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GENDER & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Women & Politics

Making Their Presence Felt: Women Legislators to Press For 10% Quota

Female parliamentarians agreed to work towards building consensus among political parties to provide a minimum of 10 per cent quota for women on “winnable” seats before the next elections. The declaration was made by the Women Parliamentary Caucus on the one-day roundtable conference titled “Strengthening Women’s Representation in Political & Legislative Process” to initiate a dialogue with political parties on the different ways to strengthening women’s representation in legislative assemblies. The conference highlighted the role women have played in the legislative process in recent years. The nexus between sustainable development & the role of women was acknowledged & recommended the need to give a minimum of 33 per cent women’s representation in the legislative assemblies. The political parties should take measures to enhance women’s participation in the legislatures, making it more transparent & effective. The parliamentarians committed to protect & preserve the provision of reserved seats for women in the National Assembly, Senate & the provincial assemblies. To enhance women’s representation in legislatures the need is to work within the respective political parties. Women’s representation at all levels of decision making in the political forums should be increased.

[The Express Tribune - September 30, 2011]

Women’s Empowerment & Gender Equality

Saudi King Gives Women Right to Vote

In a five-minute speech, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud said women will also take part in the next session of the unelected, advisory Shura Council, which vets legislation but has no binding powers. He said that because we refuse to marginalize women in society in all roles that comply with Shariah, we have decided, after deliberation with our senior ulama (clerics) & others to involve women in the Shura Council as members, starting from the next term. Women will be able to run as candidates in the municipal election & will even have a right to vote. Women’s rights are regarded as a litmus test for the government’s appetite for social & political reform. Saudi Arabia adheres to a strict version of Islamic law that enforces the segregation of the sexes. The king did not address the issue of women being allowed to drive. Although there is no written law against women driving, they are not issued licenses, effectively banning the practice. Women in Saudi Arabia must also have written approval from a male guardian, a father, husband, brother or son to leave the country, work or even undergo certain medical operations. King Abdullah has long been pushing cautious political reforms, but in a country where conservative clerics & senior members of the ruling family oppose even minor changes, liberalization has been very gradual. He built a new university for students of both sexes & encouraged women to participate more in the labor market. Despite calls on social media for widespread protests in Saudi Arabia, the only noteworthy demonstration was confined to the country’s Eastern Province, which is home to the country’s Shia minority. Activists in the country have long called for greater rights for women. Ruled by an absolute monarchy supported by conservative Wahabi clerics, Saudi Arabia is a conservative country where religious police patrol the streets to ensure public segregation between men & women.

[The Express Tribune - September 25, 2011]

KP Assembly – The Worst Place to Be a Woman

Women parliamentarians are being treated unfairly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly as the male majority ignores the resolutions presented by them, discouraging & discriminating against lawmakers who represent 52 percent of the country's population. The speakers & other ministers also ignore the opinions & remarks of the female legislators, who have been deprived of their rights as elected representatives of the people. The attitude of the male members is very discouraging & females are constantly being discriminated against. One example of Pakistan People's Party's member Noor Sahar's walkout from her set because the speaker, Kirmat Ullah Khan Chagharmati was not listening to her, adding that members from the opposition also supported her. Noor only continued after her Parliamentary leader Abdul Akbar Khan ordered her to resume the set. Women are already being underrepresented in the assembly & the lawmakers, should raise our voices if we want to be heard. She had grounded two bills in the assembly but they had been ignored & recently she had requested all female members to sign the Domestic Bill so that it is taken up in the assembly. She said the rights of the women needed to be defended well since in most areas of the province they were not even allowed to vote. Another PPP member Faiza Rasheed said it had been a year since she had presented the Labor Law Bill but it still had not been picked up by the speaker, adding that she had not been given the floor even once in three years. ANP lawmaker Zubida Ihsan said women need to be made aware of their rights so that they could become constructive members of the society.

[Pakistan Today - September 26, 2011]

AASHA Holds Awareness Workshop on Sexual Harassment

In order to convince the managements & employees of firms to abide by sexual harassment laws, Alliance against Sexual Harassment (AASHA) held a training session on sexual harassment legislation. Participants were mixed stakeholders that included Human Rights personnel from international organizations; employees of legal departments; potential inquiry committee members & officials from civilian organizations against gender bias; media personnel & lawyers. The training provided the opportunity for male & female participants to understand the point of view of the opposite gender. Many participants, especially male, agreed that the point of view of the opposite gender changed their perspective & attitude towards the issue of sexual harassment. Once the participants were clear on what sexual harassment entailed, they were given a detailed session on the two laws promulgated to curb sexual harassment: Protection Against Harassment of Women at Work Place Act 2010, which applies to the formal work sector; & the amendment to section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code which applies to the public & private sector. The participants were clarified that even though the name of the legislation was 'Protection against Harassment of Women at Work Place Act 2010', the Act used the word 'person' in its text & therefore it applies to men, women, children & even third genders. The participants agreed on the fact that the management of an organization had a high responsibility to implement the Act in their workplace but it was the responsibility of the employees to ensure that their organization implemented the law & to take their organization to court, where the organization in question would be fined anything from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 100,000 in case it was not in compliance with the legislation against sexual harassment.

[Pakistan Today - September 26, 2011]

Government, Civil Society Collaboration Stressed For Handling VAW Cases

Participants of the South Asian Conference on violence against women (VAW) have highlighted the need to enhance collaboration between state machinery, civil society & community to effectively handle the VAW cases. Speaking at the conference titled Reclaiming Space From Victimhood to Agency: State & Civil Society Response to Violence against Women they said that

it is not the responsibility of one department to facilitate the VAW victims, but law enforcers, civil society & general public will have to join hands to create enabling environment for violence survivors in police stations, courts, hospitals & in the society. The conference was aimed at providing a learning platform for civil society activists to review their struggle against VAW in the light of the engagement of women's movement. Three sessions focusing on gaps in medico legal system, shelter home for women & community responses were held where representatives of different countries shared their successes & weaknesses & called for regional collaboration to make violence victims the true agents of change. They stressed to establish a strong network of support system for those who dare to stand against the violence & agreed that insensitivity towards VAW among police officials is the weakest link in providing justice to the violence survivors. They emphasized for the training of medical experts & police officials dealing with VAW survivors on ethical aspects of the medico-legal procedures. The first session discussed medico-legal protocols & police response to violence. The discussion highlighted the challenges & progress in forensic testing, protocol for health professionals & challenge of making the largely male dominated, rigidly hierarchal institutions subservient to political interference respond to vulnerable groups on issues as sensitive as VAW. The session reviewed the protocols used in half way houses & shelters across South Asia, which have been instrumental in ensuring ethical & effective services for women survivors of violence. The last session focused on community responses including alternate dispute resolution mechanism.

[The News - September 24, 2011]

Concern Expressed Over Acid Throwing Incidents

The civil society has expressed concern over the recent acid throwing incidents where acid was used by the terrorist as a weapon to target innocent people with an aim of spreading panic & fear among general public. Recent incidents of acid throwing have given a new dimension to acid attacks in Pakistan. In past, these attacks were directed towards women in most of the cases. The UN representatives were briefed about the status of Acid & Burn Crime Act 2011. Momentum for acid & burn crime legislation initiated after Supreme Court issued direction to the government to establish a legal framework on acid & burn violence on November 29, 2010. Since then, an amendment in Pakistan Penal Code is lying with lower chamber of National Assembly. Additionally a comprehensive law was drafted with ASF & NCSW after extensive consultation with stakeholders that is pending in Council of Common Interest. There are around 200 acid attacks take place annually in the country in which women are the victims in 80 per cent of the cases. Currently, the civil society has to overcome three main challenges with regard to violence against women including legislation on domestic violence & acid crime & the parallel justice system. The efforts of women activists in Pakistan were highlighted & the steps taken by the NCSW to support women related legislation in the country. NCSW is lobbying with the women Parliamentarians in provinces so that the Domestic Violence Bill (DVB) can be approved from provincial assemblies. A presentation on Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 was given & the different mechanisms operating mostly on voluntary basis to implement the law were also elaborated. The law has yet to be institutionalized so that it starts operating within the state system. The law should make part of the modules of training institutions so that government officials can implement the law effectively in future. Decision taken by Pakistani government to transfer powers to provinces was appreciated but stressed for federal level monitoring of the implementation of international commitments in provinces.

[The News - September 26, 2011]

Self Immolation: Woman Burns Herself for Being Forced To Remarry

According to the police, the girl set herself on fire after her family refused to let her marry the man of her choice & were about to force her to marry someone else. Shumaila, 18, set herself on

fire a night before her wedding. Doctors have said that Shumaila has suffered third degree burns to over 65% of her body & she told that her parents were forcing her to marry a man of their choice. Shumaila & his neighbor Waqar were in love. They both knew that their families wouldn't approve so they got married in court secretly some time ago. Shumaila didn't tell her parents until they started arranging her marriage with her cousin but when she told them, they didn't listen & were trying to get her to marry her cousin. They set the date for September 17 & no matter how much she protested they refused. She even told them about the wedding but they said it did not matter. Civil Courts judge Asif Rehman married Shumaila & Waqar a few months ago & court records state that Waqar's friends acted as witnesses for the event. According to Shumaila, who recorded her statement with the police, she set fire to her bed, while she was sitting on it. Shumaila's 9-year-old neighbor Aqsa told that Shumaila had paid her to purchase kerosene oil from the market. Shumaila was admitted to Bahawal Victoria Hospital & her condition was critical. Shumaila was later shifted to the tehsil hospital from where she will be taken to Nishtar Hospital. A case has been registered under Section 324 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) in the Kotwali Police Station but no person has been nominated in this case. Station House officer (SHO) Rasheed Channar said that police officials were investigating the case.

[The Express Tribune - September 19, 2011]

Sexual Assault: Girl 'Raped' At Gunpoint at Friend's House

According to area residents, Moza Bukhsho Bhithar resident Majeeda Bibi went to her friend Alya Bibi's house to get her clothes stitched. Her friend went to the tailor & left her at the house to wait. While she was there her friend's brother attacked her at gun point. According to Majeeda, Alya's Brother Muhammad Razaq pointed a gun to her head & ordered her to keep quiet. She began screaming while he raped her & some neighbors stormed in & rescued the girl. The culprit escaped from the scene. Majeeda & her father approached the police but police officials refused to register a case. The two men who had helped save her went with them to file the case but police ignored the charges. Then Majeeda got a medical certificate but police told them to drop the case otherwise their lives would be in danger. Police officials said that they did not register the case due to lack of evidence but were investigating the matter. Majeeda's father Asadullah, who works as a laborer, said that the family had been receiving death threats ever since they tried to register the rape case. The victim's family has approached the court with the case & is seeking police protection against Razaq & his friends. Asadullah said that he had approached the Rahim Yar Khan District Police Officer (DPO) seeking justice & demanding that the police take action.

The names of the victim, her family & the accused have been changed to protect their identity

[The Express Tribune - September 19, 2011]

Gang Rape: Woman Twice Abducted & Raped By the Same Men

According to police officials, Gopipur resident Tooba Shams had been kidnapped at gunpoint eleven months ago by four landlords & raped. The men got her to sign blank papers & later tried to seize her property. The papers included a marriage contract & property transfer documents but she had the 'marriage' annulled. According to the original FIR lodged with the Satrah police station under Section 376-II, Tooba was abducted by four landlords Nadeem Mughal, Rana Bilal, Amir Shafi & Muhammad Sadiq while she was going to a local religious seminary in the village eleven months ago. She recorded a statement saying that the accused took her to a warehouse & gang raped her for a month. She finally managed to escape them one night & sought protection with a Darul Aman. Then she filed a case with the police & a case for the annulment of the marriage with the courts. Tooba had also submitted a medical test proving that she had been gang raped. A local court in Daska had dissolved the 'marriage' with accused Nadeem Mughal.

On July 6, 2011, the accused kidnapped her again & took her to Pasrur, where they gang raped her for three days as punishment for annulling the marriage. Tooba is now pregnant with her rapist's baby & they are still not arrested.

All names have been changed to protect the identity of the victim

[The Express Tribune - September 27, 2011]

HR WATCH

Child Rights

Child Labor on the Rise

'Hazardous child labor is on the rise in most of the world among older children aged between 15 to 17' was reported by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The ILO drew attention to this urgent issue by commissioning new studies in Pakistan to examine occupational risks to children working in ten sectors. Preliminary results showed that one of the highest rates of injury was being found in stone crushing where children's lungs were damaged by silica dust & they suffered bone injuries. Amputations had been documented of children in small workshops & repair shops. Representatives of provincial governments from Sindh, Punjab, KPK, & Baluchistan met to examine the results of these studies & to develop strategies for addressing this urgent problem, which jeopardized the future employability of Pakistani youth. Hazardous work of children in specified sectors can be eradicated, given a concerted effort by Government, employers, workers & civil society.

[The News - September 26, 2011]

Call for Urgent Action to Protect Child Rights

Various research studies conclude that more than six million children in Pakistan are deprived of education & learning support due to various forms of disability. Denying disabled children their right to education is one of the greatest injustices & violation of their fundamental rights. Social science researchers, special education experts & physiotherapists say disability among children should not become a hurdle in their development & progress rather they should be given preference so that they should not lag behind fellow children in growth & schooling. They called for protection & promotion of the rights of the disabled children, especially in the aftermath of the 18th Amendment in the Constitution that devolved both education & special education ministries. They called for a prompt & urgent action to provide protection to these children. Special Education does not have capacity to cater to the education needs of over six million children with disabilities. So there is a need to enroll them in inclusive education system to achieve target of high enrolment of children as committed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). International & national legislation recognize that all children have several inherent rights & governments as well as societies have obligation to protect & promote these rights. Unfortunately neglect of disabled children is still an issue of concern for Pakistan. Children with disabilities have the right to receive schooling in mainstream schools along with the same-age students. Inclusive education recognizes that all children can learn & that teaching must cater to the needs of students to utilize their maximum abilities. Even in many families parents consider their disabled children as an economic liability & don't pay much attention to their needs. Due to indifferent attitude of family & community members, the incidence of runaway children among disabled children is quite higher. Crime groups take advantage of such situation & use these children as professional beggars.

[The Nation - September 05, 2011]

Conflict Watch

Balochistan Situation Going From Bad to Worse, Says HRCP

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Balochistan chapter expressed its serious concern over the increasing number of decomposed bodies of missing persons being recovered from different parts of Balochistan. The situation is going from bad to worse in the province, as security personnel themselves were not secure from attacks. They said that most of the people did not come forward to record their statements out of fear. The hoardings displayed in Hindu dominated areas of the province demanding security for members of the community reflect the state of lawlessness & prevailing sense of fear. They said the numbers of mutilated dead bodies of missing persons are increasing with each passing day. Around 188 decomposed dead bodies have so far been dumped in desolate places in different parts of Balochistan since June 4, 2010. Most of the victims were political opponents, students & cream of the society. Those lawyers who appeared before courts in connection with the cases of missing persons were also killed. The Commission had set up a special cell for collecting evidence & documents about persons who were whisked away by the authorities. Around 12 families have submitted documents relating to the disappearances of their loved ones. Those who resurfaced later on or were freed are reluctant to record their statements in courts.

Petitions were also filed in the Supreme Court, Balochistan High Court & other courts regarding enforced disappearances, & immediate steps were desperately needed to resolve the issue. It is pertinent to mention here that the interior minister claimed merely 44 people were missing in Balochistan, while, on the contrary, relatives of Baloch missing persons say they have complete data about 1,300 missing persons. HRCP office bearers demanded the government to seek political solution to problems of Balochistan instead of using brute force. Issues are political in nature, thus negotiations must be held with the stakeholders. According to the HRCP, 83 people, including teachers, political leaders & policemen, were killed in 50 incidents of target killings this year while 58 persons lost their lives & 74 were injured in 58 bomb blasts. Around 26 incidents of kidnapping for ransom took place in Balochistan in which two persons were killed & five Hindus were released after paying ransom. HRCP has expressed its serious concern over the recovery of bullet-riddled corpses of missing persons & said such kinds of actions were condemnable. HRCP has criticized the government for not taking any action or arresting any person responsible for abducting, killing & maiming people. According to the HRCP, even the personnel of law-enforcement agencies are not safe anymore from attacks by miscreants. Minority members confront kidnappings & forced marriages. They said that even people of the Hindu community had now stopped sending their children to schools due to lack of security. Traders, doctors & even retailers are being kidnapped or threatened.

[Daily Times - September 18, 2011]

Protest Held in Quetta against Sectarian Killings

Activists of Balochistan Shia Council, Hazara Qaumi Jirga, Shia Ulema Council & Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen held a demonstration against sectarian killings in the province. The activists took out a procession & gathered at the Musa check post. They raised slogans against the government & in favor of the armed forces. The government had failed to control the law & order situation in Balochistan & called for the imposition of governor's rule in the province. They pointed out that terrorists killed 29 people belonging to the Hazara community on Sept 20 in Mastung & Quetta & another three people of the same community on Sept 23 in the provincial capital. However, the police were yet to arrest the culprits. They called for an impartial probe into the killings in Mastung. They said a government that could not protect the people's lives had no right to be in power. They said there was no dispute between the Shias & the Sunnis, but some terrorists were attempting to drive a wedge between them. They expressed the hope that people would

frustrate the designs of the conspirators. The demonstrators ended their protest following assurances by army officials that law-enforcement personnel would provide protection to them & the killers would be arrested soon. Shams Mengal of the BMM said the killers of party leader Akmal Raisani, who was assassinated last month, had not been arrested till now. He claimed that local Indian agents were behind the target killings in the province to create disturbances among the people.

[Dawn - September 26, 2011]

Crime Rate Surges across Country: FAFEN

The law & order in the country can be gauged from the fact that around one-fifth of the FIRs registered in 66 districts across the country in June were about theft, car lifting & robbery. According to a FAFEN crime monitoring report, of the total 39,497 registered FIRs, 7,204 (18 percent) were about cases of theft, snatching of vehicles & robberies. On average, 109 FIRs were registered for these crimes in each of the 66 monitored districts. FAFEN monitors collected statistics about registered FIRs against 27 offences covered by Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) from the 66 offices of district police officers (DPOs) in June. Of the monitored districts, 28 were from Punjab, 17 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 13 from Sindh, 7 from Balochistan & 1 from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). The report said 13 percent of the total 39,497 FIRs were of crimes involving physical harm, including attempted murder, assault, & murder, with Lahore reporting the highest—380—cases of attempted murder.

[Pakistan Today - September 09, 2011]

Target Killings in Karachi

Eight Killed In Different Acts of Violence, Mishaps

Eight people were killed in separate acts of violence & mishaps in the metropolis.

1. A man was shot dead at Gouda Colony, Bin Qasim within the jurisdiction of Shah Latif police station. Fifty-year-old Gul Mohammad Baloch was standing outside his house when some unidentified armed men shot him dead. SHO Malik Ishaq said that victim was a laborer by profession & had an enmity with his relatives which might be reason behind the murder. The victim was a father of five & hailed from Balochistan.
2. A man was killed in mysterious circumstances within the remit of Malir Cantt police station. Forty-year-old Ghulam Mustafa, son of Ghulam Hussain, was found slaughtered inside his house. Police shifted his body to a hospital for medico-legal formalities. Sub Inspector Azeem Solangi said the victim was a civilian barber & used to live alone in the quarter. "Initially police have established that the victim committed suicide", he added. The body was moved to victim's hometown, Punjab after an autopsy.
3. In another incident, a man committed suicide at Jamshed Road area within the limits of Jamshed Quarter police station. The 35-year-old man, Raza, son of Yameen, hanged himself to death at his house. The body was shifted to Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) but his family took it without having the legal formalities completed.
4. Separately, a taxi driver was crushed to death near Chota Gate within the jurisdiction of Airport police station. The 50-year-old man, Mohammad Ashiq, son of Pir Bux, was a resident of Shah Faisal. He was in his taxi when a speeding passenger bus rammed into the taxi, killing him on the spot. Police have arrested the responsible driver Imran Noor. The body was shifted to JPMC for post-mortem. Police have registered a case against the responsible driver while further investigation was underway.

5. Similarly, in another incident, a man was crushed to death at Vita Chowrangi, Korangi within the precincts of Awami Colony police station. The 36-year-old man, Jamshed, son of Salleh, was a resident of Model Colony. He was crossing a road near Vita Chowrangi when a speeding vehicle knocked & killed him. The body was shifted to JPMC for an autopsy & later handed over to the heirs.
6. A man was electrocuted at Ittehad Town, Baldia within the limits of Mauripur police station. The 26-year-old Mohammad Adnan, son of Mohammad Ahmed, was a resident of Ittehad Town. He touched an electric pole near his house & received fatal shocks. The body was shifted to victim's hometown, Mianwali after post-mortem.
7. A man was shot dead, while other sustained injuries in Old Muzaffarabad Colony within the jurisdiction of Quidabad police station. The 30-year-old man, Ishaq Mehsud, son of Khan Mohammad Mehsud, was a resident of Old Muzaffarabad Colony. He was standing in front of his house when unidentified armed men opened fire on him; resultantly he died on the spot. A passerby, Zardad, received bullet injuries in the incident. The body was shifted to JPMC for legal formalities. Police official said the victim hailed from North Waziristan & had arrived in Karachi few days ago.
8. Separately, a man was crushed to death on Natha Khan Railway track within the limits of Drigh Road railway police station. The 30-year-old man, Ramzan, son of Usman, a resident of Natha Khan Goth, was crossing the railway track when a local train crushed him to death. The body was shifted to JPMC for legal formalities & later handed over to his family.

[Daily Times - September 18, 2011]

150 Suspects Arrested, Cache of Weapons Recovered In Karachi

The law enforcement agencies (LEAs) continued the surgical operation in various localities of the metropolis, including Lyari, held 150 suspects, recovered huge cache of weapons & found two torture cells. In a raid in Lyari, they cordoned off Gul Muhammad Lane, Nayabad, Slaughter Yard, Singo Lane, Shah Baig Lane, Chakiwara, Kalakot & other areas. The law enforcers also held Zafar Baloch leader of Aman Committee but released him within couple of hours. However, Rangers did not confirm his arrest. They said that Rangers also picked up over 130 suspects but released many of them except 17 alleged terrorists including Rashid Rekha, Mullah Nisar, Saeed, Rashid alias Tension, Asif & Hanif. The sources also confirmed that Rangers recovered three dungeons where people were brought for tortures & killing. The two were recovered from Gul Muhammad Lane & one from Nayabad while Rangers was yet to confirm the recovery of dungeons. The LEAs also seized cameras installed in various locations & mobile jamming devices. Rangers claimed to have recovered a huge cache of weapons, including licensed weapons. The illegal weapons recovered were rocket launchers, SMGs, hand grenades, Kalashnikovs & other sophisticated weapons. It is pertinent to mention here that Rangers & police conducted at least four other operations. Similarly, law enforcers also cordoned off the area of Baldia, Dawood Goth & arrested 15 alleged miscreants. They also carried out the operation in different areas of the Burns Road & picked up seven suspects besides seizing weapons. The sources said that LEAs arrested a man who is an active worker of a political party but no official of police & Rangers confirmed it.

[Daily Times - September 26, 2011]

Four Die In Separate Incidents of Mishaps in Karachi

1. A man died in mysterious circumstances in his shop at Meera Naka within the precincts of Chakiwara police station. Rohail, 28, son of Iqbal, was a resident of Gulistan Colony, Lyari. Police official said he was the owner of a tyre shop situated at Coal Go down, Meera Naka.

He went to the washroom of shop & did not return after quite some time. His workers, after waiting for some time, broke the door of the washroom & found his strangulated body. Police have initially established that Rohail committed suicide because of his financial problems. Body was shifted to the Civil Hospital Karachi for medico-legal formalities & later handed over to the heirs.

2. Separately, a man died after falling from a lift in Gulistan-e-Jauhar within the limits of Sharah-e-Faisal police station. Technician Somar, 26, son of Kumar, was repairing the lift of Sunny Pride Apartments, situated at Jauhar Morr, when it malfunctioned & collapsed. The ill-fated technician died on the spot. Police shifted his body to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) for autopsy, which was later handed over to the heirs. Victim was a resident of the same area & hailed from Umerkot of interior Sindh.
3. Meanwhile, a woman was electrocuted at her house in Kala Board, Mehmoodabad within the jurisdiction of Tipu Sultan police station. Zubaida, 40, wife of Latif, received a fatal electric shock from the washing machine of her house. Area people shifted the woman to JPMC where doctors confirmed her death. They took the body without having the medico-legal formalities completed.
4. In a road accident, an elderly man was crushed to death at Nasir Jump, Korangi, within the limits of Korangi Industrial Area police station. The victim, yet unidentified, was crossing the road near Nasir Jump when a speeding vehicle knocked him & fled. He received serious injuries & was moved to JPMC for medical treatment where he breathed his last. Later police moved his body to Edhi Morgue for identification.

[Daily Times – September 27, 2011]

Target Killings & Other Terrorist Incidents in Karachi during September

Following are the major incidents of target killings which took place in Karachi during the month of September:

- September 4:** At least four people, a woman among them, were killed and two others injured during a clash between Deoband and Barelvi sects in Godhra area of New Karachi area of Karachi.
- September 19:** At least eight people were killed and 30 others injured in a suicide car bomb attack targeting SSP CID Chaudhry Aslam in the Darakhshan area of Karachi.

(Compiled From Different Dailies)

Terrorist Incidents in September

DATE	PLACE	KILLED	INJURED
September 1	Kurram Agency of FATA	7	-
	Lakki Marwat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	5	35
September 7	Quetta	28	60
September 11	Hisokhel village of North Waziristan Agency FATA	4	-
September 13	Matani, a suburb of Peshawar	5	16
September 14	Janikhel area of Frontier Region Bannu/FATA	3	-

September 15	Lower Dir District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	45	63
	Bara tehsil in Khyber Agency of FATA	6	-
September 16	Gawaki area of Kurram Agency in FATA	7	2
September 18	Akakhel area/Bara tehsil/Khyber Agency/FATA	15	-
	Kurram Agency	3	-
	Lower Dir District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	10	-
September 19	Nishtarabad Chowk/GT Road/Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	5	33
September 20	Mastung District and Quetta city of Balochistan	29	-
	Dabori area of Orakzai Agency in FATA	29	-
September 21	Khwezai tehsil in Mohmand Agency of FATA	3	-
September 22	Chamarkand village of Bajaur Agency in FATA	5	8
	Mingora town in Swat District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	1	-
September 23	Miramshah, headquarter of NWA in FATA	6	-
	Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency	4	-
	Sayrab area of Quetta in Balochistan	3	3
September 24	Lower Dir District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	15	-
	Orakzai and Khyber Agencies in FATA	14	-
September 27	Wana of South Waziristan Agency of FATA	3	-
September 28	Sharag in Harnai District of Balochistan	3	5
September 30	Baghar village of South Waziristan Agency in FATA	3	-
	Kalat District of Balochistan	3	-

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

Minority Rights

Woman Linked To Blasphemy Case Calls for Protection

Samreen Masood, a housewife linked to blasphemy case demanded protection & justice to herself & her husband while addressing a press conference. She said that her brother, Raheel Masood Wasti, was booked in a blasphemy case (295-C) a few months back & her family had shifted to a village of Khairpur district to seek shelter. She said that Raheel was allegedly involved in desecrating the holy pages of Quran, adding, that the police had already registered an FIR (301/2010) with the blasphemy charges under section 295-A & B. Samreen claimed that both accused of blasphemy case, namely Raheel & Zafar Iqbal, had already left the country. However, police have recently nominated another family member Khalid Masood Wasti in the same case after further investigations of several months. Police had tortured her husband Faisal Yousuf while he was travelling to Khairpur city from the village. She demanded the IG Sindh Police & other relevant authorities to provide protection & justice to herself & family. Meanwhile, police sources told that the investigation of case under the eye witnesses' statement presented at a local court of Karachi revealed that Khalid was also involved in the same incident of blasphemy. The police further said that the accused Samreen, who got married after the incident, was living with her husband miles away from Karachi, giving a perception that she had

left the country. As per sources, police on a tip-off finally traced her whereabouts & raided her house; however the culprit Khalid who was living in her house escaped from the scene. Police sources have denied the allegations that they had tortured Yousuf & claim that an angry mob had ransacked the house of Samreen & tortured her husband since he was sheltering an accused of blasphemy but the police timely intervened & saved his life, while a case was registered against him as well.

[Daily Times - September 06, 2011]

‘Girl Should Not Have Been Expelled For ‘Blasphemy’

Religious scholars & civil society members took to the streets to oppose the expulsion of a Christian schoolgirl for misspelling the word ‘naat’. They also demanded an inquiry into the actions of the school administration that had expelled the girl. Faryal Bhatti, an eighth-grade student at Sir Syed Girls High School, POF Colony, Havelian, was accused of committing blasphemy when she miswrote the word ‘naat’ as ‘laanat’. Faryal apologized for what she said was an inadvertent spelling error but she & her mother, a staff nurse at the POF Hospital, Havelian, were hauled up before the POF managing director, where it was decided that Faryal will be expelled & she & her family will have to vacate their residential quarters. The family has since moved to an unidentified location although Faryal’s mother has reportedly been transferred to POF Wah. Dr M Aslam Khaki, an advocate of the Supreme Court & a Juris Consult of the Federal Shariat Court (FSC), said that the FSC had clearly ruled in the Dr M Ismael Qureshi case that if the accused carried out his or her actions unintentionally then the act can be pardoned. He said that the FSC had ruled that the offence of blasphemy is Hadd & that there is a clear verdict by the Holy Prophet (PBUH) that the hadood must be spared if there is doubt. In this case, Khaki said, the doubt arose from the girl’s young age & the similarity between the two words. Many religious scholars & ulema agreed that Faryal should be pardoned. Ziaul Haq Naqshbandi, a spokesperson of the Tahafuz-e-Namoos-e-Risalat Mahaz, blamed Faryal’s teacher for the incident. The real culprit is the man who set this question paper for the Christian girl. If you are not taught Islam during your childhood then even a Muslim student can make such a mistake.

[The Express Tribune - September 26, 2011]

Ahmedi Shot Dead In Faisalabad

An Ahmedi citizen, Naseem Ahmed, was assassinated by unidentified assailants in Faisalabad after terrorists distributed pamphlets in the city a few weeks ago urging citizens to kill Ahmedis. According to details, 55-year-old Naseem was sleeping in his house when, at around 1:15am, four men entered his house, opened fire on him & escaped from the crime scene. A news report had informed about plans of execution of terrorist activities against Ahmedis in the region. The report had further mentioned that the terrorists were collaborating with other wings & laying out a proper plan of Ahmedis’ target killings & had started distributing hate material like pamphlets & flyers in this regard. The terrorists had also released a list of prominent Ahmedi businessmen & other personalities living in Faisalabad & surrounding areas by mentioning their names & addresses, saying that the Ahmedi citizens of the country were involved in “conspiracies against Islam & Pakistan”. An extremist group, All Pakistan Students Khatam-e-Nabuwat Federation, also took part in distributing hate material against Ahmedis amongst the citizens living in Faisalabad. The government & law enforcement authorities did not take due notice of the people distributing pamphlets & other hate material, ignorance that eventually led to the killing of Naseem Ahmed. Naseem left four daughters, a son & his widow to mourn after him. Meanwhile, police has been unable to find clues against the murderers & no arrest had been made till the filing of this report. Ahmedi community’s spokesperson Saleemuddin said the incident was a result of the recently launched pamphlet & hate material distribution campaign

by terrorists in the region. He said that those who had distributed the pamphlets had also mentioned their names, emails & phone numbers on the documents but police could not arrest single one of them, which definitely boosted their confidence & encouraged them to go ahead with their vicious plans.

[Daily Times - September 05, 2011]

Hindus Still Tied In Knots over Marriage Registration

The largest minority in Pakistan is struggling to register marriages due to chronic delays in the passage of the Hindu Marriage Act. The draft bill, proposed in 2008 but yet to be tabled before parliament, seeks to address the decades-old problem faced by the Hindu community in Pakistan, which numbers approximately four million. In Pakistan there is no system for the registration of marriages of certain minorities, including Hindus, Sikhs & Baha'is. There is, however, marriage registration for Christians. The government & some Hindus do not see eye-to-eye over the controversial divorce clause as there is no concept of divorce in Hindu religion. Hindus will get Computerized National Identity Cards (CNIC) if the bill gets passed. Pakistani Hindus often face difficulties when travelling abroad due to a lack of a marriage certificate. Clause 13, the controversial passage of the proposed 16-page bill, states that any Hindu can divorce his wife or her husband at any time & in any court. Various conditions have been proposed for divorce proceedings. The new draft empowers any court to entertain any petition for the legal dissolution of a marriage. Various other rules have also been mentioned in the bill, such as when divorcees may marry again, the legal rights of children, void & voidable marriages, the punishment of bigamy & punishments for other contraventions of Hindu marriage laws. The draft also described practical ramifications of divorce cases, such as the content & verification of petitions, custody of children, ownership of property & savings, & repeals. Minister for National Harmony Akram Masih Gill said that the first priority is to get the Hindu Marriage Act passed at all cost. He admitted that the divorce clause remains a bone of contention between the government & Hindu community. However, the minister is optimistic a consensus can be reached on the issue after taking all stakeholders into confidence. He added that the government had sought the opinion of Hindu community leaders from Hindu Panchayat (Karachi Division), Nagarparkar in Tharparkar & Rahim Yar Khan, who drafted the bill for marriage registration based on the Indian model.

[The Express Tribune - September 19, 2011]

HR Related Issues

Unemployed Youth Being Lured By Terrorists: Gilani

Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani said Pakistan is facing the huge challenge of extremism & its unemployed youth are falling prey to terrorism primarily because of a lack of opportunities & jobs. The democratic government is working hard to evolve a comprehensive mechanism to equip the youth with necessary skills aimed at the productive utilization of their talent within the overall economic framework. The Prime Minister said Pakistani exports have reached \$25 billion, which is the highest in the country's history. Expatriate Pakistanis are sending \$11 billion as remittances annually, the second largest source of foreign exchange earnings. What is required is imparting quality skills to the youth. The Prime Minister termed the agreement signed with the EU as another milestone of the meaningful relationship with the European Union, especially Netherlands & Germany. Germany & Netherlands have agreed to provide over 42 million Euros to Pakistan for the promotion of technical training. The Prime Minister said Pakistan is a resource-rich country & our youth comprise almost 60% of the population, placing Pakistan at a better position compared to the developed world which is teeming with an aging

population. The need of the hour is to equip the youth with competitive skills to espouse the cause of social development. The prime minister said the Pakistan government is mindful of the fact that against an annual target of a million skilled force set in the Medium Term Development Framework, Pakistan's current capacity in Technical & Vocational Education & Training (TVET) institutes only caters for little over three hundred thousand. The National Vocational & Technical Training Commission have been tasked at the federal level to devise policies & strategies to identify & address problem areas in vocational & technical training. This area has traditionally been neglected in the past & with the efforts of NAV&TTC it is on its path to improve the quality, relevance & suitability of the skills imparted.

[The News - September 15, 2011]

GOVERNANCE WATCH

Political Governance

Prominent Baloch Militant Leader Ready to Join Mainstream Politics: Raisani

Senator Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani made a startling disclosure that a prominent militant leader had approached him agreeing to end his militancy & join the mainstream politics within the framework of one Pakistan. The senator said that the militant leader had contacted him from a foreign country & expressed his readiness to join the mainstream politics by ending his campaign for greater Balochistan. He did not impose any conditions or place any demand but expressed his willingness to join the peaceful political struggle within the framework of law & the constitution & now it is up to the rulers that how they treat this development. Raisani said the Baloch leader now wanted to join mainstream politics & launch a peaceful struggle for the rights of people of Balochistan. Commenting on the possible outcome of this breakthrough, Lashkari said that track record of Pakistani rulers had not been good. If we analyze situation, the rulers took an oath on the holy Quran but even then they betrayed Nawab Nauroz Khan Zarakzai. He died in jail & his sons were executed in Hyderabad Jail. The purpose was to give a shock to the Baloch people. It was the greatest betrayal of the political history. Nawab Nauroz Zarakzai Khan along with his commanders & tribesmen took to hills in 1958 & launched the second militancy in Balochistan. However, he surrendered & put down weapons after a dictator took oath by taking Quran in his hands that there will be negotiations. & in return he was betrayed. Lashkari also categorically said those who contacted him were not involved in target killings or killing of innocent & unarmed people in Balochistan.

[Daily Times - September 06, 2011]

PPP, MQM, ANP Responsible For Karachi Anarchy: PTI

Pakistan People's Party, Mutahidda Qaumi Movement & Awami National Party cannot find a way out of the anarchy in Karachi because their armed wings are the cause of the anarchy & only a neutral governor rule under a powerful administration can restore peace & stability in the city. Imran Khan said that if the May 12 incident had been handled sensibly & all those responsible were punished on time, Karachi would have been a different city now, adding that major responsibility of the present situation was on the MQM's shoulders followed by the PP & ANP since all these parties were the forerunners in organizing & funding land & bhatta mafias. He said the statements of Zulfiqar Mirza should be taken very seriously because he, being the former interior minister of Sindh, was a close aide of President Asif Ali Zardari, adding that the allegations made were directly related to the integrity & stability of the country & the president, prime minister & Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik should step down but they were so shameless that they were busy looting the country to amass more wealth abroad. He said where the PPP government had doubled the foreign debt within three years; the PML-N government in Punjab had failed to maintain law & order in the province. He said 11,000 citizens had been kidnapped during the current year including the son of former Governor Salman Taseer while only 700 were recorded kidnapped in 2009.

[Pakistan Today – September 04, 2011]

Federal & Provincial Governments

Dangerous Trend May Rollback 18th Amendment Spirit: Rabbani

Senator Mian Raza Rabbani spoke his heart out after observing a dangerous trend that may rollback spirit of the 18th constitutional Amendment & warned that any such conclusion would be detrimental to the federation of Pakistan. Spirit of the 18th Amendment is in danger to be rolled back. This roll back must be stopped. We have the political history of state suppression, state disappearances, & state murder & torture. We have the history where the provinces were denied the rights to promote their languages. With his bold & critical analysis of post-18th Amendment era Senator Rabbani captivated the audience of that intellect in an hour-long speech. Despite his affiliation with the ruling party he blamed the establishment & some elements within the ruling elite of trying to circumvent the process of devolution. Known as chief architect of the 18th constitutional amendment, Rabbani earlier headed a committee to formulate the amendment & later a commission to oversee the implementation process. Senator Rabbani revealed the implementation commission faced a strong opposition from several quarters in the second phase of the devolution of ministries to the provinces. He specified that the nation was misled on the question of devolving the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to the provinces. Making another example he said the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission was supposed to be handed over to the provinces, but several times the Implementation Commission faced resistance from the Prime Minister Secretariat.

[The News - September 18, 2011]

Hunger Strike against Corruption Observed

Activists of a civil society organization observed a token hunger strike outside the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to protest against endemic corruption & deteriorating law & order situation in the country. A hunger strike camp was set up under the aegis of newly formed 'Baidar Pakistan' attended by Tariq Khan, Ashfaq Ahmad, Brig (r) Qayyum Sher, former provincial minister Ihsanullah Khan, Qayyum Khan, Rizwanullah Mahsud, Arifullah Khan, Arbab Sarir Khan & other members of the civil society. Speaking on the occasion, Provincial Convener Fayyaz Ali said that corruption was spreading like a cancer, paralyzing state institutions. He said that corrupt elements were pocketing national wealth & called upon social & political workers, students & the general public to forge unity among their ranks & play a role to purge the society of all ills. He said there was a dire need to devise a comprehensive strategy to make the country prosperous besides unmasking corrupt elements.

[The News - September 18, 2011]

Bipolar Focus: PPP May Go For Early Polls after Senate Race Pans Out

The outcome of Senate elections seems to be the focus of both mainstream political parties: the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is considering calling fresh parliamentary elections immediately after elections for half of Senate seats, while the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) wants the polls to be held ahead of the crucial elections. The possibility of holding early polls, according to top party leaders, was being discussed by party cadre said to be close to President Asif Ali Zardari. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani was also in favor of dissolving parliament & announcing elections once the provincial assemblies elect 50 new senators next year. The parliamentary elections in Pakistan are due after the current administration completes its term in March 2013. The current political mixture is likely to give the PPP an unprecedented edge in the Senate election, & the situation would not be acceptable for the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The PPP has 20-plus senators now, & the number is likely to reach 40 after the Senate polls. Individuals close to both Zardari & Gilani said

the proposal was being considered as “a pre-emptive measure” to blunt PML-N’s plan to start anti-government public agitation. The party ranks are constantly haunted by the specter of the army taking advantage of extreme political instability if the opposition manages to create chaos on the streets was another powerful factor, & this fear is said to be another reason which may sway most of them to the idea of holding early elections. The PML-N is going to hold a crucial meeting to finalize a strategy for mobilizing masses to press for its demands. Officials in PPP said the proposal was also discussed during the meetings of party’s core committee in recent months. Subsequently, President Zardari ordered the party cadre to prepare for elections, & moves like forming new alliances for Karachi & Punjab, & the announcement about bifurcating Punjab along ethnic lines came after that. PPP insiders said that decision like carving a Seraiki province out of Punjab & political alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) had already dimmed the prospects of Nawaz Sharif’s party mobilizing masses for its demand in a big way. About fears within the party that some other ‘institution’ might take advantage of chaos on the streets are said to be “just speculations.”

[The Express Tribune - September 06, 2011]

PML-N yet To Hold Provincial Elections

Even six weeks after getting its central office-bearers, the Pakistan Muslim League-N is unable to hold provincial elections reportedly because of deep differences within the party, especially in Sindh & Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The leadership was facing difficulty in the choice of provincial office-bearers because of “strong groupings” at the lower level, with some important members even threatening to quit the party if not given positions of their choice. After the election of Nawaz Sharif as party president & other central office-bearers at a general council meeting in Islamabad on July 27, the leadership had decided to complete the already-delayed elections of provincial chapters by Sept 30. But no serious efforts have been made so far by the leadership to resolve differences. Former chief minister Syed Ghous Ali Shah has openly criticized Mr. Sharif for appointing him senior vice-president, instead of president of the party’s Sindh chapter. Senator Ishaq Dar reportedly arranged a meeting between Mr. Shah & Mr. Sharif in Madina last week, but it is not clear if the differences have been resolved. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, former secretary general Saranjam Zamindar has already announced that he will quit the party if his demands, which are of local nature, are not met. The leadership is also undecided about the post of president of the all-important Punjab chapter. Shahbaz Sharif is being tipped for the office. The Sharif brothers were seriously considering giving some important position to MNA Hamza Shahbaz, the son of the chief minister. There was a group within the party which opposed the move, saying it would damage the party’s image because critics would get an opportunity to term the PML-N a family affair of the Sharifs. Earlier, the party leadership had to defer its decision of appointing 82-year-old Sartaj Aziz as general secretary at the last moment after realizing an apparent unrest in the party.

[Dawn - September 09, 2011]

Demand for New Province

PM Vows to Give Seraiki Masses Separate Province

Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani said that new province for southern Punjab would remove the sense of deprivation among people & the creation of a new province was part the PPP’s manifesto. He said his party would give the Seraiki masses a separate province & no one should dare oppose it. Addressing a public gathering after performing the ground-breaking ceremony of the multi-million housing project for flood-affected people, Gilani said people would reject those who were against the creation of a new province. He assured the large gathering that the

new province would guarantee their rights. The prime minister delivered his address in the Seraiki language, & said it was due to the demand of the native people who desired a separate province. During the ceremony, Gilani was informed that the New Muzaffargarh City project would comprise 1,274 new homes to be built with donations collected by the people of Turkey to help their flood-hit brethren in Pakistan. A 432-kanal piece of land has been allocated for the purpose in the city's suburbs. The prime minister was informed that 500 houses would be built in Fazalpur & another 346 in Jampur Tehsil of Rajanpur District. Another 2,000 homes would be built in Shikarpur (Sindh) & 500 in Dera Allah Yar (Balochistan). The overall cost of the houses being built for the flood-hit people of the areas was estimated at \$138 million. The work on the initiative began in March 2011 and it would be completed in 700 days by Feb 2013. Prime Minister Gilani said that Turkey would build 4,620 residential units for the flood affected people of Pakistan. He said other ancillary facilities like schools, mosques & health centres would also be constructed. Prime Minister Gilani urged the people to reach out to help their brethren who were homeless & do as much as possible so that they may be rehabilitated without any delay. He said an installation of Parco refinery would be set up in the vicinity which would generate employment opportunities in the area.

[The News - September 18, 2011]

Jamali for New Provinces to Ensure Good Governance

More provinces should be created for good administration & relevant committees should address this issue. He said that parliamentarians should give a policy for development instead of getting funds for parliament. Jamali said that in Balochistan an MPA gets over Rs. 250 million for development but still there is no development in the province. He believed that the standing committees do not fully play their role & do not deliver like they should. The Senate deputy chairman was of the view that every political party should give 33 percent tickets to women for the general election. The PILDAT Directory of Parliamentary Committees, civil society & research organizations have been prepared to fill the gap between parliament & the civil society & to serve as a resource tool for parliament to facilitate the use of professional research sources in addressing issues relevant to the parliamentary committees. It is an attempt to promote the formation of more purposeful linkages between parliamentary committees & the civil society. The directory attempts to give information of all standing committees of parliament as well as of the provincial assemblies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab & Sindh. No standing committee has been elected in the Balochistan Assembly after the general election of 2008; therefore it is the only legislature whose committee information does not appear in the directory. In this directory, information of 28 standing committees of the Senate, 32 standing committees of the National Assembly, 33 standing committees of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, 38 standing committees of Punjab & 30 standing committees of the Sindh Assembly have been given while the profiles of 90 organizations have been presented in the first edition of the directory.

[Daily Times - September 23, 2011]

ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

Facts & Figures

Current Account Deficit Narrows to \$189 Million

Pakistan's current account deficit narrowed to \$189 million during the first two months of the current fiscal year against \$1.016 billion in the corresponding month last year. The current account deficit for August stood at \$89 million, according to the statistics of balance of payment released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The major components of the balance of payment for July/August included exports & remittances that had prevented widening in the current account deficit. The exports maintained the growth rate of 20 percent to \$4.167 billion in July/August 2011 against \$3.465 billion during the corresponding period last year. However, there are concerns over rising imports, which widened the trade deficit to \$3.328 billion, up by 19.54 percent against \$2.784 billion. The remittances sent home by overseas Pakistanis also registered phenomenal growth of 39.58 percent to \$2.406 billion during the first two months of the current fiscal year against \$1.724 billion in the corresponding months last year. The flow of remittances during August registered record high receivables in a month as the central bank received \$1.31 billion during the month. This was sixth consecutive month when Pakistani workers remitted over \$1 billion in a month. Overseas Pakistanis would continue to send their savings to homeland due to uncertainties in world economies. The current account balance for the last fiscal year ended June posted \$437 million surplus after six years against a deficit of \$3.94 billion in the preceding fiscal year. The current account surplus of \$1.445 billion was last seen in FY04, which was declined from preceding year of \$4.082. The surplus in FY11 was attributed mainly to historic high remittances sent home by overseas Pakistani & record export receipts that not only maintained the exchange rates, but also helped the foreign exchange reserves to reach a historic high of \$18.247 billion. The remittances sent home by overseas Pakistanis hit a record high of \$11.2 billion during the last fiscal year, showing a growth of 25.77 percent, or \$2.295 billion, against \$8.905 billion received during the preceding fiscal year. The exports reached an all-time high of \$24.827 billion in FY11 against \$19.24 billion in the preceding year, depicting a rise of 28.7 percent.

[The News - September 18, 2011]

Pakistan to End IMF Programme

The finance minister & his team are off to preside over the end of the current IMF programme. Of the nine programmes that Pakistan got into with the Fund, eight have been unsuccessful. The government's inability to implement three major economic policy commitments — limiting fiscal deficit to 4.7 per cent of GDP, introducing integrated value added tax (VAT) & power sector reforms — will lead to technical completion of an unsuccessful \$11.3 billion programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This is the eighth programme with the IMF to conclude on an unsuccessful note. The finance minister told that Pakistan would not waste its energy on revival of the incomplete programme or seek a fresh programme owing to a comfortable external balance of payments position. However the government would stay on course on power sector reforms & macroeconomic adjustment & stabilization programme & take steps so that it has reasonable credibility to return to the IMF programme with ease in case of any difficulty with external account. The government had secured an \$11.3 billion programme in 2008 & got disbursements of about \$7.6 billion, but failed to get the remaining \$3.7 billion due to slippages in performance criteria, leading to suspension of the programme since May 2010. The programme was extended for nine months until September 30, but disbursements were not resumed owing continuous non-observance of agreed measures.

Officials said the government might have to increase electricity tariff by 10-12 per cent if it succeeded in pushing forward the power sector reforms to reduce subsidies. The quantum of tariff increase required to be introduced in case reforms failed to progress because the power sector's financing gap stood at about Rs. 250 billion this year.

Officials said the government had committed to the IMF to contain the fiscal deficit below 4.7 per cent of the GDP after the last year's floods, which was later revised to 5.3 per cent of the GDP. However, the government could not meet even the revised fiscal deficit limit which officially exceeded 5.9 per cent at the end of the financial year on June 30 this year. The government also could not introduce the value added tax in an integrated form & then it could not show a good performance on power sector reforms which also contributed to higher than anticipated fiscal deficit. The official said both the government & the IMF understood that spending energy on revival of existing programme for a couple of billions of dollars were of no use. The government's comfortable feeling stems from anticipated \$37 billion earnings from a five per cent growth in exports & strong workers' remittances during the current fiscal year, enough to meet the country's foreign exchange requirements with a current account deficit of about 1-2 per cent. The officials said the government would have to repay \$1.2 billion to IMF during the current year in two installments & it estimated a gap of \$500 million to a maximum of \$2 billion during the year. The finance minister tried to explain how the government could remain fiscally responsible in the absence of an IMF programme when elections were fast nearing. Reminded that the previous government had given up the IMF programme prematurely which later led to a freezing of power tariffs & build-up of oil-related subsidies & that the current government was also following the same path ahead of elections to leave a poor economy for the next government, the minister said elections were never discussed in any official meeting.

[Dawn - September 17, 2011]

No Fund, No Development

The city managers have decided not to launch any uplift project in the federal capital due to 'acute financial crisis.' A letter issued by Capital Development Authority (CDA) said that there is severe financial constraint in the authority having a worst financial health; therefore, it is advisable that no new scheme is to be started. The letter also recommended that some of the under-progress schemes should be dropped. Strict control needs to be exercised for ongoing work. In case of ongoing work, a review is required to be taken to see if non-essential schemes can be dropped. The CDA has been facing financial crunch for the last two years, especially after real estate market saw a slump in the country, particularly in Islamabad. The civic body used to mainly depend on the sale of land to meet its development & non-development expenditures but due to the prevailing recession in the real estate market it has stopped the sale through open auctions. However, the sale of plots in schemes like Park Enclave Housing Scheme & Northern Strip, a newly-developed commercial & residential area in Sector E-11, continues.

The authority in its Rs. 23.99 billion budget for the current fiscal year had emphasized maintenance work & environment protection activities. Of the total outlay of Rs. 23.99 billion; 52 per cent or Rs. 6.260 billion were allocated to the engineering wing for maintenance work & uplift projects; Rs. 1.984 billion set aside for the estate management wing, Rs. 800 million for environment wing for beautification & maintenance of parks & playgrounds. Not only mega development projects but also petty maintenance works had also been affected by the new decision. Funds already allocated for the maintenance works are also not being released; as a result, maintenance works like repair of roads, streetlights etc., cannot be executed. Despite the orders by the finance official the authority's chairman was empowered to start any new scheme. However, he agreed that poor financial condition of the civic body had compelled the city managers not to start any new scheme but have no intention to drop any development project which is already under progress. Those new projects which require funds of Rs. 2.5 million &

above will not be commissioned. The civic agency said some of the priority projects would also be affected by the decision. These include development of Park Enclave at an estimated cost of Rs. 584.70 million, up gradation of mini-markets in G & I sectors (Rs. 300 million), provision of health services & renovation of filtration plants (Rs. 150 million), development of city centre in F-7 costing Rs. 100 million, cleaning of Nullahs & ravines, development of Sector I-15 & extension of Kuri Road up to Simly Dam Road & launching of public transport & a tourist bus service.

[Dawn - September 24, 2011]

Devil in the Details: \$5.7b 'Discrepancy' Leaves Debt Office Clueless

The office in the finance ministry charged with keeping track of Pakistan's total debt & liabilities appears to have no clue about government's short term borrowing activity in the local bond market & was unable to explain an apparent \$5.7 billion discrepancy between the amount of loans that the finance ministry claims it paid back & the repayment numbers tracked by the central bank. According to the State Bank of Pakistan, the government paid back \$7.8 billion in principal on public debt during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2011. The finance ministry's figure for the same category is \$2.2 billion. The discrepancy came to light during an internal meeting at the finance ministry. This is the second time in recent weeks that the Debt Office's claims on the nation's financial liabilities have been called into question by the State Bank. Earlier, the central bank had come up with figures for Pakistan's overall debt & liabilities that were much higher than those declared by the finance ministry. The main source of the discrepancy appears to be about \$4.9 billion in short term borrowing from local banks. The maturity on all of these loans was less than one year. However, the finance ministry appears to be completely unaware about this borrowing. A senior official at the State Bank said that most of this money was borrowed for liquidity management purposes, with some even being borrowed overnight. He added that he was not surprised that the figure was not reflected in the finance ministry's documents. He did, however, add that the central bank's figures were accurate & reflected a true picture of the country's financial affairs.

The debt office's management of the government's liabilities has been called into question in recent month as the government has been forced to retire much of its long term debt & exchange it for short term liabilities, exposing the government to interest rate shocks. About Rs. 3 trillion of the government's Rs. 10.8 trillion in debt is short term & that proportion seems set to increase. Statistics released by the economic affairs division of the finance ministry state that Pakistan paid back \$1.9 billion in foreign loans about \$253 million in loans to the International Monetary Fund, bringing total principal repayments to above \$2.2 billion. Interest payments on foreign debt during fiscal year 2011 came to \$810 million. The central bank's data shows that Pakistan returned \$980 million to multilateral creditors like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank & the Islamic Development Bank. Another amount of \$232 million was to Euro & sukuk global bondholders & \$179 million to the Paris Club – a group of bilateral creditors. In addition to these payments the country managed to get rescheduled \$1.5 billion loans during the last financial year. The major rescheduling of \$1 billion was of the central bank deposits deposited by Saudi Arabia & China. The Finance Ministry also managed to secure the rescheduling of \$388 million in loans from the Islamic Development Bank.

[The Express Tribune - September 05, 2011]

Government Policies

All Stand United For National Defense

Mounting threat of US attack on Pakistani soil after Islamabad's blunt refusal to blindly implement Washington's orders against the Haqqanis has generated a national fervor for country's defense, swinging Prime Minister Gilani into action. The Prime Minister contacted leaders of all shades of opinion to take them on board & inform that he was going to call an all-party conference in the days ahead to hammer out with consensus a strategy to deal with the situation. The mainstream political parties across the national spectrum vowed to go to any extent to defend the country's sovereignty & territorial integrity, vowing to stand by the government & the army in this noble cause. Gilani asked Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar to immediately return from New York after her address to the UN General Assembly. PM spoke to the foreign minister twice & asked her to forcefully project Pakistan's point of view on that important platform. The prime minister's initiative of direct contacts with all the political leaders was appreciated by all political quarters who are concerned over the gravity of the situation because of the widening divergences between Pakistan & the United States. Although there have been ups & downs in the past in the relations between the two allies in war on terror, the ties plummeted to the lowest ebb when the United States alleged that Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) supported the Haqqani group, an accusation Pakistan strongly denies, & a number of its officials issued threats that the US could launch ground attack in Waziristan to get the Haqqanis. The government & other forces are united for the solidarity & integrity of Pakistan.

[The Nation - September 26, 2011]

No Money for Big Projects: Zardari

President Asif Ali Zardari received the High Commissioner of Australia Timothy Spencer George & South Korean Ambassador in Pakistan Choi Chung Thoog Joo & discussed bilateral relations with the two envoys. President Zardari invited Korean companies to invest in Pakistan in building small dams & a modern irrigation system. He suggested that the two countries seriously consider starting barter trade & a currency swap agreement to facilitate trading in local currency. The president said that the world is passing through a phase of recession & it offered a great opportunity to Pakistan & Korea to work together for stimulating their respective markets through currency swap agreement & barter trade for mutual benefit. The supply by South Korea of mosquito repellents, mosquito nets & tents for use in flood affected areas was also discussed. The president with the Australian envoy highlighted the devastation caused by the floods in Sindh & the huge damage it had inflicted on the agriculture sector. The Australian envoy said that he will take up with his government the matter of providing sunflower seed on an urgent basis to help the farmers in Sindh sow sunflower in the coming season in November. The president called for increased trade & commerce between the two countries. President Zardari invited investors to build infrastructure projects on BOOM (build, operate, own & maintain) basis by raising necessary equity through the country's stock exchanges. The president said that decline in inflation & crude oil prices provided an environment conducive to investment in infrastructure projects. He said that the government could not finance huge projects because of equity crunch & this factor also offered an opportunity to investors to raise equity through stock exchanges for building infrastructure projects in a win-win scenario.

Zardari said that through this scheme the investors owning the project would have guaranteed profit over a very long period of time & the country will also benefit from the new roads, bridges & other infrastructure that will boost economic activity. The president directed the provincial Finance Minister to hold meetings with the stock exchange companies to fine tune the proposal

& prepare a workable plan. Zardari told them that the government had given increased incentives to expatriate Pakistanis to remit foreign exchange to Pakistan. He said the government recognized this sector of economy & wanted to strengthen it further through a policy of 'recognize, incentivize & patronize'. The president said that foreign exchange remittances during 2007 were around \$6 billion which have increased to \$11 billion now due to the government policy of incentives. He said that remittances could cross \$15 billion a year mark if the expatriate Pakistanis were offered adequate incentives. He advised the money exchange entrepreneurs to improve their services & play a more pro-active role. The president said that the crop damage due to floods may be a recurring feature as result of climate change & it was necessary to introduce crop insurance scheme in Pakistan. He directed that the State Life & State Bank should work together with other stakeholders & submit proposals to the government for crop insurance & reinsurance in the commodity market. He said that modern mapping technology was available which could be employed to great advantage in crop insurance by offsetting the possibility of wrong claims.

[The Nation - September 25, 2011]

Economic Targets Set To Be Revised

The economic team of the government has faced another jolt in achieving its macroeconomic targets during the ongoing financial year 2011-12 due to the floods triggered by heavy monsoon rains in Sindh, besides fudging revenue collection. The rains have damaged the 80 per cent crops in Sindh that would hamper the overall agricultural growth of the country during the current fiscal year. As, the Pakistan's economy largely depends on agriculture sector, therefore the country may suffer to achieve the economic growth target of 4.2 per cent set for the current financial year just like previous fiscal year. The government has fixed 3.4 per cent growth target for the agricultural sector for the year 2011-12. However, as 80 per cent crop of Sindh has been damaged, the agricultural target seems difficult to achieve. According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) estimates, over four million acres of areas are covered with floodwater & 1.7 million acres of crops - mostly cotton - have been damaged so far. However these were the initial estimates. Meanwhile according to some other reports, over 2.5 million bales of cotton, over two million tons of Irri-6 rice, & more than four million tons of sugarcane has been destroyed due to the rains & floods in Sindh province. Meanwhile some 0.1 million cattle also died due to the above said natural disaster. The economic experts believed that country had no other option but to revise its economic targets after the two main reasons including floods & figures fudging. It is worth mentioning here that the government had also revised its all targets during the previous financial year 2010-11 due to the then unprecedented floods in the country. Meanwhile finance ministry told that government was already working to revise its targets after the figures fudging scam of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). However the floods & rains have further created difficulties for the economic managers of the country. The sources further told that government was working to revise all its economic targets for the current fiscal year, as FBR had failed to achieve the revenue collection target of Rs. 1,588 billion set for the previous year & it managed to collect Rs. 1550 billion. The government has fixed its economic targets for the current year on the basis of Rs. 1,588 billion, however as the tax department failed to reach the target, therefore the government has to revise its entire targets.

[The Nation - September 07, 2011]

Full Text of the APC Resolution

Following is the full text of the APC resolution:

- 1.** On the invitation of Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, the leaders of Pakistan's political parties met in Islamabad on September 29, 2011 to consider issues relating to national security
- 2.** The conference was briefed by Foreign Minister Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar & Director General ISI, Lt. Gen Ahmed Shuja Pasha on the security environment of the country & the regional situation.
- 3.** After in-depth deliberations, leaders of all political parties unanimously resolved, as follows.
 - i.** As a peace-loving country, Pakistan desires to establish & maintain friendly & cordial relations with all countries of the world on the basis of sovereign equality, mutual interest & respect.
 - ii.** All Parties Conference recognized that there has to be a new direction & policy with a focus on peace & reconciliation. "Give peace a chance" must be the guiding central principle henceforth.
 - iii.** Pakistan must initiate dialogue with a view to negotiating peace with our own people in the tribal areas & a proper mechanism for this be put in place.
 - iv.** We need to further enhance our brotherly bilateral relations with Afghanistan at three levels on priority basis: government to government, institution to institution & people to people.
 - v.** The APC recognized the sacrifices of the people & the Security Forces of Pakistan, especially the people of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa & tribal areas. The international community needs to recognize these tremendous sacrifices as well as the colossal magnitude of destruction in Pakistan.
 - vi.** Pakistan can enhance its self-reliance comprehensively. Trade, not aid, should clearly be the way forward. We should also focus on internal economic & tax reforms as well as resource mobilization & the curbing of corruption.
 - vii.** Defense of Pakistan's sovereignty & its territorial integrity is a sacred duty which shall never be compromised.
 - viii.** National interests are supreme & shall guide Pakistan's policy & response to all challenges at all times.
 - ix.** Pakistan shall continue to endeavor to promote stability & peace at the regional & global planes, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations & international law.
 - x.** All earlier unanimous resolutions of the Parliament, the recommendation of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on National Security must be implemented.
 - xi.** APC rejected the recent assertions & baseless allegations made against Pakistan. Such assertions are without substance & derogatory to a partnership approach.
 - xii.** The Pakistani nation affirms its full solidarity & support for the armed forces of Pakistan in defeating any threat to national security.
 - xiii.** A Parliamentary Committee is formed to oversee the implementation of earlier resolutions as well as this Resolution & progress on the same be made public on monthly basis.

[The Express Tribune - September 30, 2011]

ELECTION WATCH

ECP & Election Related Updates

ECP to Consider Parties Reservations against Rolls

The Election Commission of Pakistan is all set to consider a demand of different parties to extend the last date of the verification of draft electoral rolls 2011. The ECP would also review the progress made so far of the electoral rolls verification drive & would consider the objections of certain parties over the exercise. The electoral rolls verification drive is set to end in September & many parties, including the Sindh chapter of the ruling Pakistan People's Party, demanded an extension in the deadline. A delegation of the PPP & the Awami National Party called on Provincial Election Commissioner Sono Khan Baloch & submitted a presentation against the draft electoral rolls & increased census blocks. The delegation comprised Najmi Alam & Lal Bux Bhutto of the PPP & Bashir Jan of the ANP. They drew election commissioner's attention towards glaring mistakes in the draft lists as the voters who were residing in Saddar were shown in Lyari while residents of Gadap Town were shown in some other town. They also said that the verification forms were being filled by pencil instead of pen. They also stressed the need for extending the last date as the verification work for the draft rolls was launched in the month of Ramazan, which was stopped in the Eid holidays. Later, rains wreaked havoc on the entire province that resulted in the displacement of a large number of people. The provincial election commissioner assured the delegation that he would take up the case in the meeting.

The NADRA representative told that the verification staff had already been instructed that in case the names of the families or all members were not found in the draft rolls, they could fill out the form No 2 & if some names were found & others were missing then in such case they could fill out the form "alif". Regarding increasing number of census blocks if compared from the lists of the previous general elections, Mr. Leghari said that last time one apartment building was counted as one unit but in the new census exercise each flat of the apartment building was taken as an individual unit due to which the number of census blocks had increased. The change of this rule aimed at setting up polling stations for more than 1,000 voters so as to facilitate voters & polling staff. Mr. Baloch told that in Sindh the work of verification of the draft electoral rolls had been entrusted to over 33,500 personnel, whose services had been acquired from the education department, while 10,600 supervisors, 601 assistant registration officers & 27 registration officers were engaged in the verification work. Meanwhile, it is reliably learnt that the ECP has declared all those voters listed in the electoral rolls of 2007 elections as fake whose national identity card number was not mentioned against their name. According to the election commission, the unverified electoral rolls had over 10 million voters while there were 8.6 million & 17 million voters in the NADRA's augmented list & in the draft electoral rolls, respectively.

[Dawn - September 27, 2011]

Election Office Acknowledges Voter Lists Mixed Up In Areas

The election office has acknowledged that some of the voter lists for some suburban & city areas for Karachi have been mixed up during verification. There is some genuine complaints said Sindh election commissioner referring to bogus voters. Election office is sorting out the problem by referring the voters to the relevant blocks & towns. The delegation from both parties, the PPP & ANP, said they wanted the process to be stopped. They raised two main points – one regarding the constituencies which are wrongly mentioned in draft electoral rolls in which the [phrase] Metropolitan Corporation Karachi. The constituency is now called by the new name of Metropolitan Corporation Karachi Orangi/ Korangi etc. They showed the 1974 rules that do not

mention [the] naming of constituencies [in such a way]. The second objection was on registering the voters of one area in the list for other areas. This way a large number of voters of other areas have been registered in areas which are PPP strongholds. They were surprised how this all happened. Why have the voters of permanent residents of Liaquatabad, Lalukhet & Karimabad been registered in Malir, Keamari, & Bin Qasim towns? They have already written to the chief election commissioner, demanding the process be stopped or changed; otherwise they will have no choice but to challenge it. The PPP's Syed Najmi Alam felt that the verification process has been weak & hardly 30% of voters have been verified in Karachi & 10% in other districts of Sindh. It is not possible for the Election Commission to complete its task on time. PPP has demanded that they extend the deadline till November, given the heavy rains & flooding. More than eight million people have been affected in lower Sindh where only 10% of voters have been verified. The provincial election commissioner endorsed Alam's view, saying that they would propose extending the deadline. Bhutto said the draft electoral rolls prepared by NADRA were full of anomalies, as the total number of voters, as shown on it, has declined from 19.7 million to 10.5 million instead of showing an increase because the population has gone up. The ANP's Bashir Jan said that officials from NADRA, the election commission & census department were blaming each other for errors in the rolls. So far, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement has expressed no reservations over the process & party leaders refuted reports of bogus voters. They said that the Election Commission has been following the NADRA database & census department, which according to them was accurate & could not be tampered with.

[The Express Tribune - September 27, 2011]

Around 500,000 Fewer Voters in New List

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) issued a new district-wise list of voters after deleting 37.18 million names from the list of 2007 & adding the names of 36.69 million other persons after verification from National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA). The voter list for 2011 has 80.72 million verified names as compared to 81.21 million names in the list for 2007. A perusal of the new list for Islamabad zone shows that 153,965 names have been deleted from the previous list. However, with the inclusion of 324,116 new names the total number of voters in the federal capital now stands at 652,699. The commission has struck off the names of 18.35 million persons in Punjab but added 20.25 million new names, taking the total number of voters in the province to 47.05 million. The previous list had 45.14 million names, which means that the province now has about two million more voters. However, the number of voters has declined in Sindh. The list for 2007 had 19.75 million names but the new one has only 17.77 million names. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa now has 11.64 million voters, compared to 10.8 million in 2007 because 4.67 million unverified names have been deleted from the list & 5.51 million new ones added to it. The number of voters in Balochistan has now fallen to three million. Previously it had some 4.22 million voters. With the inclusion of 759,775 new names in the list & removal of 788,655 names from it, the total number of voters of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas now stands at 1.25 million. In Punjab, the largest number of unverified names was reported from Lahore district, for which 1.49 million names were deleted from the list. However, 2.08 million new names were included in the list, taking the total number of voters in the district to 4.26 million, compared to 3.67 million in 2007. The new list for Karachi has about 6.8 million names, compared to 6.63 million in the old list. The number of names removed from the list stands at 2.72 million & the number of names added at 2.88 million. Peshawar now has 1.38 million voters, compared to 1.25 million in 2007. Similarly, Quetta now has 560,083 voters, compared to 652,799 voters in 2007.

[Dawn - September 25, 2011]

EC Rejects Interior Ministry's Directive on NADRA

The Election Commission asserted its independence by refusing to accept interior ministry's 'direction' to it to route all communications with National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) through the ministry. A letter from Interior Secretary Khwaja Siddique Akbar was sent to EC Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan that urged the commission not to contact NADRA directly because the authority worked under the control of Interior Ministry. He said the letter was discussed in detail at a meeting of the commission presided over by Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Rtd) Hamid Ali Mirza & termed to be against the independence & autonomy of the EC. There is no question of any ministry issuing directions to the Election Commission. It was pointed out during the meeting that according to Article 220 of the Constitution "it shall be the duty of all executive authorities in the federation & the provinces to assist the commissioner & the Election Commission in the discharge of his or their functions". The Supreme Court in a case titled Sheikh Rashid Ahmed versus government of Punjab (PLD 2010 SC 573) had also remarked that "Chief Election Commissioner & the Election Commission are absolutely independent with exclusive jurisdiction while performing duties in which no interference is allowable by any of the parties interested by resorting to any manner & mode". The official said the preparation of error-free electoral rolls was a major initiative undertaken by the commission to ensure holding of transparent & credible elections in the country & the NADRA had a significant role to play in this exercise. In view of the complaints of use of bogus ballot papers & to avoid possibility of rigging in polls, the commission had approved the import of paper with watermark for ballot papers. Paper of special specifications would be imported for the purpose & the specifications would be changed for every new election. He said the use of magnetized ink for obtaining thumb impressions by the presiding officers for casting of votes was also approved as this would ensure transparency, create deterrence against casting of bogus votes & eliminate the possibility of impersonation. He said the record of thumb impressions of all the eligible voters was available with the commission & by tallying the voters' thumb impressions with its record the EC would ensure transparency in elections.

[Dawn - September 28, 2011]

Deadline for Voters List Verification Extended

The Election Commission decided to extend the deadline for completion of the ongoing countrywide campaign for verification of electoral rolls by one month as enumerators could not complete the exercise in time in any of the four provinces. As per an earlier decision, the process was to be completed by Sept 30. Only 50 per cent of the work had been completed in Sindh because several districts of the province had been affected by rains & floods. In Balochistan & Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 65 per cent & 70 per cent of the work had been completed. The maximum progress has been made in Punjab where 80 per cent of the work has been completed. The sources said that about 70 per cent of the work had been completed across the country. In view of the recent floods in Sindh, law & order situation in parts of Balochistan & Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & dengue fever in Punjab, the commission approved to extend the completion date of the verification process of Electoral Rolls-2011 by one month. More than 200,000 verification officials throughout the country to make all possible efforts to ensure 100 per cent coverage of all houses & voters for preparing a complete & accurate list of voters to ensure free, fair, transparent & credible elections & underlined the need for all political parties & voters to extend full cooperation to make this exercise a success. He urged all teachers involved in the door-to-door verification exercise to complete the ongoing verification exercise with zeal. He pointed out that this was going to be the last verification exercise as thereafter the EC will be making arrangements with NADRA for continuous updating of the voters' list at the time of issuance of new computerized national identity cards.

[Dawn - September 30, 2011]

REGIONAL POLITICS

Pakistan's Foreign Relations

Islamabad, Moscow Set Sights On New Era in Relations

With the trough in Pakistan-US ties experiencing an extended run this year, Islamabad & Moscow have quietly been busy in trying to reinvent their relations. The two are currently readying to hold the second session of their inter-governmental commission, constituted to promote bilateral cooperation. The minister-level commission is expected to meet in November in Islamabad for the second consecutive year, indicating that the two countries are attaching considerable importance to the initiative. The focus of the meeting will be on economic cooperation, but both sides also want to forge a strategic partnership. Recent regional developments have forced Pakistan & Russia to cozy up to each other. Russia wants to get more involved in regional affairs as it is wary of the growing influence of the US & Nato in the region. It also knows that Pakistan can play a key role in the Afghan endgame. Better relations with Moscow suit Islamabad's long-term strategic interests as it seeks to diversify resources needed for meeting its economic, energy & defense requirements, particularly in view of continuing problems with Washington that has hitherto been its biggest supplier. Russia has offered Pakistan a wide range of counter-terrorism equipment. The package on offer includes 10 MI-17 helicopters of unarmed configuration. Mindful of reluctance in Moscow to sell arms to it, Pakistan is said to be considering the offer for helicopters even though it is not too interested in the unarmed transport version. The Russians have also offered to sell Sukhoi Superjet 100, a modern aircraft with a capacity of up to 95 passengers. Pakistan, which has traditionally been purchasing Boeing & Airbus aircraft, may purchase a couple of the Russian jets on an experimental basis. Moscow has shown special interest in energy projects. A working group of both countries met last month to explore cooperation in this sector. A source privy to the discussions said Russia had agreed to invest \$500 million in CASA-1,000 (Central Asia-South Asia) electricity transmission project. At the same time, details for up gradation of Pakistan Steel Mills in two phases by Russia are being finalized. The up gradation would increase PSM's production capacity from 1.1 million tons to 3 million tons per year. Pakistan has also sought import concessions for 200 tariff lines. The ties have been pushed by President Asif Ali Zardari & his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev, who are said to have developed a rapport. The two presidents have met six times in the past three years.

[Dawn - September 18, 2011]

Pakistan Seeks To Enhance Bilateral Trade with Russia

A business delegation of leading exporters of Pakistan, are expected to visit Russia next month to enhance trade cooperate. Pakistan's current share in huge Russian global imports of over \$196.8 billion was only around \$300 million. The business group led by Senator Haji Ghulam Ali, President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) is scheduled to visit Moscow. As the President Asif Ali Zardari & his Russian counterpart Dimitry Medyedev, during the Quadrilateral Summit in Tajikistan recently, have agreed to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries with cooperation in trade, economic, scientific & technological fields, the visit of exporters would try to explore ways of further enhancing bilateral trade. According to the sources the 30 member trade delegation of FPCCI will hold meetings with various trade bodies in the foreign country to tap the potential market of Russia which has been neglected by Islamabad during the last 60 years. Though president Zardari has emphasized on the need to materialize full existing trade potential between the two countries while enhancing the existing trade volume of about \$300 million to \$1 billion, Pakistan has

failed to build upon the existing trade potential with the densely populated Russian Federation. Besides, under the existing balance of trade between the two countries, Pakistan is at a highly disadvantageous position.

Despite the disintegration of the USSR & introduction of market based economy in Russia, the true potential of Pakistan's trade with the foreign country could not be realized in the Post Soviet era. While expounding upon the impediments for bilateral trade, sources said that serious efforts have not been made by both sides to remove trade hurdles for increasing economic cooperation. Higher freight rates is the main issue that needs to be addressed by both countries as most exports are shipped to the Baltic port of St. Petersburg which is distant destination & involves cost of up to \$5600 per 40 ft. container. Therefore Pakistani exporters need to explore possibilities of shipments to the black seaport of Novorossiysk which has a relatively lower freight rate from Pakistan. Pakistani exporters have traditionally focused on the European part of Russia. The Eastern or Siberian Russia which, contrary to common knowledge, has cities with sizeable population remains neglected by Pakistani exporters. These cities with comparatively middle to lower income segments of population are more suitable for Pakistan's exports. According to sources the Preferential Market Access for Least Developed Countries (LDCS) including Bangladesh which is Pakistan's major competitors in apparel market has caused a setback to Pakistan's apparel exports to Russia.

The country's exporters, who mainly focus on traditional sports goods like footballs, are neglecting the remaining huge unexplored market for growingly popular winter sports goods like skating, skiing & ice hockey which is the Russian national sport. Though President Zardari has also offered the Russian Banks to open their branches in Pakistan while entering in a currency swap agreement, the exporters of Pakistan are facing serious problems for not having a Pakistani bank in the foreign country due to weak international banking system that is hampering trade in Russia which is mostly done through DA & cash basis. Pakistan is also yet to establish a Warehousing Facility in Moscow which is needed to maintain stock of exported goods in the host country. However, sources believe that fresh development in Dushanbe where Russian President showed his country's interest in various important energy projects of Pakistan such as TAPI, oil & gas exploration, hydel power production & distribution of coal based power generation; will go on to resolve trade impediments through diplomatic channels. It is worth mentioning here that Pakistan's major exporting products are Cotton Cloth, Art & Synthetic textiles, Fruits, Onyx Manufactured, Surgical Instruments, Bed ware, Rice, Towels, Sports goods etc. Major importing products from Russia are cereals, fertilizers, steel, machinery etc.

[Pakistan Today - September 24, 2011]

Naek Stresses upon Need for Visa Relaxation between India, Pak

Acting President Farooq H Naek has stressed upon the need for relaxation of the visa regime between India & Pakistan to enhance people to people contact via frequent exchange of delegations from both sides at different levels. Naek said that the legal fraternity of both countries was sitting together right now & being on the same designation they could understand each other on the same wavelength. "Frequent people to people exchanges can help resolve the differences & can lead to positive outcomes, like enhanced trade, which would result in boosting the economies & alleviate poverty," he added. Reciprocating Naek's views, All India Bar Association General Secretary Partap Singh who was heading a 17-member lawyers delegation from India expressed his happiness on the warm welcome the delegation had received in Pakistan & said that the legal fraternity of both countries shares the same sentiments vis-à-vis relations of both countries & the relaxation of visas was vital for enhancing people to people contact. Naek reiterated his views regarding relaxation of visas & urged the bar councils of both countries to adopt resolutions so that the relevant departments of both the countries could be pushed further to relax the visa regime & instead of city specific visas there should be country

specific visas only. The acting president said that there should be a special visa for lawyers, parliamentarians, etc, & the duration of the visa should be of at least 15 days in order to have elaborate exchange of ideas & also the visitors should not be confined to just a few cities. Pakistani senators said that the issue of relaxation of visas was very much on the agenda of the confidence building measures (CBMs) & it would be resolved for the business community & other important segments of society like parliamentarians, lawyers, journalists, artists etc.

[Daily Times - September 15, 2011]

China Backs Pakistan's Sovereignty, Integrity

China categorically extended full support to Pakistan's sovereignty, independence & territorial integrity & vowed to work with it for progress & peace in the region & the world. Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani met the China's Vice Premier Meng Jianzhu who said: "Your friends are our friends, your enemies are our enemies & your security is our security". The two countries together can progress & prosper & bring the dividends of development to their people. Jianzhu said the relations between the two countries have been nurtured through generations & expressed the resolve to follow the legacy. He said 2011 marks the 60th anniversary of establishment of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations & the history has proven that both the countries are friend indeed. The vice premier termed his meeting with the president & the military leadership as "very meaningful & productive" & said the Chinese Foreign Ministry will issue a statement supporting Pakistan's efforts to uphold its sovereignty, independence & territorial integrity. Meng also held talks with President Asif Ali Zardari & military chiefs. The military said talks focused on the "emerging geo-strategic situation" in the region & said Meng "appreciated" the role played by Pakistan's armed forces "in the fight against terror" – in stark contrast to US frustrations. Pakistan promised China maximum support in fighting Muslim separatists. Prime Minister thanked China for extending support to Pakistan when it needs the most. He referred to the existing multi-dimensional co-operation between the two countries in various sectors, like economy, agriculture, infrastructure, energy & culture. He said that information technology & its exports from Pakistan to China have earned widespread recognition in China, & Pakistani IT companies were doing a booming business. The PM particularly mentioned the cooperation between the two countries in the fields of terrorism, intelligence sharing & anti-narcotics. He also commended the Chinese assistance in the aftermath of earthquake, Attabad Lake crisis, rehabilitation of the IDPs of Swat & Malakand, floods last year & help in coping with the devastating rains in Sindh that have inundated vast areas of the province & destroyed cotton & sugarcane crops. Chinese vice premier said Pakistan was the only country enjoying all-weather friendship with China.

[Daily Times - September 28, 2011]

Pakistan, Iran Join Hands On Security, Border Management

The interior ministers of Pakistan & Iran vowed to work together for regional peace & stability besides agreeing to cooperate with each on the issues of security & border management. Iran's Interior Minister Mustafa Muhammad Najjar called on his Pakistani counterpart Rehman Malik at interior ministry. During the meeting the two sides reiterated not to allow their soils to be used against each other. Rehman Malik said that they had discussed matters of mutual interest & agreed to cooperate with each for border management. Both Pakistan & Iran want peace in the region & have decided to work together. Iran would donate \$100 million to assist flood-affected people of Pakistan. A plane from Iran carrying aid consignment will arrive in Pakistan. Rehman said that Pakistan was thankful to Iran for assisting its flood victims. He said Pakistan & Iran had same religion & culture & shared common values. He said that the two sides also discussed current challenges confronted by Muslim ummah & agreed to work together to resolve those. Besides matters of mutual interest, including enhancing trade volume between

the two countries also came under discussion. Mustafa Najjar said that Iran would assist Pakistan in power & gas sectors. The two countries would also cooperate with each other on the issues of smuggling & money laundering & soon sign an agreement for that purpose. He said that the two countries needed to further deepen cooperation in all areas particularly trade, energy, security, communication & infrastructure. The president also said that promotion of intra-regional & inter-regional connectivity was a key to the socio-economic development. He stressed that Iran has a major role to play along with Pakistan due to their geo-strategic locations.

[Daily Times - September 29, 2011]

Indian Politics

Pakistan, India Agree To Boost Bilateral Trade to \$6 Billion

Pakistan & India agreed to boost bilateral trade to \$6 billion, more than double of current volume of \$2.7 billion, during the next three years. The two nations agreed to further liberalize trade flows with tentative moves such as opening a second customs post & issuing more visas, seen as bolstering a fragile peace process between the two nuclear-armed rivals. The meeting between the neighboring countries' trade ministers was part of this year's resumption of formal peace talks, which were broken off after militant attacks in 2008 that killed 166 people in India's financial capital Mumbai. New Delhi would support a scheme proposed by the European Union to boost textile exports from areas of Pakistan ravaged by floods with duty waivers. Seen as under pressure from domestic textile lobby groups, India had previously opposed the EU scheme, & New Delhi's open support was trumpeted by both sides as a sign of improving atmospherics. It was the first time the two countries' trade ministers had met in 35 years. The hope is that trade measures will feed into wider trust between the two countries & help the rivals resolve major flashpoints like the disputed Kashmir region. Less than one percent of India's merchandise exports are sold to Pakistan, in terms of dollar value, but a joint statement pledged to double bilateral trade flows within three years to about \$6 billion. The two sides agreed to open a second customs point by October or November on what is one of the world's most heavily militarized borders, as well as implementing a new business visa regime by November this year. Currently restrictive trading hours on the border would also be extended. Pakistan also pledged to significantly increase the number of goods India will be allowed to export to its neighbor soon, including petroleum products, although officials declined to give a deadline for when this would happen. Approval by India for the EU plan would help clear the way for European duties to be lifted on a list of Pakistani textiles & other products such as ethanol as early as January. India will be constructive & supportive when the WTO's next meeting takes up this matter.

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