table a consensus bill. The Balochistan government has enacted a local government law but critics have pointed out several flaws in it. A draft prepared by the Punjab government is yet to be taken to the provincial assembly. The government had prepared the draft which would be sent to the provincial cabinet soon and then to the assembly. To address the flaws in the previous system; however, former chairman of the National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB), Daniyal Aziz, said the draft had several flaws and it could not be implemented. All provinces except Sindh have wrapped up the previous system and the systems they are contemplating to introduce are at variance with each other. Following the lapse of the Local Government Ordinance of 2001 and empowerment of provinces to deal with the local government system,

they have to enact their own laws. The delay has led to administrative and other problems and affected the services of various departments. According to a federal government official, the Election Commission has not announced any schedule for local body elections. The Balochistan LG Act says the elections will be held by the provincial election commission. But the Constitution requires them to be conducted by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Another anomaly is that some posts created under the previous act have been retained although the system has been wrapped up.

[Dawn - November 07, 2011]

Demand for New Province

A Practical Move toward Seraiki Province

Although Pakistan People's Party is terming the move to have two separate chapters of party for central and southern Punjab just for better management of the party, the key political players saw it as the first practical step toward the launching of a movement for Seraiki province. The creation of Seraiki province would serve as a chain reaction and people from across the country would come up with similar demands as people from Hazara and Potohar regions had already launched campaign for having separate provinces for them. The feeble voice for restoration of the Bahawalpur province had also secured strength from the recent move by PPP. Similarly, though the people from Karachi and Hyderabad had opposed the creation of a new province comprising these two cities right now, but in days to come, who would come in their way if they wanted to have it? The sources in the Pakistan People's Party informed that the party was already working on the plan to have Seraiki province mainly comprising southern Punjab and in this connection a committee comprising senior party leaders were busy altering the party's manifesto and the promise for creation of new provinces would be included in it. Some sort of working paper is needed for the creation of new provinces in the country on administrative grounds so that the government would evolve some mechanism on forming new administrative units. Though Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) which was against the division of Punjab into two provinces, had also soften its stance and now they conditionally supported the move and said that new provinces would be formed in rest of the provinces as well and it should not remain confined to Punjab alone. Sources in PML-N informed that they were also working on a plan for creation of new provinces and they would complete their homework. Political analysts commenting on the situation said that though the creation of new provinces on administrative grounds was not a bad thing and almost all the political parties were also having the same views, but the ground reality in all the cases where people were demanding creation of new provinces was embedded in linguistic or ethnic grounds which would be detrimental to the solidarity of the state in the long run.

[The Nation – November 07, 2011]

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Facts & Figures

Rs. 391 Billion Circular Debt Swap, T-Bills to Increase Fiscal Deficit

In a major and positive development, the government has completed the circular debt consolidation of Rs. 391 billion under which Pepco's Rs. 313 billion power debt and Rs. 78 billion commodity circular debt term finance certificates have been converted into five-year Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIB) and one-year Treasury bills (T-Bills). And to this effect, banks have been issued five-year maturity Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs) equivalent to the amount of 50% circular debt while 50% equivalent amount has been adjusted in the shape of one-year Treasury Bills with 11.82 percent mark-up. The swap will increase the budget deficit for the current fiscal year (2011-12) by an additional 1.8% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The federal government would be paying interest on PIBs equivalent to last two actions average interest payable on PIBs while interest on Treasury Bonds would be 11.82%. Although, this debt is not being paid to the banks yet the issuance of PIBs and TFCs to banks against this debt would help the banks to trade them to generate money. The current circular debt is about Rs. 300 billion, including Rs. 142 billion dues, which the private sector owes. He said a meeting with provincial finance secretaries was held in which a modus operandi was carved out to pay the Pepco dues. Meanwhile, the ministry indicated that the power tariff might go up by 14 percent in the remaining months of the financial year 2010-11, subject to approval by the political leadership, or the government will have to absorb another hit of Rs. 76 billion. Pakistan's economic team tried to get a clean chit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the financial health of the economy.

Pakistan would not place any request for fresh IMF loan programme and would like to get a favorable assessment of its economy during the consultation so as to improve its relations with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. The IMF helps those countries which find it difficult to handle their balance of payment issues while Pakistan's balance of payment situation was comfortable. Foreign exchange reserves of the country had seen a decline of \$1.5 billion during the first quarter against \$2 billion decline projected for the full fiscal year of 2011-12. Pakistan would require making repayment of \$1.2 billion IMF loan during the third and fourth quarters of the current fiscal year and there would be no difficulty in meeting this obligation, while maintaining the foreign exchange reserves at a comfortable level. Pakistan was negotiating with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) for arranging \$2 billion financing for clearance of the circular debt. Pakistan would like that both these institutions participate in this lending programme. Besides, Pakistan is also negotiating performance-based lending programme with the World Bank and once the performance indicators are met, there would be fast track finance available to Pakistan. The loan to be arranged from the WB and ADB for clearance of circular debt would be handed over directly to the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA).

External inflows (\$359 million) during the first quarter (July-September); remained negative and below expectations while outflows were recorded at \$408 million. The budget deficit was likely to shoot up to 1.5% of the GDP in the first quarter and the ministry had managed to keep it to 1.1% of the GDP. The federal government has borrowed Rs. 260 billion in the first quarter to meet the budget deficit finance requirements. Dilating upon the economic reforms plan, he said not seeking a fresh IMF loan programme did not mean the government would not follow economic discipline. Pakistan would stick to fiscal and structural reforms with the same spirit as was agreed while signing the Stand-by Arrangement with the IMF. A reform programme for PIA was being finalized and it had been agreed in the meeting, presided over by the prime minister, that the federal government would only help PIA in its debt restructuring. Reforms in the

Railways are also underway and the federal government had guaranteed Rs. 6.1 billion loan from the banking consortium for repair of around 100 railway engines mainly for resumption of freight business of the Pakistan Railways. The Railways' earnings were Rs. 28 billion three years back which had now come down to Rs. 14 billion mainly due to its inability to carry out freight business while expenditures had jumped to Rs. 48 billion annually. The federal government has taken the entire responsibility of payment of pensions and salaries of railway employees and there would be no difficulty to the employees in future. PSO wants to run its own train to ensure smooth fuel supply upcountry and similarly NLC had asked the government the permit to run it two to three freight trains. He also disclosed that a private passenger train equipped with all the facilities would run from Karachi to upcountry in 12 to 13 hours time.

[Pakistan Today – November 06, 2011]

Pakistan Seeks IMF Clean Chit for Fresh Loans

Pakistan's large contingent of over 22 members is engaged in two rounds of talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Dubai to get clearance on its financial health and an endorsement of a medium-term macroeconomic framework that could pave the way for entering into a fresh loan programme in the range of \$3-5 billion sometime in the current fiscal year. The agreement on fiscal and macroeconomic framework will require evolving a consensus on the fiscal deficit with Islamabad's expectations that the Fund will allow up to five percent of GDP against the earlier envisaged target of four percent of GDP for 2011-12. But the IMF may allow the fiscal deficit to rise to 4.5 percent of GDP for the current fiscal year. If the consolidation of outstanding liabilities of the power sector and commodities is taken into account it will add another 1.8 percent of GDP in the fiscal deficit and with this one-off step the deficit will swallow up to 6.3 percent of GDP. The fiscal deficit stood in the range of over 6 percent of GDP on average in each year over the last four-year rule of the PPP-led regime. The technical level talks had already been kick-started from November 9 but the key functionaries of Finance Division led by Secretary Finance Dr Waqar Masood as well as important members of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) proceeded to Dubai on Saturday to convince the Fund staff headed by mission chief Adnan Mazarei to give a clean chit on the financial health of the country under the cover of Article IV consultations. The agreement on macroeconomic and fiscal framework is pre-requisite for entering into talks for a fresh loan programme. Pakistan is going to seek relaxation in the fiscal deficit by asking the Fund to allow its hike from 4 percent of GDP to 5 percent of GDP for the current fiscal year with the expectation that the Fund will allow its upward revision of to 4.5 percent of GDP for the current fiscal year. When contacted Special Secretary Ministry of Finance Rana Asad Ameen said that the Article IV consultation with the IMF would basically meant to get endorsement of the Fund on the financial health, as Islamabad would be sharing its medium term macroeconomic framework to gauge its sustainability. Asked about timeframe for seeking fresh loan programme, he said this decision would be taken by the political leadership but so far the economic team wanted to continue close engagement with the IMF. The minister for finance and secretary finance should have taken briefing from different wings of the Ministry of Finance, similarly the chairman FBR could have taken a briefing from its respective members and also the governor SBP should have taken a briefing for monetary conditions and Balance of Payment (BoP) from its concerned staff. Maximum five to six members could have been sufficient to talk to the Fund for holding talks on Article IV consultation.

[The News - November 13, 2011]

PSDP 2011-12 Funds Releases Show Downward Trend

The government has released only Rs. 3.6 billion under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP-2011-12) during the current fiscal year against a criteria set by Ministry of Finance to release Rs. 25 billion per month. By Sep 2011, the government released Rs. 55 billion from developmental budget while in October 8; total releases were Rs. 59.2 billion showing Rs. 4.2 billion in one month. By November 4, the Ministry of Finance through Planning Commission total PSDP releases reached to Rs. 62.8 billion, showing Rs. 3.60 billion in less than a month. The releases from PSDP 2011-12 shows a downward trend and if the same trend continue then by end of this fiscal year, the developmental budget would be cut by more than fifty percent as the case was in PSDP 2010-11. The total releases under developmental budget Rs. 62.8 billion further classified as Rs. 32.9 billion for infrastructure sector, Rs. 29.3 billion for social sector and Rs. 0.568 billion for others sectors. The whole allocation was made for 1259 national importance projects. Total size of the PSDP 2011-12 is Rs. 290 billion including Rs. 36.5 billion as foreign exchange component (FEC) and Rs. 33 billion as Special Programme. The releases against Special Programmes are being made by Cabinet Division, Finance Division. The Foreign Aid disbursement amount is received in the Economic Affairs Division. The Rs. 62.8 billion releases are exclusive of Foreign Aid disbursement. Therefore above releases are against Rs. 220.5 billion (290-36.5-33), the Planning and Development Division will release funds against this amount (Rs. 220.5 billion). Sector Projects Cost Releases Allocation 2011-12: Rupee component of Power Sector Projects is arranged by WAPDA from its own resources. Therefore, rupee component of Power Sector Projects is not part of budget and not released by Planning and Development Division. Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission received Rs. 4.576 billion for Chashma Nuclear Power Project (C3 & C4) being constructed in collaboration with China. Total cost of these two new nuclear power projects amounts to Rs. 189.918 billion. PAEC also received Rs. 633.500 million for Chashma Nuclear Power Project CII, Mianwali with a total cost of Rs. 51.046 billion.

In the Water and Power Sector, Federal government has released Rs. 3.600 billion for land acquisition for construction of Diamer Basha Dam the project land acquisition requires Rs. 60.052 billion, the Dam will generate 4500MW power on completion. Federal government has released Rs. 3 billion for Raising of Mangla Dam including resettlement project while and total cost of this project is Rs. 62.553 billion. Gomal Zam Dam project Rs. 250 million, Kachhi Canal (Phase-I) Rs. 750 million, Raine Canal (Phase-I) Rs. 750 million, Lower Indus Right Bank Irrigation and Drainage, Sindh Rs. 500 million, Balochistan Effluent Disposal into RBOD. (RBOD-III) Rs. 500 million, Revamping, Rehabilitation of Irrigation and Drainage System of Sindh Rs. 180 million, Extension of RBOD-II, Dadu and Thatta District of Sindh Rs. 1.3 billion, Lining of Tributaries and Minors in Sindh Rs. 240 million, Construction of 100 Delay Action Dams, Balochistan Rs. 120 million, Construction of 20 small Dams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rs. 100 million, Re-construction of Shadi Kour Dam, District Gwadar Rs. 100 million, Federal government had allocated Rs. 5 billion for People's Works Programme-I and Rs. 28 billion were allocated for People's Works Programme-II, that are flagship development programmes of the PPP government in the centre, have not received a single penny till November 4, 2011-12. Out of the block allocation of Rs. 8.2 billion Azad Jammu and Kashmir government was released only Rs. 2.788 billion by end November 4. The government also released Rs. 200 million for construction of Rathua Haryam Bridge across Reservoir Channel on Mirpur-Islamgarh Road. Federal government had announced in the federal budget a total development budget of Rs. 730 billion for 2011-12, compared to Rs. 663 billion last year, showing a 10 percent increase. Among the total development budget PSDP, an amount of Rs. 290 billion has been allocated for the projects of federal government, whereas Rs. 430 billion have been earmarked for the provinces, to be spent through their ADPs, while Rs. 10 billion have been allocated for ERRAs.

[Daily Times - November 12, 2011]

Slap More Taxes to Enhance Revenue, IMF Tells Pakistan

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that if the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) wants to achieve its envisaged Rs. 1,952 billion target in the current fiscal year, the government will have to take additional revenue measures by slapping more taxes to get the desired results otherwise there will be slippages in it. A senior official of IMF said that the current account deficit (CAD) would turn into deficit this year because exports would decrease because of lingering crisis in the European market where Pakistan's made-up possessed major share. When asked about any specific number related to the budget deficit target agreed between Pakistan and the IMF, the representative of the donor agency said that Islamabad was not into the IMF programme and recently concluded talks were just consultative nature under Article IV. But Pakistan needs to manage its fiscal deficit because any unsustainable situation would start impacting external account with certain time lag.

[The News - November 24, 2011]

ELECTION WATCH

ECP & Election Related Updates

NARA Registers Illegal Migrants, Says NADRA

National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has clarified that illegal migrants are registered by the National Alien Registration Authority (NARA) across the country, not by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). NADRA spokesperson said the matter relates to ambit of NADRA as Minister for Interior briefed over it in the National Assembly on a point of order moved by a Member National Assembly (MNA), Syed Zafar Ali Shah, on aliens' and the interior minister answered that the subject is related to National Alien Registration Authority (NARA). The illegal immigrants are not registered by NADRA and hence, no Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) has been issued to them. However, strong mechanism exists within the NADRA, which upon information takes appropriate action. NADRA has also created a biometric alien watch list that consists of photographs and fingerprints of Afghans as well as illegal immigrants.

[Daily Times - November 23, 2011]

New ECP Wing to Be Formed To Probe Politicians' Assets

It has been decided to set up a new 'Political Finance Wing' in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) as the first step to eliminate corruption from politics. This body will probe into the assets of political parties and elected representatives. ECP Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan has confirmed that a separate Political Finance Wing is being established, which will have experts from the FBR and other institutions. The wing will probe into the expenditure and sources of income of political parties, and those of members of assemblies and parliament. Serious attention is being paid to enact a new law for the formation of the Political Finance Wing. The government is facing stiff resistance from some influential politicians to the proposal of empowering the ECP to probe into the returns of assets of political parties and elected representatives. They are of the view that giving such an authority to the ECP would give rise to a host of problems and a Pandora's Box would be opened. On the other hand, the ECP is of the view that the assets of politicians are probed into in many countries, including India, and those filing bogus and false statements are held accountable. ECP had completed one round of talks with the Auditor General of Pakistan and the FBR authorities and the second round was expected soon. As part of wider agenda of electoral reforms, the ECP is reiterating to expedite legislation so that a new mechanism could be brought in place to probe the assets of political parties and politicians. According to the law in force, political parties and elected representatives do file returns of their income and expenditure and assets, but there is no mechanism to check them and there is no system to penalize those who file bogus returns. This has made mockery of the law and made it ineffective. ECP had contacted political parties too in this regard but it received no positive response. However, in spite of the fact that most of the politicians are not prepared to support such legislation, the ECP has decided to go ahead with the proposal so that the main objective of eliminating corruption from politics is achieved.

[The News - November 07, 2011]

NADRA Centres Directed To Start Eunuchs' Registration

National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) sent instructions to all its registration centres throughout the country to facilitate eunuchs for their registration and to issue those Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) and what the authority claims, all is being done in the light of Supreme Court's instructions. In addition to that, NADRA has also decided to deploy its mobile registration vans (MRVs) to facilitate eunuchs in far flung and remote areas. Under the new instructions, the third genders can have male transgender, female transgender or "Khunsa-e-Mushkil" written on their CNIC according to their own will. NADRA centre across the country are already serving eunuchs for registration. All registered eunuchs will be eligible to cast vote as citizens of Pakistan in the next general elections as their names are also being added in computerized electoral rolls. Their registration is carried out without any medical proof on their given particulars and details at the time of registration. NADRA was already issuing national identity cards to eunuchs, following instructions of the apex court, while authority extending registration facilities to third gender has deployed mobile registration vans, MRVs to facilitate eunuchs. NADRA being guardian of national database ensures registration of all citizens irrespective of their caste or creed. NADRA is the first organization in Pakistan, which is providing job opportunities to the third gender at its regional offices in order to engage them as productive citizens of the society. Eunuchs working in NADRA were not only an example for other organizations but also help in registration of other eunuchs. After the registration of third gender as eunuchs, their rights were more protected and it would pave the way for more job opportunities to them in government and private sector.

[The Nation - November 15, 2011]

PPP and PML-Q Agree On 'Joint Election Formula

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) have agreed in principle to field joint candidates in the next general elections in Punjab. Both parties confirmed that an understanding had been reached between both the coalition partners to field joint candidates at all 297 constituencies in Punjab in the next general elections. The both parties agreed on a joint election formula, allowing both the parties to give the party tickets to their winning candidates in the Punjab Assembly and the coalition party would be bound not to issue party tickets to their candidate in any case. Furthermore, both the parties have decided to issue the party ticket to the candidates who had lost the elections to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), but had emerged as the closest contesters. President Asif Ali Zardari, who is also Co-Chairperson of the PPP, had formed a team led by the member of the Punjab Assembly (MPA) and former finance minister Tanveer Ashraf Kaira to negotiate with the PML-Q leadership at provincial level for reaching an undisputed and logical joint election formula, which should be acceptable to both the parties as well as their candidates without any objection. The PPP had won 85 seats of the Punjab Assembly in the previous general elections and the PML-Q succeeded in 62 constituencies in the province while the PML-N obtained 138 seats in the province. There are 32 members of the PML-N, 21 of the PPP and only 18 of the PML-Q on the reserved seats of women and minorities, so the total strength of the PML-N representatives is 170, PPP's 106 and PML-Q's 80 in the Punjab Assembly.

Following the joint election formula of the PPP and PML-Q, candidates of both the political parties will contest directly on their winning seats while the party ticket will be given to the runner up candidate of any party and the other party will support him. Both, PPP and PML-Q would not only directly challenge the candidates of the PML-N in Punjab at their home ground (winning constituencies) but there are chances of them taking some extra seats in the province to form their next coalition government in the province by the reason of their joint vote bank which must be multiplied after their support to each other's candidates. The PML-N had some political edge over the other parties in cities but had a limited vote bank in the rural areas of

Punjab where the PML-Q and the PPP had majority votes. Both coalition partners, especially the PPP, would also support the demand for the southern Punjab as a separate province. On the issue of distribution of the seats of the dissident group of the PML-Q, the Unification Bloc, the PML-Q would have a principle right to field its candidates at the respective seats but both the valuable contender of the other party could also be considered there. Around 40 members of the PML-Q while differing with their mother party, the PML-Q, have established the Unification Bloc led by Atta Manika and Dr Tahir Ali Javed in the Punjab Assembly and given support to the PML-N in the House after the promise from Sharif brothers, especially Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif to give them the PML-N tickets in the next general elections.

[Daily Times - November 19, 2011]

REGIONAL POLITICS

Pakistan's Foreign Relations

Pak-India Ties In Positive Zone: Khar

Ties between Pakistan and India had entered a positive zone, stressing that the two countries had spent too much time engaged in hostility and it was now time to seek peace through an uninterrupted and result-oriented dialogue process. Pakistan would not shy away from investing in the region, whether it was India or Afghanistan, because it had a selfish interest in seeking peace and would not hesitate to bend over backwards in the process. Pakistan has invested far too much in seeking hostility towards each other and too little in seeking peace. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told the Indian media that after a long time the Pakistan army was on board about the recent peace initiatives between the two countries. The foreign minister appeared in an upbeat mood at the outcome of the summit, saying Indo-Pak relations had moved forward from 'Thimpu spirit' to 'Addu hope'. Within ten years, Saarc will create a new model to lead Asia and will itself become so important that a meeting between a Pakistan and Indian prime minister will not be the main event or take centre stage and they can meet each other like they meet other leaders. Khar emphasized several times that her confidence came from the reality that the trust deficit had dropped on both sides. The issue of Samjhota Express, mass graves and other issues were brought up at the UN and in the British parliament. The prime minister discussed all issues including Kashmir. There has been progress on the Mumbai trial. Both prime ministers stated that they discussed all issues and they mean it. After talks between the two sides the future looked more positive and constructive.

[The News - November 14, 2011]

Indian Politics

Work On Lokpal Bill to Be Completed Soon

The Parliamentary Standing Committee going into the Lokpal Bill will complete its work 'soon', its chairman Abhishek Manu Singhvi. The speed and the direction of the committee are nothing short of a miracle. Hope is to see complete work soon and fast, but it is unfair to suggest timelines and deadlines. The committee has been given three months time to prepare its report. The committee, however, was not in operation for almost a month as the term of the earlier committee ended and reconstitution took time. Team Anna had first appeared before the committee in August this year after Anna Hazare's 13-day fast that month demanding that the Jan Lokpal Bill be passed in the monsoon session of parliament.

[The News - November 07, 2011]

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