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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ELECTION WATCH	5
Political Stakeholders & Elections	5
'The Government Is Not Obligated To Conduct a Decennial Census'	5
Balochistan Unrest: Fair Election Not Possible, Says Mengal	5
ECP Reopens Fake Degree Cases, Summons 24	6
ECP Approves Code of Conduct for Media	7
Balochistan EC to Take Decision on Nomination Papers After 7 th	7
Scrutiny Process to Continue Even After Elections: ECP	8
Elections 2013: ECP Accepts 23,079 Nomination Papers	8
36 Appeals Filed With Election Tribunal	9
Media Restrictions: ECP Denies Closing Doors on Journalists	9
Information Minister Dispells Fears of Delay in Elections	10
Article 62, 63: LHC Orders Action against 14 Candidates	11
Fatwa Declares Casting Vote Religious Responsibility	11
Security Arrangement by ECP for Free, Fair Polls Inevitable	12
Amnesty Urges Pakistan to Probe Election Violence	13
Role of Media during Elections	13
ECP Issues Time Schedule for Elections	14
Mominabad Tragedy: ANP Wants FIR against Caretaker Government, ECP	15
Political Parties	16
Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP)	16
Gilani's Two Sons, Brother Get PPP Tickets	16
Election Tribunal Declares Ashraf Ineligible to Contest Polls	17
PPP, Q Declare 20 Seats 'Open'	17
PPP Is the Only Hope for the Poor: Bilawal	18
Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML - N)	18
PML-N Sets Sights on 56 NA Seats from Central Punjab	18
An Old Warrior Still Leads the Pack	19
An Overview of 1993 General Elections: A Pile of Dirty Linen	21
An Overview of 1997 General Elections: PML-N Returns with a Bang	22
SDPI Seminar: Experts Question PML-N's Stance on Militancy	24
PML-N Will Change Country's Destiny after Coming into Power: Nawaz	24
PML-N Lines Up NA Candidates in Punjab	25
PML-N to Make Pakistan a Self-Reliant State: Nawaz	26
PML-N Leaders get 15 Months Jail Term	27
PML-N Will Serve Masses with New Passion: Nawaz	27
Nawaz Pledges to Make Country Economic Giant	27
PTI, PPP, Q in Collusion to Defeat N: Shahbaz	28
PML-N's Election-Winning Strategy	29
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	30
Election 2013: Victory Will Be Ours, Predicts Imran Khan	30
Alliance-Less PTI Hits Election Trail	31
My Name Is Khan and I Am the Replacement	31

35pc Young Candidates Riding PTI's Polls Tsunami	33
Imran Challenges Nawaz to TV Debate	34
Why Youths want Imran's PTI to Win the Elections	35
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	36
Munawar Urges Voters to Reject Feudal Lords in Elections	36
Jamiat Ulema - e - Islam Fazalur Rehman (JUI - F)	36
Party manifesto: JUI-F pledges to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state	36
JUI-F Announces 12 Points Manifesto	37
JUI-F's Election Plan: English, Urdu Versions of Manifesto Termed Incongruent	38
JUI-F Opens Doors to Non-Mullahs	38
Muthida Qaumi Movement (MQM)	39
Muttahida at the Crossroads	39
Senate Session: MQM Moves Bill for Amending Article 63	40
MQM Shuts Down Election Camps as Bombings in Karachi, Quetta Mar Electioneering	41
MQM to Participate In Polls	41
All Pakistan Muslim League (APML)	42
Elections: Musharraf's Nomination Papers Rejected	42
Musharraf's Last Poll Hope All But Over	43
Independent Candidates & Other Parties	44
Insecurity in Balochistan: Mengal Casts Doubts on Transparency of Polls	44
Independents Outnumber Political Nominees: 850 in Fray for 47 NA Seats in KP, FATA	45
Women Candidates – Nominations & Contesting	46
Two Tribal Women, Badam Zari and Nusrat Begum, Out To Make History	46
Badam Zari Vows to Project Soft Image of Tribal Areas	46
KP Assembly's Reserved Seats: Papers of 100 Women Rejected	47
Welcome Nominations: Tribal Women Step Forward	48
PML-N's Sakina Mengal Tries to Kill Herself	49
Badam Zari Kicks Off Poll Campaign in Bajaur	49
Dir Woman Candidate Too Shy To Answer RO Queries	50
Once a Landlord's Serf, Pakistani Hindu Woman Enters Elections	50
Entering the Race: Elections Would Be Counterproductive To Democracy Says Ghinwa	52
Parties' Manifestos	53
With Restoration of Peace on Top, QWP Unveils 12-Point Agenda	53
Voters & Overseas Pakistanis	53
Slim Chance of Voting For Women in Slums	53
Female Voters to Be Encouraged	55
Pakistan among Countries with Lowest Voter Turnout	55
Seeking Votes in Name of Religion, Sect Banned	56
Disenfranchised: The Refugee Voter	57
SC Orders Expedited Efforts for Expats' Voting Ordinance	58
Overseas PTI Supporters to Charter Plane for Upcoming Elections	58
Kohistan Candidates Vow To Ensure Women Participation	59
Polling Assessment, Polling Stations & Polling Staff	59
Modified Ballots: 'Vote for None' Option Sparks Controversy	59
Poll Assessment: National Observers Need To Follow International Standards	60
Balochistan Teachers Refuse Polls Duty	61

Election Reports & Updates	62
Scrutiny Fears Keep Many Out Of Poll Fray.....	62
Larkana to Witness a Triangular Fight.....	63
Election 2013: The Youth Vote.....	63
Lawmakers Get Prison Terms In Degree, Nationality Cases.....	68
Scrutiny, Sexism and a Spelling Bee.....	69
Papers of Dozen More Candidates Rejected	70
Time for Filing of Appeals over: Over 4000 Out Of Election Race	70
ECP Wants Action on Media Directive	71
Mrs Faisal Saleh Hayat First Victim of FBR Scrutiny	71
ECP, FBR Holding Details of Defaulters, LHC Told.....	72
Elections 2013 - A Nemesis	73
Old and New Faces Compete For NA-35.....	74
Election Postponed In Jhal Magsi After Candidate Killed	75
A Hypothetical Column - 2013 Election Results	75
Violations, Rules & Regulations - Elections Updates	76
Angry Activists Storm PPP Office in Rawalpindi.....	76
The TTP Threat and Elections.....	77
ECP Election Code Violations Go Unchecked	78
Violence Takes Seven More Down.....	79
Blasts Hit MQM Election Office, PPP Meeting In Karachi.....	79
ANP Seeks Bomb Blast FIR against ECP, Government	81
Election Security: Balochistan Braces for Surgical Operation	82
GOVERNANCE WATCH	83
Government Working	83
Federal cabinet: Caretaker ministers assigned portfolios	83
Judiciary	83
Musharraf 'Arrested' in Benazir Murder Case.....	83
SC Refuses To Remove Journalists' Names from Its Website.....	83
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH	85
Government & Human Rights	85
Fair Process: Blasphemy Trials in High Courts Suggested	85
GENDER WATCH	86
Violence against Women	86
Planned Abduction: 14-Year-Old Rape Victim Seeks Justice	86
SECTARIAN CRISES & CONFLICT WATCH	87
Conflict & Sectarian Crisis in the Month of April	87
Incidents of Attacks in Sindh in the Month of April	87
ECONOMIC WATCH	91
Facts & Figures	91
FDI Improved By 3.9 Percent in 9 Months	91
IMF Ready but New Govt Should Decide On Loan Programme: PM's Adviser	92
DEVELOPMENT WATCH	93
Health Projects	93
National Immunisation Drive: Over 33 Million Children Targeted In New Campaign.....	93
Government Measles Vaccination Report Draws Ire of International Health Bodies	93

Health Reports/ Controls	94
Measles: 59 Cases Reported In the Past Three Months	94
REGIONAL WATCH	95
Pakistan & India	95
Iran, India Set To Discuss Extension of IP Gas Pipeline.....	95

ELECTION WATCH**Political Stakeholders & Elections****'The Government Is Not Obligated To Conduct a Decennial Census'**

The census commissioner opposed petitions filed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement and Pakistan People's Party against delimitation of few electoral constituencies in Karachi, arguing that the pleas did not qualify for a hearing since they lacked law and facts. "Population and housing census traditionally is a decennial activity all over the world. Under the prevailing law, the government is not obliged to conduct population and housing census in the country every ten years," said Liaquat Ali Chattha, the assistant census commissioner at the ministry of the Economic Affairs and Statistics. The Section 31 of the General Statistics (Re-organised) Act provides cover to conduct census, he said. He added that the federal government may from time to time declare that a census of population and housing conditions of Pakistan shall be taken by the Bureau. Therefore, the assistant commissioner opposed the petitions and pleaded to the court to dismiss the same. The controversy started as the commission on March 22 issued a notification regarding delimitation of three national assembly and eight provincial constituencies in Karachi. Both PPP and MQM opposed the decision, eventually going to court to have the order cancelled. Concluding his arguments, MQM's lawyer Barrister Farogh Naseem insisted that the electoral boundaries had been redrawn without a fresh census in Karachi. Secondly, the process was set in motion after the general elections' schedule had been announced. He pleaded to the court to set aside the ECP's notification regarding delimitation.

PPP's objection to NA-230 delimitation

PPP leader Qadir Patel had also challenged delimitation of NA-230, saying the ECP had included three defunct union councils of Baldia Town and two of Keamari Town in the constituency without providing any justification. The deputy attorney general Munirur Rehman requested for time to file the commission's comments to the objections raised by the petitioner. Headed by Justice Maqbool Baqar, a division bench adjourned the hearing till April 8.

The Express Tribune - April 04, 2013

Balochistan Unrest: Fair Election Not Possible, Says Mengal

Sardar Akhtar Mengal, the chief of his eponymous faction of the Balochistan National Party (BNP-M), has said that environment is not conducive for general elections in the volatile province. "Fair, free and transparent elections are not possible in Balochistan where people are still receiving mutilated bodies of their loved-ones," Mengal told journalists at Uthal, some 600km from Quetta. He claimed that enforced disappearances continued to multiply in the province where Baloch insurgents have been fighting a low-profile insurgency since 2004. Mengal declared that if there was any option available for him and his political colleagues [to secure the rights of the people of Balochistan] "we will definitely use those options, and no power on earth can stop us". Recalling his recent meetings with the caretaker chief minister and the chief election commissioner, Mengal said the government has failed to address 'serious reservations' of his party. He added that he had conveyed to the chief minister that people were randomly picked up [allegedly by the spy agencies] and their mutilated bodies were dumped on roadsides.

“There are ‘no-go’ areas in Balochistan where armed gangs of killers hold sway under the protection of the establishment and paramilitary Frontier Corps,” he alleged. “In such a situation free, fair and transparent elections are not possible,” he added. “Elections are being held in Balochistan at gunpoint which could not be free and fair.” He said that nobody can carry the BNP flag in Khuzdar district due to fear of ‘state-sponsored death squads’. “These squads can lay siege to the offices of the election commission. There is no difference between holding general elections in Balochistan and [disputed Himalayan state of] Kashmir,” he said. He claimed that hundreds of thousands of tribesmen were uprooted from their homes in the Bugti Tribal Territories and made internally displaced persons (IDPs) allegedly by the state. “More than 50 per cent people have migrated from Khuzdar alone who are now settled in safer areas of Sindh, including Karachi,” he added. The BNP-M chief said he has authorised his party leaders to go for seats adjustment with likeminded parties. However, he ruled out a seats adjustment with the PML-N without elaborating.

The Express Tribune - April 04, 2013

ECP Reopens Fake Degree Cases, Summons 24

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) reopened on cases of 24 lawmakers accused of holding fake academic degrees and asked them to appear before it. And in what is being described as an innovation in the electoral history of the country, the commission has decided to introduce a new column “none of the above” in the ballot paper. While some political observers term it a move to discredit politicians, others defend the ‘blank box’ and say that it gives a wider choice to citizens who would want to cast their votes but not for any of the candidates in their constituency. The order to reopen the fake degree cases was issued by the Supreme Court after the Higher Education Commission (HEC) had claimed that the ECP had on its own closed the cases against 27 legislators. Details provided by the ECP at a press briefing, however, reveal that eight of the 27 cases were closed after the HEC cleared their degrees it had earlier dismissed as fake or invalid. The eight are Senator Gul Mohammad Lot, former MNA Syed Ameer Ali Shah Jamot, MPAs Ghulam Sarwar Sial, Mukesh Kumar and Basheer Ahmad Khan from Sindh, MPAs Shafiq Ahmad, retired Lt Col Shujaat Ahmad and Samina Khawar Hayat from Punjab and former MPA from Balochistan Rubina Irfan. The proceedings against two former MNAs, Haji Omer Gorgaje and Deewan Syed Ashiq Hussain, and MPA Wasim Afzal from Punjab have been dropped under judicial orders. The cases against two members of the Punjab Assembly, Shumaila Rana and Shabina Khan, were closed by former Chief Election Commissioner retired Justice Hamid Ali Mirza on Jan 15, 2011, because they had already resigned and these against Senator Nawabzada Mohammad Akbar and former member of the Balochistan Assembly Nawabzada Tariq Magsi and member of the Punjab Assembly Seemal Kamran were closed because they had contested the elections when a bachelor degree was not a requirement. The cases against Senators from Balochistan Israrullah Khan Zehri, Mir Mohabbat Khan Marri and Rehana Yahya Baloch were closed between Aug 11, 2011 and Jan 1, 2012 on the plea that under Senate rules of business a senator cannot be proceeded against if the process of prosecution goes beyond six months.

The period had elapsed in the cases. The case against Dr Israr Hussain, candidate for a Senate seat, was closed after the petitioner withdrew his plea seeking remedy from the court. The case against former Sindh minister Mir Nadir Magsi was closed by the ECP after allegations of corruption against him could not be proved. The case against former member of the Sindh Assembly Patenbar Sewani was closed after she proved her degree to be genuine and that against former member of the Punjab Assembly Rana Ejaz Ahmad was disposed of after his

degree issued by a seminary affiliated with Tanzim-ul-Madaris had been recognised by the HEC. After the ECP meeting, its Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan said the commission had decided to include the new column of “none of the above” in ballot papers. It provides electors an option not to vote for any of the contestants. In its verdict in the Workers Party case last year, the Supreme Court had asked the ECP to consider this option which was in practice in several developed countries. If over 50 per cent voters opt for this option a run-up election is held in that constituency. The ECP secretary said the commission would send a summary to the caretaker prime minister through the Ministry of Law to make the option a law through an ordinance. He said no decision could be taken on the modus operandi allow overseas Pakistanis to exercise their right to vote. A final decision on the matter was expected to be taken at a meeting on Tuesday which would also be attended by the attorney general. Mr Khan said the Ministry of Information Technology had offered to develop a video-based system which would enable the ECP to monitor 425 returning officers from Islamabad. He said the ministry had also agreed to develop a system to monitor the ‘sensitive’ polling stations.

Dawn - April 04, 2013

ECP Approves Code of Conduct for Media

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has approved a ‘code of conduct for media’ - the guidelines to be observed by media, political parties and even the state institutions while covering the general elections. The code of conduct has 15 guidelines covering all segments and stakeholders about media coverage of election activities from the start of campaigning till the announcement of results. According to the guidelines, media will not be responsible for unlawful statements made by candidates or party representatives during live broadcast of election campaigns, but it will not apply to repeat/recorded telecasts or publications. The ECP has said a candidate or party which has been defamed or is a victim of gross misrepresentation or other illegal injury by broadcast of information should be entitled to a correction and should have an appropriate opportunity to reply. The ECP has also decided to formulate a ‘regulatory and complaints mechanism’ for implementation of a ‘media code of ethics’ to be prepared by representatives of various media organisations. The complaint committee will be headed by an additional director general (PR) of the Election Commission and it will comprise representatives from media organisations, including PBA, APNS, PCP, CPNE, PTV, PBC, PFUJ, SAFMA and SAWN. About ‘opinion polls and election projections’, the ECP guidelines said if a broadcaster/newspaper published the results of an opinion poll or election projection, they should try to report the results fairly and in a proper context explaining the scope and limits of such polls that have their own peculiar limitations. According to ECP opinion polls should be accompanied by information to assist viewers/listeners to understand the poll’s significance, such as who conducted, commissioned and paid for the poll, the methodology used, the sample size, the margin of error, the fieldwork dates, and data used.

Dawn - April 04, 2013

Balochistan EC to Take Decision on Nomination Papers After 7th

The Balochistan Election Commission has accepted nomination papers provisionally subject to submission of details about their income tax, bachelor’s degree and assets by the candidates. Official sources in the provincial election commission told that the decision about acceptance or rejection of nomination papers would remain pending till April 7. The Election Commission of Pakistan has made it mandatory for the candidates to submit details about his/her assets,

educational documents and proof of income tax payment to get the nomination papers accepted. The sources said returning officers had accepted nomination forms as correct, but bound the candidates to provide details about their assets, source of income, income tax payment, dual nationality status and educational documents to the ECP by April 7. Nomination papers of former federal minister Sardar Yar Mohammad Rind were rejected because a case for holding a fake degree was pending against him and his son, Mir Sardar Khan Rind, because an anti-terrorist court in Sibi has been hearing cases against him. Nomination papers of former federal minister Mir Hamayun Aziz Kurd were rejected after he was sent to prison after his conviction by a court in a fake degree case.

Prominent among those whose nomination forms have been accepted are Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal, the chief of his own faction of the Balochistan National Party; Mohammad Aslam Bhootani, former speaker of the Balochistan Assembly; Sardar Mohammad Saleh Bhootani, a former caretaker chief minister; Nawabzada Khalid Khan Magsi, a former federal minister; Mir Changez Jamali; PML-N leader Nawabzada Jangez Marri; Shahzain Bugti of the Jamhoori Watan Party; Salim Khosa, a former provincial minister; Sardar Kamal Bangulzai of the National Party; Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal; Mir Changez Jamali, a former federal minister; Mir Salim Khosa, a former provincial minister; and Bashir Ahmed Mandai of the Jamaat-i-Islami. Meanwhile, the Higher Education Commission has sent the names of former parliamentarians Mohammad Mohsin Ali Qureshi, Agha Irfan Karim, Abdul Khaliq, Mohammad Rahim, Samina Razique, Sabina Rauf and Amjad Khan Afridi to the University of Balochistan to get their educational documents verified. The university administration has asked them to submit copies of their graduation degrees and intermediate and matriculation certificates along with a copy of the computerised national identity card to the Controller, Registrar Office, University of Balochistan, by April 4.

Dawn - April 04, 2013

Scrutiny Process to Continue Even After Elections: ECP

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said that the scrutiny of the declarations made in the nomination papers would continue even after the elections and those found to have deceived would be declared disqualified ever after winning the elections. ECP Additional Secretary Afzal Khan replying to a question clarified that the process of scrutiny would continue even after elections. It may be recalled 7th April is the last day for scrutiny of electoral nomination papers

The News - April 07, 2013

Elections 2013: ECP Accepts 23,079 Nomination Papers

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has uploaded on its website the details of nomination papers accepted or rejected by the returning officers. According to website information, a total of 27,075 nomination papers were filed for the upcoming national and provincial assemblies' elections. 23,079 nomination papers have been accepted while 3,996 nomination papers were rejected. 6,850 were accepted for the National and 16229 for Provincial Assemblies.

The News - April 10, 2013

36 Appeals Filed With Election Tribunal

Former opposition leader in the National Assembly Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan filed an appeal with the election tribunal against the rejection of his nomination papers in NA-53 Taxila. The tribunal, comprising Justice Rauf Ahmad Sheikh and Justice Mamoon Rashid Sheikh of the Lahore High Court (LHC) Rawalpindi bench, issued notices to the complainant and sought record from the returning officer till April 11. As many as 36 appeals have been filed with the tribunal and a few of them have also been decided. In the application of Sheikh Rashid Ahmad from NA-55, the tribunal upheld the decision of the returning officer and rejected the objections raised against the acceptance of his candidature. In five other appeals, the tribunal rejected the objections and sustained the decisions of the returning officers. It returned the appeal of former President Pervez Musharraf with the objections that neither he had cited the respondents who had raised objections to his candidature for NA-48 nor attached the list of the objections. He was directed to file the appeal again. In the case of Nisar Ali Khan, one of the objections raised against his candidature was that he had not mentioned the inherited property that was in the name of his daughter Natalya Ali in nomination papers in 2008. His counsel Kashif Malik told the tribunal that Natalya Ali was born in 2009. The second objection was that Nisar did not mention the correct details of his agricultural lands.

On this, his counsel contended that they did attach the details but the objection was raised due to misreading or non-reading of the nomination papers. Another objection about the property of the PML-N leader was that he mentioned a one kanal plot as two kanals in his assets. His counsel told the tribunal that his client had a plot measuring one kanal in the Senate housing scheme but the scheme was never executed by the government even after receiving the advance money. The fourth objection was about an article written by Nazir Naji in which he wrote that Chaudhry Nisar was in favour of having good relations with the US but publicly denied that. The counsel maintained that his client had denied such allegations. Another objection was about the mention of Chaudhry Nisar in a book Parliament House Sey Bazaar-i-Husn Tak.

It was objected that Chaudhry Nisar never rebutted the allegations in writing. His counsel, however, argued before the court that the book was a piece of yellow journalism aimed at character assassination. There were certain elements that keep publishing such things and it was not necessary to rebut such an allegation. In an appeal against Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI) candidate Inamullah Khan Niazi from NA-71 Mianwali, the tribunal issued notices to the returning officer and Mr Niazi till April 11. The objection was that the returning officer had accepted his nomination despite the fact that he was a bank defaulter. Among others whose appeals were accepted for hearing were Engineer Qamrul Islam from PP-5, Mohammad Ali from PP-35, Tariq Murtaza Satti of the PTI from PP-2, Farrukh Nazir from PP-34, Sargodha, and Safdar Ranjha from NA-65. The tribunal issued notices to the returning officers and sought record on April 11. In another appeal filed by Mohammad Ashraf Kalyar from PP-36, the tribunal upheld the decision of the returning officer and rejected his nomination papers. It also rejected an appeal of Anwarul Hasnat from PP-27, Jhelum, whose nomination papers were rejected due to his dual nationality.

Dawn - April 10, 2013

Media Restrictions: ECP Denies Closing Doors on Journalists

In an attempt to make things more coordinated between the Election Commission of Pakistan and the media, the electoral body on appointed a focal person who will now be the link between the ECP and the media. The ECP has also barred its officials from giving statements directly to

the media. The move comes in response to repeated requests made by media personnel that the ECP should not limit itself to providing information of the commission on an individual basis. They insisted that a focal person should be appointed who could coordinate with them. An ECP official, however, that inaccurate reporting of many election-related developments and recent unpleasant incidents involving some media persons and commission officials has led to the restriction. The official complained that many stories were wrongly attributed to the officials of the commission without any verification of facts. While elaborating the ECP's plans, its media coordinator said that officers were advised to strictly follow the channel of providing information to the focal person, who would later send it for dissemination, instead of communicating the updates directly to the media. He added that appointing a focal person to deal with the media will help media personnel with questions or for interviews. However, he said that discipline and security will not be compromised in the process. The commission clarified that the electoral body has always taken concrete steps to facilitate the media. It said that special arrangements were made to facilitate access to the media subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of working of the ECP, as well as to streamline the procedure with regard to provision of information to the media. An impression is being created by some media reports as if the Election Commission has closed its door on media which is not correct and contrary to the factual position. Meanwhile, the commission has also transferred 78 appeal cases to another election tribunal. The new Appellate Tribunal appointed by the ECP comprises Justice Anwarul Haq and Justice Mahmood Maqbool Bajwa.

The Express Tribune - April 17, 2013

Information Minister Dispels Fears of Delay in Elections

Dispelling fears about delay of elections, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Arif Nizami said that the caretaker government would hold timely elections in fair and free manner. This he said while addressing a joint press conference along with Minister for Law and Justice Ahmer Bilal Soofi and Secretary Interior Khawaja Siddique Akbar to brief the media about a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Justice (R) Mir Hazar Khan Khoso for reviewing law and order situation in the country. Arif Nizami said that Prime Minister Justice (R) Mir Hazar Khan Khoso lauded the political parties for their active participation in the ongoing electoral process and stressed upon ministry of interior and home departments to plug security holes which might affect the process. The meeting was also attended by caretaker chief minister Punjab Najam Sethi, caretaker chief minister Balochistan Nawab Ghaus Bukhsh Barozai and caretaker chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Tariq Pervaiz.

Chief Secretary Sindh attended the meeting on behalf of the Sindh CM. Governor Khyber Pakhtoonkhaw, Secretaries interior and defence, chief secretaries of four provinces, Director Generals of ISI and IB also attended the meeting. They discussed the overall political situation in the country with special focus on the prevailing law and order. Nizami quoted the Prime Minister as saying that it was heartening to note that political parties, representing all shades of political spectrum, had decided to be part of the mainstream political process. The Prime Minister maintained that as they were approaching the Election Day, law and order situation was becoming a challenging task for the caretaker government, said Nizami. It is the duty and obligation of the government to provide an atmosphere conducive to the conduct of fair and transparent elections.

Prime Minister Khoso further said that there was a need to restore and strengthen confidence of people by ensuring a peaceful environment during the elections and by maintaining law and order. Nizami informed the media that chief ministers of Punjab, KPK and Balochistan and Chief

Secretary Sindh gave detailed briefing about law and order situation in their respective provinces. The meeting was informed that 90000 polling stations will be set up for 272 National Assembly and 728 Provincial Assembly seats in the country. Nizami said that the KPK CM asked the federation to provide 10,000 security personnel and federation agreed to provide the required security men. It was also decided that foreign election observers will be provided foolproof security so that they could perform their duties safely. The meeting decided that special arrangements will be made for holding public meetings during election campaign and the candidates will have to inform the district management in advance. Nizami said that a special cell has been established in Interior Ministry to collect sensitive information from provinces and intelligence agencies and take action in this regard. Pakistan Army's Quick Reaction Force will be constituted which will be deployed in the sensitive areas as per need. Replying to media persons questions, Arif Nizami said that in Musharraf case all the orders and directives of the courts will be implemented in letter and spirit. Law Minister Ahmer Bilal Soofi said that law enforcement agencies were handling the situation after the cancellation of Musharraf's bail and the caretaker government was not interfering in their affairs.

The News - April 19, 2013

Article 62, 63: LHC Orders Action against 14 Candidates

The Lahore High Court has ordered action against 14 election candidates in articles 62, 63 implementation cases. The full bench of the Lahore High Court resumed hearing of articles 62, 63 implementation case and ordered action against the 14 candidates. The court also has demanded the record from the NAB and the FBR of 1,319 candidates who had moved appeals in the court. In this regard, the State Bank, NAB and FBR have been issued notices for further proceeding. The court made it clear in its order that the main job of the ECP is not limited to the holding of general elections.

Daily Times - April 26, 2013

Fatwa Declares Casting Vote Religious Responsibility

Religious scholars and the members of the All Pakistan Ulema Council have issued a 40-page edict, which declares the non-casting of vote is a sin, saying that casting vote is compulsory under Islamic injunctions. The forty-page edict reads that voting is a religious responsibility and should be used in appropriate means. The religious scholars presented the edict and said that Pakistan is suffering from a very difficult time and change in the country is possible only through ballot. They said that it is a religious responsibility of every Pakistani to cast his/her vote because vote-casting is like depositing in a court of law, so concealing evidence is a sin. Addressing the 'National Solidarity Conference' the scholars expressed serious concern over the view that women voting is un-Islamic and asked the political parties to bring awareness among people about the importance of voting. Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi asked the people to cast votes in the elections and use their right in favour of good candidates and if there is no good candidate then the people can choose a "less bad" person. It was further said that women have equal rights to vote. It is not religion that bars them from voting but the feudal system, therefore, misusing the name of Islam should be stopped immediately. The clerics of all religions were urged to play their role in preaching tolerance and urged the political and religious parties to start a campaign regarding the importance of voting. The speakers in the conference were of the view that every step should be taken to promote interfaith harmony in order to prevent the

country going towards anarchy. The participants condemned the target killings of ulema and minorities. They also condemned terror incidents in Quetta, Karachi and Joseph Colony. They demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

Daily Times - April 26, 2013

Security Arrangement by ECP for Free, Fair Polls Inevitable

Election Commission of Pakistan finalised the security plan for general election 2013, aiming at ensuring security for all candidates, political leadership, voters and polling stations, with a commitment that no one would be allowed to disturb or block the way of free and fair election. More than a million personnel of the Pakistan Army, paramilitary forces, police, Rangers, FC and scouts, along with other law enforcement institution, would be assisting the district returning officers to maintain the situation of law and order until the polling day. The commission said that the representatives of the said security and law enforcement agencies had gave their firm commitment to the ECP for maintaining law in areas to be handed over to them.

CEC Justice (R) Fakhruddin G Ebrahim presided over a meeting with security Chief incharges in regard to the general election, scheduled for May 11, and would not get delayed even by a single day. The meeting discussed the strength of security staff and the number of areas, personalities and buildings requiring security before and on the polling day, with special focus on different security requirements of the provincial governments. The defence secretary on behalf of the Pakistan Army had expressed full commitment to providing required security during the election process, especially on the polling day, in all four provinces and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). It has been decided that all caretaker provincial governments would seek Pakistan Army's assistance during the final phase of the general election at the district level, and this would include deployment at sensitive polling stations as well as all the sensitive areas and cities of the country, as per the security plans prepared by the district returning officers.

The meeting was informed that elections would be held in all the agencies of FATA and all the districts of Balochistan, and the Pakistan Army and paramilitary forces would have a lead role in providing security. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary requested the ECP to get the assistance of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Police and Northern Areas Police for election duty, on which the meeting decided that the Interior Ministry would arrange for such assistance. Meanwhile, provincial governments have been advised to utilise all possible resources to ensure foolproof security. It has been decided that CCTV and video coverage would be arranged for sensitive polling stations to avoid rigging and all four provincial governments would bear the expenses of such arrangements.

The ECP secretary said that Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance Dr Shahid Amjad and secretaries of the finance and water and power had assured the meeting that there would be no load shedding in the country from May 11 to May 13, and that all required funds would be made available for this purpose. The ECP secretary informed that although Pakistan had allowed foreign election observers in the country, the people of Pakistan would determine the transparency and fairness of the general election, not the foreigners. The media was urged to play their role in making the upcoming polls the most transparent election in the history of the country by highlighting any type of rigging on the polling day.

Daily Times - April 26, 2013

Amnesty Urges Pakistan to Probe Election Violence

Amnesty International called on Pakistan to investigate a wave of attacks and threats against politicians and election workers that have marred the run-up to key polls next month. At least 26 people have been killed by bombers and gunmen since April 11, including 16 mown down by a suicide bomber at a rally by the Awami National Party (ANP) in Peshawar. The Taliban have directly threatened the three main parties in the outgoing government, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the ANP and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which are often described as secular. The May 11 polls are due to mark the first democratic transition of power after a civilian government has served a full, five-year term in a country that has been ruled by generals for half of its life.

Amnesty said at least 37 people had been killed and 183 injured in attacks on election officials and party representatives and supporters countrywide. As a result of the threats, there have been few large-scale political rallies leading to a lacklustre campaign for the May 11 polls. Amnesty said the authorities must ensure adequate protection and protect freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association and the right to life. Candidates themselves also have a responsibility not to incite violence against rivals or segments of society such as religious minorities. Amnesty also urged parties and candidates to make human rights a priority in their election pledges and policies. Some advances had been made in passing legislation by the outgoing parliament, but said rights abuses by state and non-state actors have in some respects worsened over the last five years.

The News - April 26, 2013

Role of Media during Elections

This is the first time in the history of Pakistan that elections are being held after the assemblies and elected governments have completed their five-year term. Moreover, the neutral caretaker governments are in place as per provisions of the Constitution duly amended by the previous National Assembly. Yet there is added significance this time round – judiciary and media are independent today. The question is what sort of role media should play before and during elections. Of course, all the reporting and visual coverage of the political parties should be done in an impartial manner. It means that they should not be preferential treatment to a particular political party. However, the situation on ground is that some print media organizations, while reporting, and TV channels in their visual coverage try to show only a part of a big public meeting to prove that it is an insignificant rally.

On the other hand, using camera tricks they display the size of a small rally as a mammoth meeting, showing utter disregard to journalistic ethics and the fundamental principle i.e. reporting should be factual and without getting emotionally involved. If one is emotionally involved, one would either take side or oppose a political party or a candidate. In other words, reporting should be objective and not subjective. However, rumours abound that some media men and media groups have received huge amounts from the political parties for their projection, and in some cases from individual candidates to portray them somewhat larger than life. In such cases, it becomes difficult for an honest and conscientious journalist or anchorperson to perform his duties honestly. In these circumstances, he has two options; either to resign or disobey the owners to perform duties honestly. And if he goes for the second option, he will be sacked.

There are two sides of reporting an election campaign: covering what the politicians are saying and investigating the issues that are being discussed. Of course, the politicians are entitled to

say what they want to, and the voters are entitled to hear them. But journalists have a responsibility to question and examine all that is said. Anchorpersons need to ask tough questions on behalf of the audience but they should not become obstreperous or uncouth. Of course, they should be aware of the public sentiments, and know what questions the audience would like to ask if they are interviewing a political party's leader or representative. The politicians indeed would like to talk about what suits them, but the journalist needs to take an independent view of what is important to the voters. He needs to decide what the big issues are and present them, setting out the basic facts while making clear what different parties have to say about them. But they should tell the truth where facts are involved, and make it clear what a factual story is and what the journalist's or the newspaper's opinion is. If the journalist's newspaper or TV channel is backing one side, he should keep the comment separate from the news. But it seems to be a Herculean task, because truth is bitter and harsh.

Whether it was the PPP-led government at the centre, in Balochistan, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa or the PML-N led government in Punjab, they all failed to deliver. The PPP is highlighting Benazir Income Support Programme and the PML-N is trying to capitalise on laptops' distribution and Metro-Bus Project in Lahore. Throughout the country, corruption has become so rampant in the polity that it is now part and parcel of the national life. It cuts across the polity, having enveloped its every segment and sparing not even its private sector. For having a legitimate job done hassles-free palms have to be greased in government offices and state institutions. If corruption and malfeasance have run wild in the polity, the goddess of wealth and money has blinded its segments after segments that they have lost every touch with the sense of shame. Tax evasion is not being considered an offence or a sin. The landed aristocracy is wallowing in wealth due to windfall earnings from their crops and hugely generous government-support prices. Big businesses and industries fiddle with their books and in collusion with corrupt taxmen evade the tax due from them.

On the other hand, the people of Pakistan are passing through the harrowing experiences they never did before in their lifetimes. Despite the vows about keeping the tax-evaders, bank defaulters and land mafia out of the election process, they have been allowed to participate in the elections, which is a big question mark on the ECP and even the judiciary. With the stories of palmed off media men receiving huge amounts and plots from a property tycoon, the people seem to have lost faith in the elections. How they can restore their image is a million dollar-question.

The Nation - April 28, 2013

ECP Issues Time Schedule for Elections

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) issued the schedule for polling, which will be held from 8:00am to 5:00pm without any interval on May 11. The Election Commission has also released the polling scheme for the constituencies of the National Assembly and provincial assembly in Punjab, which envisages a significant increase in the number of polling stations and polling staff to facilitate voters. There are a total of 49,297,879 registered voters of which 27,726,609 are male and 21,571,270 female voters. Across the largest province in terms of its population and registered voters, there will be as many as 40,078 polling stations, 108,357 polling booths and to manage the polling, the services of 40,078 presiding officers, 216,714 assistant presiding officers and 110,234 polling officers will be made available. In the federal area, the total registered voters are 629,233 with 337,673 male and 291,560 female voters, indicating a minimum gender disparity compared to voters in other provinces and Fata, where the gender gap is maximum followed by Balochistan. Throughout Islamabad, a total of 550

polling stations will be established along with 1,877 polling booths, wherein 550 presiding officers, 1,877 assistant presiding officers and 1,877 polling officers will be posted for smooth polling of votes. According to the polling scheme for the Punjab Assembly constituencies, there will be a total of 40,078 polling stations, 108,357 polling booths, 40,078 presiding officers, 216,714 assistant presiding officers and 108,357 polling officers. Meanwhile, the Election Commission has postponed the election process in PS-64 Mirpurkhas-I after the death of one of the candidates, Waqar Buland Khan. The returning officer issued a public notice in this context. A statement by the electoral body here said the electoral process would be conducted in the constituency now after the general elections for which the schedule will be announced at an appropriate time. However, quoting the ECP Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan, the Election Commission pointed out that there was no need for the remaining contesting candidates to file the nomination papers afresh.

The News - April 28, 2013

Mominabad Tragedy: ANP Wants FIR against Caretaker Government, ECP

Reiterating his party's stance that it will never leave the electoral arena for militants or their political patrons, Senator Shahi Syed of the Awami National Party has said that his party wanted a criminal case against the Election Commission of Pakistan, caretaker Sindh chief minister and the inspector general of police regarding the Mominabad bomb blast that claimed 11 lives. Speaking at a press conference at his residence on Saturday, Senator Syed said that two days back the ANP had sent a letter to the ECP that it would hold responsible the ECP, caretaker government and the Sindh IGP if any leader or worker of the party was targeted. "Now we have submitted an application for the registration of a criminal case against the ECP, the caretaker CM and the IG Sindh about the Mominabad blast," said Sen Syed as the party observed a day of mourning over the night killings. The Sindh ANP president said that it was the responsibility of the ECP and the caretaker government to provide security to candidates and ensure free and fair election. He said that the election campaign was running only in Punjab, where Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif, Imran Khan and Jamaat-i-Islami were holding public meetings and the liberal and progressive parties like the ANP, Pakistan People's Party and Muttahida Qaumi Movement were being repeatedly targeted. He said that terrorism was not only an issue for one party but it was the issue of whole Pakistan. Accompanied by Bashir Jan, who survived the bomb attack, Sen Syed said that the IGP withdrew the security given to the ANP on the grounds that the ECP had instructed him to do so. However, the chief election commissioner was saying that he did not give any directive to withdraw security from political parties, he added. He said he did not understand as to why the law-enforcement agencies were not taking action against terrorists despite the fact that the ANP had even provided them with the numbers of the phones the terrorists were using to extend threats to party leaders and workers.

He said that the incidents of terrorism against progressive forces were part of a conspiracy aimed at stopping the moderate and enlightened parties from contesting the elections. In this situation, he said, it would be a joke if anyone believed that free, fair and transparent elections were going to be held on May 11. In view of a US plan to withdraw troops from Afghanistan in 2014 efforts were being made to send 'political wings of terrorists' in parliament in maximum numbers and to restrict the representations of liberal, progressive and enlightened forces, said Sen Syed. "We want to tell the world that the ANP will never leave ground for terrorists and their political wings...we will fight till the last," he said, asking all political parties, religious scholars, civil society, etc, to think because it was an issue of the integrity of Pakistan. He said that the election campaign of the ANP would continue with vigor despite the tragic incident. "We will take extra precautions to avoid any terrorist activity in future." He called upon the

Chief Justice of Pakistan, corps commander and the Rangers director-general to take notice of the Mominabad incident and order arrest of the killers and take measures to prevent such deadly incidents.

The Dawn - April 28, 2013

Political Parties

Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP)

Gilani's Two Sons, Brother Get PPP Tickets

The PPP announced the names of its candidates from South Punjab for 33 seats of the National Assembly and 72 of the Punjab legislature. The list of candidates released by the Zardari House indicates that the PPP has recognised services of former Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani since his two sons and a brother have got the tickets. They will contest for National Assembly constituencies in Multan. The former prime minister's sons, Abdul Qadir Gilani and Ali Musa Gilani, were MNAs in the previous assembly, whereas his brother Ahmed Mujtaba Gilani was an MPA. "The candidates were finalised after a series of meetings at the Zardari House. The sessions were also attended by Yousuf Raza Gilani," said Nazir Dhoki, a member of the PPP's media team. He said the names of candidates from central Punjab would be announced in a couple of days as meetings were finalising them. PPP leader Naveed Chaudhry told Dawn that the list of candidates from south Punjab had been finalised after a seat adjustment with the PML-Q. The PPP had not given tickets to its candidates in a number of constituencies where Q-League candidates were contesting elections. Former premier Gilani has introduced his younger brother Mujtaba Gilani from his own constituency (NA-152) because he cannot contest the election as a result of the Supreme Court order convicting him of contempt of court for not writing a letter to the Swiss authorities to reopen graft cases against President Asif Ali Zardari. Abdul Qadir Gilani is one of the accused in the 2011 Haj scandal case and Musa Gilani in the 2012 ephedrine (a chemical used in drugs manufacturing) quota scam case.

According to sources, the PPP wants to get political mileage in south Punjab on the issue of a new province for which it moved a bill in parliament. It was passed by the Senate on March 6. However, the bill could not get through the National Assembly because it completed its five-year term on March 16. Among the prominent PPP candidates from south Punjab includes former minister Makhdoom Shahabuddin who will contest for NA-194. Sardar Saifuddin Khan Khosa, son of PML-N's central leader Zulfiqar Khosa, has got PPP ticket for NA-173 DG Khan. It is expected that he will face his brother who may be a candidate of the N-League. Sardar Bahadur Khan Sehar, who recently joined the PPP after quitting the PML-Q, will contest for NA-181 Layyah. His joining the PPP is said to be one of the main reasons for halting of talks on seat adjustment with the PML-Q, which later resumed on the intervention of President Zardari. Former minister Abdul Qayyum Khan Jatoy, who resigned after having been involved in a scandal, has succeeded in obtaining the PPP ticket for his own constituency NA-180 Layyah. Former MNAs Malik Niaz Ahmed Khakkar and Moazzam Ali Khan Jatoy will contest for NA-182 and NA-179, respectively.

Mehmood Hayat Khan alias Tooichi Khan was the youngest member in the outgoing National Assembly. He is PPP candidate for NA-170. The following are the PPP candidates for NA seats in south Punjab: Syed Ali Musa Gilani NA-128, Malik Mohammad Amir Dogar NA-149, Nafees Ahmed Ansari NA-150, Syed Abdul Qadir Gilani NA-151, Syed Ahmed Mujtaba Gilani NA-152, Rana Mohammad Qasim Noon NA-53, Rana Mohammad Faraz Noon NA-154, Pir Haider Zaman

Qureshi NA-158, Capt Syed Iqbal Gill NA-159, Ehsan Ellahi Cheema NA-167, Ms Natasha Daultana NA-168, Mehmood Hayat Khan alias Toochee Khan NA-170, Sardar Saifuddin Khan Khosa NA-173, Khawaja Kaleemudin Koreja NA-174, Sardar Jehanzeb Khan Dareshak NA-175, Dr Mian Mohammad Shabbir Ali Qureshi NA-176, Malik Ghulam Rabbani Khar NA-177, Nawabzada Iftikhar Ahmed Khan NA-178, Moazzam Ali Khan Jatoi NA-179, Abdul Qayyum Khan Jatoi NA-180, Sardar Bahadur Khan Sehar NA-181, Malik Niaz Ahmed Jhakar NA-182, Khadija Amir Warran NA-184, Sahibzada Munwar Hayat Abbasi NA-185, Dr Akhtar Ali Lalika NA-189, Chaudhry Zafar Iqbal NA-190, Dr Ch Mazhar Iqbal NA-191, Khawaja Ghulam Rasool Koreja NA-192, Mian Abdul Sattar NA-193, Makhdoom Shahabuddin NA-194, Makhdoom Syed Mustafa Mehmood NA-195, Javed Iqbal Warraich NA-196 and Makhdoom Syed Murtaza Mehmood NA-197.

Dawn - April 13, 2013

Election Tribunal Declares Ashraf Ineligible to Contest Polls

Election Tribunal has rejected an appeal of former prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, barring him from contesting the upcoming polls from NA-51 Gujrat. The Election Tribunal comprising Lahore High Court (LHC) judges Justice Abdur Rauf and Justice Mamoon-ur-Rasheed declared the former premier ineligible to contest elections. Raja Pervaiz Ashraf was accused of misappropriating development funds and indulging in nepotism. It is interesting to note here that both the former prime ministers of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) - Yousuf Raza Gilani and Raja Pervez Ashraf - stand ineligible to contest May 11 elections.

The News - April 15, 2013

PPP, Q Declare 20 Seats 'Open'

The Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid have finally reached an understanding on more than 20 'disputed' national and Punjab assemblies seats, leaving them 'open' to the candidates of both parties which had been coalition partners. Instead of allowing the (seats) issue to become a full-blown rift that may impact the alliance in the May 11 election. However, the parties have authorised their candidates on the disputed seats to make adjustments on their own, if possible. The National Assembly seats from where both the PPP and PML-Q candidates will contest separately include NA-105 (Gujrat), NA-164 (Pakpattan) NA-62, NA-63 (Jhelum), NA-141 (Kasur), NA-113 (Daska), NA-143 (Okara) and NA-79 (Faisalabad). Since the leaderships of both parties have already agreed that Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi and Ahmed Mukhtar will contest against each other, there is no last-minute withdrawal from any side. PPP stalwart Fawad Chaudhry is contesting from NA-63 (Jhelum) from PML-Q platform as the former has obliged Raja Afzal, who recently defected to PPP from the PML-N, on both NA-62 and NA-63. Fawad Chaudhry told that he had submitted his resignation to the PPP leadership but it was not accepted. Farrukh Altaf and I are contesting on the PML-Q tickets against Raja Afzal on both NA constituencies. Since he (Afzal) has not been welcomed by the PPP workers, he may not get the PPP vote. The PPP leadership has issued no show-cause notice to Chaudhry for violating the party policy. Since the PML-Q candidates were runners-up in the last election, the PPP had to leave these seats 'open'. Similarly, in Faisalabad where nomination papers of PPP candidate Rana Farooq Saeed and his wife were rejected by the tribunal, the PML-Q wants to pitch Dildar Cheema and the PPP should concede the seat to it. The Q believes it has strong candidates in NA-141 (Asif Nakai), NA-143 (Rai Aslam Kharal) and NA-164 (Pir Muhammad Shah Khagga), against those of the PPP. The Punjab Assembly seats which the parties have left

open to their candidates include PP-24, PP-25, PP-26 and PP-27 (Jhelum), PP-60 (Faisalabad), PP-117 and PP-120 (Mandi Bahauddin), PP-136 (Narowal), PP-149 (Lahore), PP-182 (Kasur), PP-196 (Multan), PP-239 (Vehari) and PP-277 (Bahawalnagar).

Dawn - April 17, 2013

PPP Is the Only Hope for the Poor: Bilawal

PPP chairman in a video speech says wanted to launch campaign along with PPP workers but will be assisting elders for now PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said the party is the life the country needs, the hope of the poor, the voice of the labourers and the future of the new generation. In a video speech released, Bilawal said the PPP was an obsession and a passion and passions can never be defeated. He said PPP was the symbol of the federation that linked the four provinces and it will win with the support of the people. There are some forces in the country who want to divide the people but the PPP is the party that unites all. The PPP chairman said the party had to continue the journey of democracy "as it is the journey of hope, independence, prosperity of the poor, and rights of the working class". This is the journey of Pakistan's prosperity and it will continue till we reach our destination, when there will be no fear and terror". Bilawal said the PPP would win the elections in Sindh because of the record development activities carried out by the PPP government in the province and because it had veteran politicians such as Qaim Ali Shah, Khurshid Shah and Amin Fahim there.

Bilawal also said South Punjab was also the base of the PPP and it would remain so forever, adding that the PPP welcomed the demand of a separate province so that terrorism, unemployment and poverty could be eliminated. He said the PPP raised its voice for the rights of people of Multan and Bahawalpur. Bilawal said the PPP had sacrificed its prime minister, Yousaf Raza Gilani for the cause of people of south Punjab, adding that the PPP's opponents were mistaken when they thought they could conquer the entire Punjab by utilising the resources of the whole province on just one city. The PPP chief said central Punjab was also a strong hold of the PPP jialas and no one could defeat the party there as party workers like Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, wise politicians like Qamar Zaman Kaira and public leaders like Ahmed Mukhtar were present there. Bilawal said he wanted to contest the polls living amongst the people and also wanted to launch the election campaign in the streets of the country alongside the PPP workers. He said that the followers of Benazir Bhutto are anxiously waiting for him, but PPP is at a war against a mindset. The murderers of Quaid-e-Awam and BB Shaheed now want to eliminate us as well. I don't care for my life, and will one day also lead the PPP's election campaign. However, until that time, I will be assisting the elders."

Pakistan Today - April 24, 2013

Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML - N)

PML-N Sets Sights on 56 NA Seats from Central Punjab

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has set its sights on nabbing 56 of the 68 National Assembly seats from central Punjab come what may. In this regard, party chief Nawaz Sharif has been personally overseeing the finalization and distribution of tickets to aspiring party candidates from the region. Sharif presided over the meeting of the party's central parliamentary board, interviewing and finalising candidates for 20 seats from the Faisalabad division. The PML-N chief had earlier finalised tickets for 23 seats from the Gujranwala division.

He is set to finalise candidates for seats from Gujrat and Mandi Bahauddin districts. According to top level PML-N officials, the party is keen on winning 56 NA seats from central Punjab (which comprises the Gujranwala, Lahore and Faisalabad divisions) in order to attain its target of 110 NA seats from the whole province. Although the PML-N only managed to win 37 of the 68 NA seats from central Punjab in the previous elections, they said the party chief was optimistic about achieving the target this time around.

PML-N's top level policymakers have vowed to win 22 of the 25 NA seats from Lahore division and have awarded tickets for the seats to strong candidates. Of Gujranwala division's 23 NA seats, the party is determined to win at least 18 seats. And although it has received a large number of applications for Faisalabad division's 20 NA seats, PML-N has finalised strong candidates for 16 seats. According to insiders at the meeting, PML-N discussed the possible threat posed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in central Punjab and briefed its candidates on countering the latter party's popularity in the region. They said Dr Tauqeer Shah, the former secretary to the Punjab chief minister, recommended final candidates for the seats and briefed the PML-N leadership on countering the PTI threat based on the surveys he conducted in the central Punjab constituencies during his tenure. Nawaz Sharif is also set to finalise candidates for northern Punjab (Rawalpindi and Sargodha divisions) in the coming days. Following that, he will finalise candidates for the Lahore division.

Gujranwala Division

The division comprises six districts: Gujranwala, Sialkot, Narowal, Mandi Bahauddin, Hafizabad, and Gujrat. So far PML-N has finalised Usman Ibrahim for NA 95, Engineer Khurram Dastgir for NA 96, Chaudhry Mehmood Bashir Virk for NA 97, Rana Nazir Ahmad Khan for NA 99, Bilal Ejaz for NA 100, Saira Afzal Tarar for NA 102, Chaudhry Jaffar Iqbal for NA 105, Malik Hanif for NA 107, Khawaja Asif for NA 110, Khush Akhtar Subhani for NA 111, Rana Abdul Sattar for NA 112, Syed Iftikharul Hassan for NA 113, Zahid Hamid for NA 114, Mian Muhammad Rasheed for NA 115, Daniyal Aziz Chaudhary for NA 116 and Ahsan Iqbal for NA 117. Candidates for NA 101, NA 103, NA 104, NA 105, NA 108 and NA 109 have yet to be decided.

The Express Tribune - April 04, 2013

An Old Warrior Still Leads the Pack

In a sprawling home opposite the golden arches of McDonald's, the man with the golden touch in this northern Punjab city is quietly and confidently preparing for electoral battle yet again. Khwaja Asif, the silver-haired PML-N impresario with the signature country drawl, has never lost an election in this wealthy, modern export hub with a politics rooted in the old ways of biradivism. In 2002, Asif, along with a running mate on a provincial assembly ticket, was the only PML-N candidate in the entire Gujranwala division to win a seat. In 2008, his fourth National Assembly victory on the trot, Asif won by a margin of 40,000 votes, more than twice the number secured by the PPP runner-up. This time round, Asif has also thrown his hat into the provincial assembly ring – sparking rumours that he may be eyeing the chief minister's slot after the election. For all his success, though, Asif continues to deflect credit towards his boss, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. Sialkot is PML-N territory. There's high literacy, low unemployment and the people are low to middle middle-class. They identify with Mian Sahib's middle-class origins. Then there are Mian Sahib's pro-business policies. He finished the octroi tax, fixed the tax rates and as a result there's massive, massive amounts of white money here. The business community has a relationship with him. Rolling blackouts have left the city without electricity for more hours a day than with. Lengthy queues of vehicles snake around the many CNG filling stations

here, when there is any gas left to pump, that is. Chronic shutdowns at the some 6,000 small and medium enterprises that produce \$1.5bn of exports a year has triggered mass layoffs and left owners complaining about the spiralling cost of business. And there is a growing vein of resentment against Asif's aloof and autocratic style of politics. People like N-League, but not necessarily Khwaja Asif according to Naeem Iqbal, a local journalist.

Power Politics: Withering as the energy crisis has been for Sialkot's economy and everyday life, a paradox quickly becomes apparent: its effect on constituency politics appears to be negligible. A group of locals debating the electricity and gas shortages were fiercely critical of the impact on the average Sialkoti's livelihood and daily life, but, to a man, they were also sure individual candidates would not be blamed. Pakistan has a caretaker government now and the power crisis is worse than ever. Owners of small- and medium-sized enterprises and exporters, while expressing frustration at the deepening energy crisis, see the crisis neither as a compelling reason to push harder for a PML-N-led federal government nor as grounds to punish the PML-N for allowing the PPP to complete an unprecedented full term. At the end of the day, they're businessmen and focus on self-interest. There is no love for anyone or any party. They just see who has the best industrial and business policy. For many hugely influential members of chamber of commerce, the best option is the PML-N.

Opponents Divided: Complex as the politics of Sialkot city is – biradiris play a significant role as do the many business families – it can also be reduced to a simple equation: add the devotion of the electorate to Nawaz Sharif and subtract the unease felt towards Khwaja Asif to determine the margin of Asif's eventual victory. Khwaja Asif doesn't let party workers and ordinary people near him. He only has time for investors, people who can put money in his campaign according to Saleem Kalamkar, a local journalist. And the investors don't do it out of love. They are scared because they know if he wins, he can set the labour department and other agencies loose on their factories. Imran Ashraf, a former Asif protégé and two-term MPA who recently quit the PML-N and joined the PTI to take on Asif, said: "The PML-N always wins here because no other party contests against them. The voters haven't had a genuine alternative, a strong candidate to choose." But the PTI, which has set its sights on the city seats (NA-110, PP-122 and PP-123), is hamstrung by uncertainty over ticket allocation. Ashraf, who is vying for the PTI ticket in NA-110 with Usman Dar, a 38-year-old first time politician, said: "It's unfortunate. People should have been nominated a month ago. As a new party, PTI has to go out and target all voters. The established parties only have to target people who are unhappy with them. Less encumbered by uncertainty over tickets is Arshad Mehmood Baggu, the Jamaat-i-Islami candidate for NA-110 who won an MPA seat in 2002, but stayed out in 2008 because of the JI's nationwide boycott. While wary of predicting victory, Baggu does think he has an ace up his sleeve: "The PPP came to me and said that we (the PPP) can't defeat Khwaja Asif. So we'll support someone who can. Firdous Ashiq Awan will withdraw her papers before the election and will support me." Awan, whose base is a neighbouring, rural constituency of Sialkot, is the final piece of the likely major opposition to Khwaja Asif. Unable to find a strong candidate in NA-110 but having bagged 32,000 votes in the last election, the PPP high command has drafted in Awan to contest against Asif, in addition to her preferred seat, NA-111. Awan, though, is unsure if she will eventually contest both seats. For Asif, seeing the popular PTI a house still divided and recognising the implausibility of the JI and PPP working together to unseat him, it is already time to start thinking about the future.

Dawn - April 13, 2013

An Overview of 1993 General Elections: A Pile of Dirty Linen

Just when they thought they had mastered the pattern of staging a coup without hurting their democratic credentials, things went wrong. The then president, Ghulam Ishaq Khan, was following the standard operating procedure when he dismissed the government of Nawaz Sharif on April 18, 1993, using Article 58(2b) for the second time. But nothing seemed to go the way it was supposed to. The aggrieved party took legal recourse and the Supreme Court annulled the president's order, restoring the government around 40 days after its dismissal. But 'the relief provided no solution; it upped the ante. The next round was enacted in provinces, especially in Punjab. The provincial assemblies were not dissolved but as the Sharif government had lost the first round at the federal level, elected members in Punjab abandoned the sinking ship. A no-confidence motion against Ghulam Haider Wyne, a Nawaz Sharif loyalist, succeeded and Manzoor Wattoo, representing an anti-Nawaz faction of the Muslim League, took the oath as the chief minister of Punjab. But as the tide reversed in Islamabad, a no-confidence was moved against Wattoo. He advised the governor to dissolve the assembly; the governor, being the president's appointee, immediately obliged. In courts again, the parties haggled over whether the dissolution of the assembly had been sought a minute before or after the submission of the no-confidence motion. Frustrated by the ongoing legal tussle, the prime minister ordered federal rule in the province but the president stopped its implementation.

The president and the prime minister had taken it too far and their differences had become too personal. The army jumped in and brokered a compromise that saw both of them out of their offices. The then chairman of the Senate, Wasim Sajjad, took over as acting president and a hitherto unknown person, Moeen Qureshi, was sworn in as the caretaker prime minister. He had served as a senior bureaucrat at the World Bank, mostly outside the country. Fresh elections were announced for October 1993. The army became the de facto ruler of the country and dominated the administration of the elections. Judicial officers, aided by deputy commissioners and other officers of the district administration had been the main electoral machinery since 1988. The civil services were now considered too biased in Nawaz Sharif's favour and were thus kept out. Judicial officers were aided by officers from the army that had set up a hierarchy running parallel to the one put in place by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Two to three army personnel were deputed at each polling station, though they were assigned no polling-related function. The caretakers made it mandatory for candidates to declare in writing that they were not loan defaulters. Persons who had got their loans written off after March 23, 1985 (when the Junejo government took over under President Ziaul Haq) were also barred from contesting elections. For the first time, candidates were also required to submit details of their own, their spouses' and dependents' assets and liabilities.

The ECP was barred from officially notifying the name of the winning candidates unless this submission had been made. But since the rules had not prescribed any standard format, each parliamentarian-elect did it differently. The authorities also attempted to cleanse the election campaigns. The code barred candidates from calling each other infidels and also prevented them from launching propaganda against female candidates on the basis of their gender. The Pakistan Muslim League finally broke out of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) shell. A faction that had fallen out with Nawaz Sharif took the suffix Junejo (PML-J) while the main party named itself PML-Nawaz. The PML-J won for itself the election symbol of the bicycle that had been used by the IJI in the past two elections. The PML-N went for the tiger that had been the symbol of the PML-Qayyum, the anti-Ayub Khan Muslim League, during the general elections of 1970 and 1977. Nevertheless, the PML-N rose as the main centre-right party. Though it could not form government after the 1993 elections, it kept its vote bank intact. The six million votes that had purportedly been deposited by the 'establishment' in the IJI's account in 1988 now moved to

Nawaz Sharif's account, while his politics earned him an interest of two million additional votes. Consequently, the other major partner in the IJI, the Jamaat-i-Islami, went bankrupt.

The party's head Qazi Hussain Ahmed tried to inject some enthusiasm into its dejected ranks. Ostensibly wanting to emulate the steep rise of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algiers (December 1991), he decided to contest elections under the name Pakistan Islamic Front; its election symbol of the car, however, took it nowhere. It polled a total of 650,000 votes, winning three national seats. The infamous clean-up operation in Karachi was halfway through at the time. It had started following an unprecedented spate of violence in the metropolis and saw the arrest, killing and disappearance of a number of workers of what was then the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM). The party's supremo, Altaf Hussain, had slipped out of the country weeks before the operation and taken refuge in the UK. The MQM had participated independently or under the banner of the Haq Parast Group in previous elections. It was told by the military to stay away from elections to the National Assembly. It thus announced a boycott of the 1993 elections though the party's candidates contested provincial constituencies and maintained electoral supremacy.

Dawn - April 13, 2013

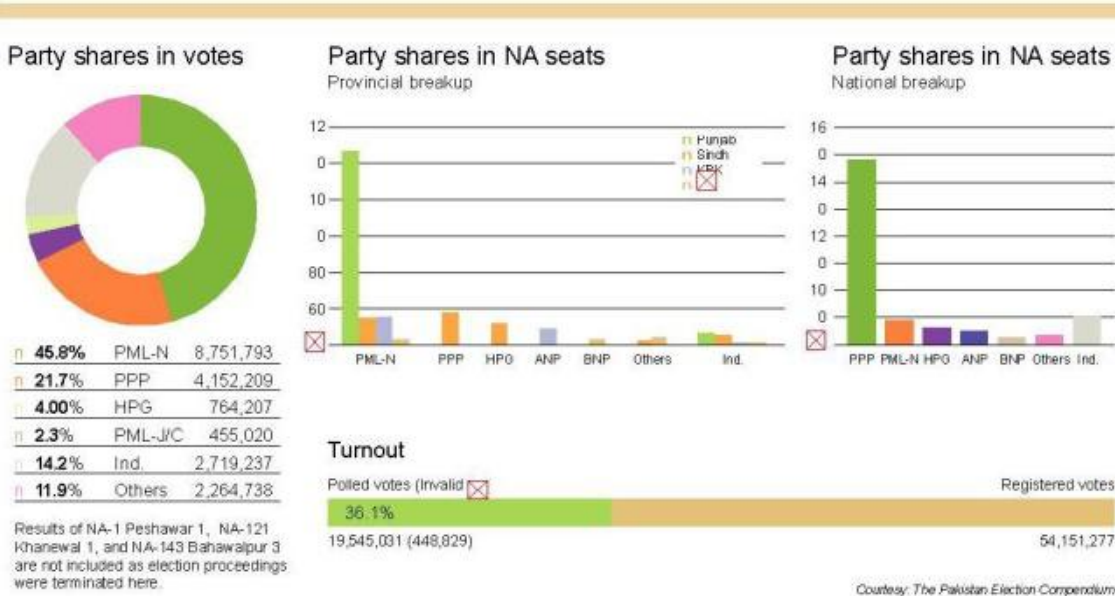
An Overview of 1997 General Elections: PML-N Returns with a Bang

By the end of the third year of its second tenure, the PPP was in dire straits and for once it had no one to blame. The PPP's supporters were dejected and disillusioned, and did not even travel the distance between their homes and the polling stations in the general elections of 1997. This handed a thumping majority to the PML-N. Over much of the past decade, power politics had tried in vain to attain a workable balance between the head of state and the head of government. It was thought that had the president also belonged to the ruling party, there would be no infighting. But the PPP's second stint in power proved this wrong. The PPP did initially use its new position to its advantage. The party had formed government in the centre and in Sindh; it had to relinquish the cherished government of Punjab to its coalition partner in the centre, the PML-Junejo, while the PML-N had its way in what is now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and an upper hand in Balochistan. The PPP soon toppled the PML-N government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thanks to the presidential power to declare governor's rule for a limited period. It repeated the same tactic, with somewhat limited success, in replacing the government of its fallen friend in Punjab. But the party could not avoid falling victim to the old president-prime minister divide. Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, became the polarising factor. He was accused of massive corruption and the party stood divided between those who saw Zardari as a menace and those who found him a part of the solution.

Murtaza Bhutto, Benazir's brother, who was said to have headed a militant anti-Zia outfit in the 1980s and had been in self-exile since then, returned to the country before the 1993 elections. The strong-headed Murtaza formed his own faction, the PPP-Shaheed Bhutto, contested elections and won on a provincial seat in Sindh. He was killed in a shootout with the police near his residence in Karachi in 1996. President Farooq Ahmed Leghari found in this an opportunity; the PPP government was dismissed and fresh elections announced. The PPP's vote bank had remained at around 7.5 million during the past three elections; it plummeted to 4.1 million in 1997. This made Nawaz Sharif's victory a landslide whose gain of less than a million votes gave him a comfortable two-thirds majority in the house. This was the second occasion in the country's history when a party had returned with such a heavy mandate. The first was in 1977, which was disputed by the opposition and the subsequent conflicts and protest campaigns had paved the way for the military to wind up the entire democratic system. The PPP's supporters

were in mourning and the overall atmosphere of the 1997 elections was not festive. Bans on cloth banners, hoardings, etc, introduced in the previous elections were extended; the election campaign set no printing presses rolling this time. The electoral carnival was shortened as it was decided for the first time to hold the polling for the national and the provincial assemblies on the same day.

The qualifications for contesting candidates were made more stringent. The declaration of assets by elected members was made an annual requirement and they were asked to submit affidavits declaring that they had not defaulted on a bank loan or in payment of government dues. A new ordinance also required them to swear by their party affiliation and commit in writing that they would not violate it under any circumstances. The most exciting of the twists in the political drama over the past decade had been provided by politicians' acts of infidelity. But the Jamaat-i-Islami was not satisfied with these measures and boycotted the polls, demanding a purge of the ranks of politicians. The party in fact had failed to reinvent itself after the demise of the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad and its experiment of contesting under the guise of the Islamic Front in 1993 had failed miserably too. A new party, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, took part in the elections for the first time but none of its 134 candidates for national seats came in at even the runner-up position.



The highest vote taker was Imran Khan himself as he polled just over 10,000 votes in two of the nine seats that he contested. Following the operation in Karachi, a faction of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) broke away and contested elections under the name MQM-Haqiqi; the main party controlled by Altaf Hussain from London continued to contest under the label of the Haq Parast Group. Adult franchise finally reached the tribal areas in 1997, half a century after the independence. The seven agencies with eight seats in the National Assembly had an electoral roll of just 37,000 voters that were handpicked by the federal government under the criteria set by colonial rulers. Members from Fata had earned notoriety for changing loyalties in favour of whoever was able to form government and offer them privileges. The president's act of extending adult franchise made the rolls 1.6 million-strong. The rolls laid bare the huge gender disparity as they registered 35 women for every 100 men. The president did not, however,

extend the Political Parties Act to the tribal areas, and resultantly the much-hyped electoral activities in Fata remained limited.

Dawn - April 14, 2013

SDPI Seminar: Experts Question PML-N's Stance on Militancy

It was the turn of Pakistan's second largest party, the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N), to present its manifesto. The event was held at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) conference hall, which was packed to the brim with journalists and political enthusiasts. Those present at the conference were skeptical about the lack of attention PML-N paid to militancy and terrorism across the country. Political analyst Imtiaz Gul criticised the party's dismissive attitude towards the issue, grilling its representative Senator Sartaj Aziz on whether he had any idea about the menace. Our biggest problem is that military, political and civil groups are not on the same page about this issue. Insurgency cannot be just be curbed by military action, there are many other factors beyond the limits of our power. Aziz focused on his party's promise to revive the economy and double the GDP growth rate from less than three per cent in the past five years to over six per cent during the next five. The manifesto emphasises on attracting foreign investment in the agricultural and livestock sectors to facilitate exports of high-value products to regional markets and converting at least 50 per cent of remittances - currently standing at USD13 billion a year - into capital for investment. Motorways, dams, housing projects and the development of new urban centres were also discussed in the manifesto.

According to Aziz, PML-N plans to bring the budget deficit down to four per cent through increased revenues, while raising the tax-to-GDP ratio from nine per cent at present to 15 per cent by the end of 2018. While the implementation plans presented by the PML-N for economic growth were impressive, many expressed their reservations over the party's lofty promises. "What is really needed are structural reforms, which no government seems to have carried out. Stating that the tax-to-GDP ratio will increase to 15 per cent in five years is asking for a miracle," said analyst Zahid Hussain. He added that the manifesto was not clear on tax restructuring, abolishment of Statutory Regulatory Orders (SROs), and implementation of the Reformed General Sales Tax (RGST). Hussain was skeptical about the manifesto's education policies, stating that "ensuring 100 per cent enrolment in education by 2020 was just plain rhetoric." He also called on the party to confirm its stance on whether it supported the agriculture tax. Hussain said the party had missed out the major issue regarding the energy sector - a lack of management.

The Express Tribune - April 16, 2013

PML-N Will Change Country's Destiny after Coming into Power: Nawaz

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif on Monday said that if his party returns to power, it will put the country on the path to progress and prosperity and will provide jobs to the unemployed youth. Addressing a public meeting in Hafizabad, he said prosperity was his party's goal and he was determined to achieve the goal. Nawaz Sharif said PML-N would change the destiny of the country after coming into power. He said war would be waged against poverty, price hike and corruption. Nawaz Sharif said the enthusiasm of the people of Hafizabad, "like always, is unmatched". "Voters will hold accountability of the plunderers on May11," he said. Nawaz said Pakistan attained prosperity during the tenure of PML-N government and the

Pakistan flag enjoyed respect in the world. "Today Pakistan is drowned in darkness due to load shedding and corruption", he said. He urged the masses to support PML-N in order to bring Pakistan out of darkness and into light, and to restore Pakistan's respect in the world. Nawaz promised the youth that they would be provided jobs and opportunities for business. He condemned the killing of the son and brother of PML-N Balochistan President Zahri. He said the people will hold all those accountable on May 11 who had deprived them of electricity and gas. He said the respect of the country would be restored in the comity of the nations. Nawaz Sharif said his party will steer the country out of the ongoing crisis. He said that the problems being faced by the people of the area would also be resolved on a priority basis.

Pakistan Today - April 17, 2013

PML-N Lines Up NA Candidates in Punjab

Following are the PML-N candidates for the National Assemblies seats in Punjab:

District Rawalpindi: NA-50 Shahid Haqan Abbasi, NA-51 Raja Javed Akhlaq, NA-52 Ch Nisar Ali Khan, NA-53 Ch Nisar Ali Khan, NA-54 Malik Ibrar Ahmad, NA-55 Malik Shakeel Ahmad Awan, NA-56 Mahammad Hanif Abbasi. District Attock: NA-57 Sheikh Aftab Ahmad, NA-58 Malik Aitbar Khan, NA-59 Asif Ali Malik. District Chakwal: NA-60 Maj (retd) Tahir Iqbal, NA-61 Sardar Mumtaz Khan Tumman. District Jehlum: NA-62 Ch Khadim Hussain, NA-63 Iqbal Mehdi Khan. District Sargodha: NA-64 Pir M Ameenul Hassan Shah, NA-65 Mohsin Shahnawaz Raja, NA-66 M Hamid Hameed, NA-67 Dr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutti, NA-68 M Nawaz Sharif. District Khushab: NA-69 Sumaira Malik, NA-70 Malik Shakir Bashir Awan. District Mianwali: NA-71 Haji Ubaidullah Khan Shadi Khel, NA-72 M Humair Khan Rokeri. District Bhakkar: NA-73 Abdul Majeed Khan Khanan Khel, NA-74 Rasheed Akbar Nawani. District Faisalabad: NA-75 Col (retd) Ghulam Rasool Sahi, NA-76 Ch Talal, NA-77 M Asim Nazir, NA-78 Raja Ali Khan Baloch, NA-79 Shahbaz Babar, NA-80 Mian M Farooq, NA-81 Dr Nisar Ahmad, NA-82 Rana M Afzal Khan, NA-83 Mian Abdul Manan, NA-84 Abid Sher Ali, NA-85 Haji M Akram Ansari.

District Chiniot: NA-86 Qaisar Ahmad Sheikh, NA-87 Ghulam M Lali, NA-88 Ghulam Bibi Bharwana. District Jhang: NA-89 Sheikh M Akram, NA-90 Saiman Akhtar Bhwarwan, NA-91 Sahibzada M Mahboob Sultan. District Toba Tek Singh: NA-92 Ch Khalid Javed Warraich, NA-93 M Junaid Anwar Ch. NA-94 Ch Asadur Rahman. District Gujranwala: NA-95 Usman Ibrahim, NA-96 Eng Khurram Dastagir Khan, NA-97 M Bashir Virk, NA-98 Mian Tariq Mahmood, NA-99 Rana Umar Nazir Khan, NA-100 Azhar Qayyum Nagra, NA-101 Justice (retd) Iftkhar Ahmad Cheema. District Hafizabad: NA-102 Saira Afzal Tarar, NA-103 Mian Shahid Hussain Khan Bhatti. District Gujrat: NA-104 Nawabzada Mazhar Ali, NA-105 Ch Mubashir Husain, NA-106 Ch Jaffar Iqbal, NA-107 Ch Abid Raza. District Mandi Bahauddin: NA-108 Mumtaz Ahmad Tarar, NA-109 Nasir Iqbal Gondal. District Sialkot: NA-110 Khwaja M Asif, NA-111 Ch Armaghan Subhani, NA-112 Rana Shamim, NA-113 Syed Iftikharul Hassan, NA-114 Zahid Hamid. District Narowal: NA-115 Mian M Rasheed, NA-116 Danyal Aziz, NA-117 Ahsan Iqbal. District Lahore: NA-118 M Riaz Malik, NA-119 Mian M Hamza Shahbaz Sharif, NA-120 Mian M Nawaz Sharif, NA-121 Maher Ishtiaq Ahmad, NA-122 Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, NA-123 M Pervez Malik, NA-124 Sheikh Rohail Asghar, NA-125 Khwaja Saad Rafiq, NA-126 Khwaja Ahmad Hassan, NA-127 Waheed Alam Khan, NA-128 M Afzal Khokhar, NA-129 Mian M Shahbaz Sharif, NA-130 Sohail Shaukat Butt.

District Sheikhpura: NA-131 Rana Afzaal Hussain, NA-132 Rana Tanveer Hussain, NA-133 Mian Javed Virk, NA-134 Sardar M Irfan Dogar. District Nankana Sahib: NA-135 M Birjees Tahir, NA-136 Bilal Ahmad Virk, NA-137 Rai Mansib Ali Kharral. District Kasur: NA-138 Ch M Salman Hanif, NA-139 Waseem Akhtar Sheikh, NA-140 Malik Rasheed Ahmad Khan, NA-141

Rana M Ishaq, NA-142 Rana M Hayyat Khan. District Okara: NA-143 Nadeem Abbas Rabera Kharral, NA-144 M Arif Ch, NA-145 Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani, NA-146 Rao M Ajmal Khan, NA-147 M Moeen Wattoo. District Multan: NA-148 Malik Abdul Ghaffar Dogar, NA-149 Sheikh M Tariq Rasheed, NA-150 Rana Mahmoodul Hassan, NA-151 Sikandar Bosan, NA-152 Syed Javed Ali Shah, NA-153 Dewan Ashiq Hussain Bokhari. District Lodhran: NA-154 Syed M Rafiuddin Bokhari, NA-155 M Akhtar Khan Kanjo. District Khanewal: NA-156 Syed Fakhar Imam, NA-157 M Khan Daha, NA-158 Pir M Aslam Bodla, NA-159 Iftikhar Nazir.

District Sahiwal: NA-160 Syed Imran Ali Shah, NA-161 Ch M Ashraf, NA-162 Ch M Tufail, NA-163 Ch M Munir Azhar. District Pakpattan: NA-164 Sardar Mansab Ali Dogar, NA-165 Syed Athar Hussain Gillani, NA-166 Rana Zahid. District Vehari: NA-167 Ch Nazir Ahmad Arian, NA-168 Sajid Medhi, NA-169 Begum Tehmina Daultana, NA-170 Saeed Ahmad Khan Minais. District D.G.Khan: NA-171 Amjad Farooq Khan Khosa, NA-172 Dr Hafiz Abdul Karim, NA-173 (open). District Rajanpur: NA-174 Jaffar Leghari, NA-175 Hafeezur Rahman KhanDareshek. District Muzaffargarh: NA-176 Malik Sultan Mahmood Hinjra, NA-177 Khalid Gurmani, NA-178 M Abad Dogar, NA-179 Makhdoom Zada Syed Basit A Sultan, NA-180 Syed M Abdullah Shah Bokhari. District Layyah: NA-181 Sahibzada Faizul Hassan, NA-182 Syed Saqlain Shah Bokhari. District Bawalpur: NA-183 Makhdoom Syed Ali Hassan Gillani, NA-184 Mian Najeemuddin Awaisi, NA-185 M Baleeghur Rahman, NA-186 Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, NA-187 Khalid Mahmood Jajja. District Bahawalnagar: NA-188 M Akhtar Khadim, NA-189 Alam Din Lalika, NA-190 Tahir Bashir Cheema, NA-191 Mian Abdul Rasheed.

The Nation - April 20, 2013

PML-N to Make Pakistan a Self-Reliant State: Nawaz

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif has said his party was contesting election with a vision of making Pakistan a peaceful, self-reliant and progressive state. Addressing an election gathering in Dijkot on Tuesday, he said a national health insurance programme would be launched to take care of the most vulnerable people in the society. Nawaz vowed that Pakistan would scale the peaks of progress in their next government. "Power load shedding was nonexistent in our days. Instead of a shortfall, there was a surplus to the extent that even India was trying to buy electricity from us. In those days, Pakistan commanded respect in the world," the PML-N leader said. He said power load shedding and gas shortage had crippled daily life of the people while high inflation, unemployment and poverty had brought the society to its knees. Nawaz said the PML-N would ensure access to safe drinking water across Pakistan, including in far-flung areas. He urged the masses to reject corrupt leaders through the power of vote. Nawaz added that the PML-N aimed to restore Pakistan's lost status and include its name in the list of progressed countries. The PML-N president reiterated that his party would resolve all issues facing the country, including violence in Balochistan and Karachi, if voted to power. He said provision of gas, electricity and jobs was the right of the people and the past government deprived the masses of these rights. "The country will remain in a sea of problems if the masses do not vote for the PML-N," he said. Nawaz said the previous governments left the country in the midst of crises. He claimed that after coming to power, the PML-N would build motorways up to Karachi, besides ensuring jobs for educated youth and interest-free loans for unemployed persons.

Pakistan Today - April 24, 2013

PML-N Leaders get 15 Months Jail Term

The district and sessions courts of Kasur and Sahiwal sentenced two more PML-N leaders' former, MNA Rao Mazhar Hayat in fake degree case and Zahid Iqbal in dual nationality case. Sahiwal sessions court sentenced PML-N worker Zahid Iqbal to 15-month imprisonment in dual nationality case. Sahiwal Sessions Judge Mushtaq Ahmed awarded jail term to Zahid Iqbal for 15 months and fined him Rs. 15,000. He was immediately arrested by police as he came out of the court. Meanwhile during hearing, District and Sessions judge Kasur Tariq Iftikhar Ahmed sentenced PML-N former MNA Rao Mazhar Hayat from constituency 138 for two-year imprisonment and also fined him Rs. 20,000 in fake degree case. The former MNA was sent to district jail on direction of the session's court.

Daily Times - April 25, 2013

PML-N Will Serve Masses with New Passion: Nawaz

PML-N President Mian Nawaz Sharif said that with the public support his party would come into power to serve the masses more devotedly than it did in the past. Addressing a public gathering in Yazman tehsil of Bahawalpur, Nawaz declared that if he were elected prime minister, he would not sit in the Prime Minister's House but with the people to resolve their problems. He said that Shahbaz wanted to become the federal minister for water and power to resolve the energy crisis on priority basis. He urged the public to vote for the PML-N candidates as they had the excellent track record of public service. He said that PML-N would introduce new policies to overcome unemployment and issue loans to skilled people and concrete efforts would be made to resolve energy crisis for stable national economy. Smooth supply of irrigation water will be ensured for the promotion of agriculture sector and special projects would be introduced for Cholistan. He said that currently Pakistan had been facing a number of challenges and 'we had to resolve these issues on priority for making a strong Pakistan. The PML-N would work for restoring national pride and accelerate the progress in every field. We were over burdened by foreign loans which badly damaged our economy. The PML-N would work hard to overcome the crisis for the better future of the nation. Shahbaz Sharif, as the Punjab chief minister, did remarkably well and started various projects of public welfare. He vowed to root out corruption. He demanded action against former president Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf according to the law, saying that he was a national criminal who should not be freed because he had damaged the national institutions. He said that his government would keep cordial relationship with the army but the past chapter should be closed and no such moves should happen in future that had disfigured the Constitution. He claimed that the era of real democracy would start on May 11, which would bring prosperity in the country.

The Nation - April 26, 2013

Nawaz Pledges to Make Country Economic Giant

PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif said that his party made Pakistan nuclear power and if voted to power in May 11 elections it would turn the country into economic giant. Addressing a public meeting here, he said the country could march on the road of prosperity only if those who cared for people were given a chance to rule again. Nawaz announced to set up a network of employment banks throughout the country after coming into power to advance credit to youth for establishing their own businesses. The PML-N chief said despite corruption and plundering

by others, the PML-N government in Punjab set an example of good governance and merit. He said the PML-N government would upgrade Jarranwala as district and also connect it with Motorway.

Giving reference to Punjab chief minister, he said Shahbaz completed great projects for the masses without any discrimination. He said it is regrettable to say that factories were closed due to energy crisis, millions of workers were rendered jobless. "There is an unending chain of protests, demonstrations in the country. The question is that who is responsible for this chaotic situation? History is witness to the fact that India used to beg for electricity from Pakistan. This credit goes to the PML-N government," Nawaz went on saying. He said, "We always spoke truth with the nation. When the people of south Punjab were drowning, we supported them without any discrimination. It was Shahbaz Sharif who installed a base camp there in the flood-hit areas and focused his full attention for restoration and rehabilitation of the people."

He said the nation could make assessment by observing ads on TV screens that which party contributed for the nation and which political group neglected and rejected the masses. Nawaz added that he had not come to Jarranwala for votes; rather, his mission was to make the people understand about their well wishers and bad-wishers. He said the dictator who toppled his government was actually enemy of the nation. "I was put behind bars without any justification and direction of the country was changed in wrong way, leaving the people at the mercy of the fate". He said some politicians were raising slogans of change. Actually they had no vision and programme. They were trapping the youth just for their personal aims. "PML-N is being targeted for taking turns; the reality is that we served the nation without any personal interest. We introduced new technology in the country. We installed industry and constructed network of road across Pakistan," said PML-N chief. He concluded that PML-N had a team of experts who had ability to cope with challenges and resolve issues faced by the nation on priority basis.

"If the PML-N is given an opportunity to come to power, it would lay foundation of agricultural and industrial units, multiply the ratio of exports, create millions of jobs for workers and labourers who are real force of the nation," said Nawaz. He said educated people would be given micro loans so that unemployed youth would earn their livings in a respectable way. He said Pakistan was facing tremendous problems but by the grace of Allah PML-N would overcome these issues with cooperation of sincere voters and supporters. He said rural areas would be developed with welfare projects. Farmers would be provided with cheap fertilizers and seeds. In the last, he appealed to the people to support PML-N candidate from Jarranwala, with the hope that new leaders would serve the people without any discrimination.

The Nation - April 28, 2013

PTI, PPP, Q in Collusion to Defeat N: Shahbaz

PML-N leader Shahbaz Sharif has reiterated his pledge to end loadshedding in two years if their party is voted to power in centre, though he said he was not a supernatural being who can end power outages overnight. Addressing a public rally in Warburton area of Nankana Sahib, he said the major issue of Pakistan was electricity. The former chief minister alleged that Imran Khan was blaming him for loadshedding but actually daily 700MW electricity of Punjab was going out of the Punjab. Shahbaz appealed the nation not let the vote be divided on May 11 as vote for PTI chief Imran Khan would benefit People's Party. He said speeches of Imran, President Asif Zardari and PML-Q leaders were similar in content, all of them targeting 'the most popular party'. Addressing the meeting arranged by MPL-N candidates for MNA and MPA slots, Bilal

Ahmad Virk and Kashif Rang Elahi Padhiar, he said that today "Teer" and "Balla" were riding on punctured "Cycle", alluding to an alleged secret collusion of PPP, PTI and PML-Q against the PML-N. Criticising outgoing PPP government, he said that the electricity generating machinery of sixty million rupees kept corroding in Karachi for the last two years and people had been into 'darkness' while Zardari and Company looted the pilgrims and filled their pockets thorough corruption in rental power projects, PIA, Railways and Pakistan Steel Mills. He said that millions of laptops and solar panels were distributed among youth purely on merit to boost education sector in Punjab. Small farmers were awarded 30,000 tractors to promote agriculture in the province, he added. At the end of the public meeting, Malik Javed Iqbal Wattoo, an independent candidate from PP-168 and Malik Yasir Wattoo, announced to join PML-N and support Bilal Ahmad Virk in the elections. Earlier when Shahbaz arrived, people gathered around his helicopter with placard, banners and pamphlets. They welcomed him with chants of "Sher aa gya, Sher aa gya".

The Nation - April 28, 2013

PML-N's Election-Winning Strategy

It would be difficult to miss a mark of PML-N's performance-packed five years if you happen to live in Lahore. With schemes like Sasti Roti hopefully out of people's collective memory, the more recent impressions are about a discussion on the Metro Bus or young people carrying laptop bags on their backs across the city or posters on roadsides announcing a Dengue Eradication Week or a photograph of the chief minister with students in the computer labs of one of the Danish Schools flashed in mainstream papers. Though, till about six months ago, it was visible for another reason. There were massive road construction projects - flyovers, underpasses and mother of all projects the "Metro Bus" - going on in different parts of the city, inconveniencing common people as well as traders. Now, the fact that 'traders' were put into discomfort made quite a few people skeptical about the party's success in the coming election. But things changed rather quickly. The deadlines were met with remarkable precision and, in a few months, the doer chief minister handed over a spanking clean city to its residents who are now set to vote in the coming election. However, the game is slightly bigger than one city or even one province. Understandably, the party has picked on the slogan "Hum Ne Badla Hai Punjab, Hum Badlain Gay Pakistan". The weaknesses of the last five years are going to be compensated for in the next term, and at the national level - hence the PML-N Manifesto is all about economy, jobs, growth and energy.

Election 2013 promises to be an interesting one and the arrival of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf with a bang is not the only reason. For quite some time, the PML-N has posed as the winner of the next election and it managed to maintain this posture on a very scientific basis - surveys. From late last year, the media was abuzz with the IRI survey results that put the PML-N way ahead of all other parties in terms of popularity. And then some more surveys in the current year yielded similar results, though at least one survey conducted jointly by Herald and SDPI in February this year led to drastically different result - with the PML-N and the PPP going neck to neck. Gradually though, the IRI surveys were found to have been conducted on the request of PML-N itself in 70 constituencies of Punjab with a sample of 5000 people in each of them. These were "paid surveys" and some analysts claim that a sum of Rs. 500,000 was spent on each constituency. One is not sure how credible or incredible does this make the survey result, but the PML-N felt a lot more confident in riding the popularity wave ever since. The chances of PML-N in the next general election came to be weighed exactly at a time when Imran Khan held his mammoth rally in Lahore in October 2011. The PTI was thought to be the first real threat to

the PML-N on its home ground - Punjab. Like PML-N, the PTI seemed interested only in Punjab and KPK. That was a major turning point for both the parties and the electioneering started for them at that very moment.

For a long time, serious analysts were not ready to swear by the PTI (giving it not more than 15-20 seats) and considered Mian Nawaz Sharif to be a smooth player who knew constituency politics inside out. This observation was not untrue. The movement of electable candidates started after the PTI's first successful rally in Lahore. After the switch-over of "electables" to the PTI in the first phase, Nawaz Sharif started his work in a much more calculated way. There were two aspects of his election winning strategy - one within Punjab, of bringing in all disgruntled Muslim Leaguers within the PML fold (the Unification Bloc etc,) and the other in Sindh and Balochistan where he went and tried to make alliances outside the party. His eyes are obviously set at the magical figure of 172 in the National Assembly. This policy of bringing in the electables has continued till the last day (an example is that of choosing Sikandar Bosan and the candidates pitched against Raja Pervaiz Ashraf). PML-N has equally used the Biradri factor and is banking also on what it calls the loyal party vote. With all these factors, the PML-N is confident of its victory. Besides, Nawaz Sharif has played safe on many controversial grounds. Unlike Imran Khan and the PTI manifesto, Sharif has not named or criticised the US. In its manifesto, he has talked about friendly countries but not against any particular country. In the last seven eight months, he hasn't uttered a word against the army. The impression he wants to give is: "Look I am not against the army. All I want is that everybody should abide by the constitution".

Besides these calculations and strategies, the PML-N it appears is a little afraid of terrorism related violence in the election. The reason why it has decided to stay silent on terrorist attacks on other parties is this fear, though some people would think of it as a case of ideological affinity with extremist forces. How the PML-N actually fares on May 11 is not so easy to predict or measure. These last few weeks matter a lot because a lot of decision-making on the part of voters is done at this time. In the last days, most contests turn out to be two-way contests because people do not want to waste their vote and go with the general wave. The general sense is that if the voter turnout is huge, the PTI may affect the election results in a major way.

The News - April 28, 2013

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

Election 2013: Victory Will Be Ours, Predicts Imran Khan

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf (PTI) is prepared for the upcoming elections and the victory will be ours, PTI Chairman Imran Khan. Imran was speaking to media at the Karachi airport. Predicting his party's win, Imran said just like 1992 World Cup, an unknown party will sweep the May 11 polls. "That party will be the PTI," he boasted. Speaking about his party policy, Imran said the PTI is the only party that has given the youth an opportunity to lead. On a query related to fights within the party over tickets, Imran clarified that no tickets have been issued as yet, therefore there is no basis for complaints. Commenting on Pervez Musharraf's return to Pakistan, the PTI chairman questioned the silence of the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N).

The Express Tribune - April 06, 2013

Alliance-Less PTI Hits Election Trail

Reality And Promises Are Poles Apart: All eyes have been cast on the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), the dark horse in the upcoming general elections, on whether it shall deliver on its rhetoric of change. Some suggest that how the PTI conducts itself in the election race itself shall be a good indicator for the times to come. And for those observing the PTI hit the election trail, there has been little fodder for those looking for a new political tradition being created on the campaign trail. Continuous negotiations, seat adjustments, pre-electoral alliances and patronage-based vote bases are emerging as the campaign gathers pace. While the PTI Chairman Imran Khan has come out claiming that his party will not make an electoral alliance with any political party, he continues to meet the Jamaat-i-Islami leadership, the Nawab of Bahawalpur, Sheikh Rasheed and develop an understanding with Pir Pagara over fielding Shah Mehmood Qureshi in Sindh. If nothing, it just reeks of one man interested in getting into the seat of power one way or another, without changing much on the ground.

The significant infighting with the party over the issue of election tickets, with the elected Lahore president Aleem Khan having threatened to return the tickets, has also raised concerns over the maturity of the PTI's internal processes. But more disturbing comes the PTI senior vice president Shah Mehmood Qureshi's decision to contest elections from Sindh independently with the blessing of the Pir Pagara. The election will not be fought on the strength of Qureshi's work in the area but the shared 'spiritual heritage' with the most influential Pir of Sindh. What remains is his promise to field younger candidates below the age of 35 years of age. The PTI, to its credit, has launched a special fund, the "New Pakistan fund," for its new candidates and money is being raised from overseas Pakistanis. Whether it actually goes to new candidates and what the effects shall be is awaited.

There was a time when Imran Khan promised that one chooses "electables and alliance politics for power while our (the PTI's) politics is to usher a change in the country." The polls were to be won "on a wave of change." But now the same Khan has put all his eggs in negotiating alliances, fielding electables and even seeking our Pirs. So much for the slogan of change, if the PTI is to follow the very same policies and tactics that they stood up against. Those who have looked to the PTI to usher in change are certainly having second thoughts when witnessing the pushing and shoving to win elections. It appears that while Imran Khan continues to toe the line that the "masses support him," on the field, he is becoming a true politician. Whether that is to be cherished or not is not for us to decide.

Pakistan Today - April 08, 2013

My Name Is Khan and I Am the Replacement

Early one April morning, a couple of young political workers approach a jogger at the Model Town Park. They ask her who she is going to vote for on May 11. "Shahbaz Sharif. Thanks to his underpass, it takes me just 15 minutes to get to the Liberty from my house." A not too brief conversation follows in which the political workers reason with the Shahbaz voter why she should try something different for a change - the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf. No manifesto is discussed. There is no mention of Imran Khan's six promises at a recent public meeting. Khan, as his followers affectionately call him, is change personified. The PTI razakaars or volunteers are creating new precedents. The campaign has been going to various parts of Lahore. In the Gulberg area, three PTI workers - a bearded chap who is the local office bearer of the PTI, a boy studying at a city college and another young man who works at a car mechanic shop - knock at the door of a house. Finding that those who live inside are not registered as voters in the Gulberg constituency, they leave with photocopies of the national identity cards. A few days

later the good news comes: they have all been enrolled as voters in the area. At another place on a Friday afternoon the namazis coming out of a mosque are handed pamphlets announcing a PTI candidate.

While the PTI workers posted at the mosque fear no reprimands from the electorate simply because the party has never been in power, the candidate they are advertising is no stranger to the area. Many elections ago, he had contested on a Jamaat-i-Islami ticket from here. Could he have been one of the two former Jamaat MPs present in a news report about the PTI's launch all these years ago, happily clapping Imran on? Seventeen years - seventeen long years as the PTI activists recall with the anticipation of those who believe they are about to be vindicated. It was on April 25, 1996, that Imran Khan launched his party in Lahore. His fight was to be against corruption and for the rule of law. The same journalist who had been sufficiently amused by the sight of two old Jamaatias applauding Imran had found it remarkable that at the launch Imran was wearing a shalwar kameez - which was to in later years become for some the symbol of his identification with the popular causes in this country and to others a sign of his alleged hypocrisy. But before he could begin his long campaign, a few things needed to be straightened out. Therefore, "Answering another question, he said he was looking for the newsman he had slapped recently, to apologise to him." All these years later the media is still to be convinced that his mix of old Jamaatias and young enthusiastic workers fed up with the corruption in the system is the right recipe to power. But surely, the transformation of his image from being a naïve grumbler to a serious claimant to power, signified by the Oct 2011 jalsa at the Minar-i-Pakistan, has been possible after he recognised the truth that had always been staring him in his face.

Imran became an effective player the moment he decided to challenge the Sharifs in theirs — and his — stronghold. This observation is supported by his subsequent development as a leader to the point where he is now seen as the most potent threat to the Sharifs in the areas which they have long controlled. The PTI chief has support elsewhere, yet, amid the countdown to the election, there is so much focus on how many seats the PTI can win in Lahore and some other parts of Punjab where the PML-N has traditionally held sway. Taking on the Sharifs until he declared war on the Sharifs, Imran Khan was to the public eye, more a natural PML-N ally than a leader capable of offering a new option. After he took on the Sharifs he rose, particularly in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to the extent that he was now berated as helping Asif Zardari's cause against the PML-N. Once Imran had gotten his focus right, the next issue was whether he was a replacement of Nawaz Sharif at the head of the centre-right camp (in the Pakistani context) or was he there as just another choice, at most an alternative to Sharif. In the post-October 2011 phase, the politics between the PML-N and the PTI has played around this crucial point. The PML-N, while it has countered Imran by taking up projects aimed at the young, has also strived to dispel the impression that Imran could replace Nawaz from his old position as a moderate choice, the old lesser evil in comparison to the forever blundering PPP.

Imran has kept his youthful front at the same time showing greater openness in embracing ideals that could bring him the vital support of the 'conservatives' that has sustained Sharif. The PTI chief has been bold in his statements, such as the ones in which he condemned the war on terror as not 'our' war or when he advocates negotiations with the Taliban militants. These statements may be looked upon as projecting Imran as a replacement of Nawaz rather than the challenger who is content with playing a power alternative to the PML-N just as the PPP has done over the years. Imran has managed to gather a big party by his side. Its presence can be felt and Lahore promises a real contest between the Sharifs and a worthy opponent after a long time. The PTI could have made it even more difficult for PML-N by choosing candidates more cleverly. It does not suit a challenger to give the impression that its members are shying away from taking the big guns of the PML-N in the polls. The PTI needed to clash with PML-N head-on.

Why not Imran Khan taking on any of the two Sharif brothers in Lahore? The PML-N sympathisers would draw their own meanings from this PTI reluctance. They would like to believe the Sharifs have managed to contain the PTI thrust — by indulging in some time-tested politics. Shaken from their arrogant perch without doubt by the Imran swing they have combined some visible development projects with some serious repair work in the party. With this, the Sharifs have managed to prevent the feared erosion in the PML-N's ranks.

The tell-tale sign where a large number of old PML-N politicians were to cross over to the PTI has eluded the change-seekers. There has been Javed Hashmi, whose entry to the PTI was supposed to start, if not an exodus, then a steady trickle of known names out of the PML-N and into the PTI. But that's been about all. The PML-N candidates of the past elections stay put in the party for now. Just as this must be heartening for the Sharifs, a proof of their undiminished appeal, it leaves the PTI preying on the out-of-shape PPP and PML-Q in parts of Punjab to compliment its previous mix of youth and moral teachers that had won it the title of being the good looking Jamaat-i-Islami. This could not just be limited to the election candidates; there is a feeling that repeatedly beaten at the polls by the N-League, the PPP voters in many areas may discover the friend in the enemy of their enemy and may opt for the PTI in large numbers. The PML-N rightly recognised the youth as a PTI asset. In the face of divisions in the party ranks visible at the time of the selection of election candidates and its compromises to get hold of the 'electables', the youngsters, among them the new voters, are there to do the damage control job. They are the PTI's soul, born out of a genuine craving for change. They are dreaming dreams, whatever their political colour and however irritating their content may be to those who did wish for a new force but cannot quite relate to who they call 'Maulana Imran Khan Niazi' and who they are quick to identify with the headstrong ex-cricketer of the past prone to slapping journalists. The PML-N would never call him 'conservative' names just as it quickly discarded the tactic of painting the PTI as a baby of the establishment. As Imran Khan himself pointed out this could prove counterproductive for the PML-N. It could create an impression that he was out to replace Nawaz Sharif. Instead, as the race heats up, he may find himself fielding a fresh volley of the same questions about his morality which he was asked at the launch of his party 17 years ago.

Dawn - April 14, 2013

35pc Young Candidates Riding PTI's Polls Tsunami

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan claimed over 35 per cent of candidates of his party for the general elections are young (below 40) and 80 per cent of all candidates have never been elected to the assemblies before. He said 60 per cent of the party candidates are new faces. Imran said old faces could never bring about a change the masses desperately looked for. He asserted that the PTI had changed the culture of what he called musical chairs between the PPP and PML-N. He challenged both parties to name a single state entity that they had been pulled out of crisis during their repeated tenures in power. The PTI chief said it was high time for the masses to vote for a change. Speaking at a news conference here, Imran, clad in white shalwar qameez and flanked by some young nervous-looking faces, said the nation was going for the most interesting 'match' of its history on May 11. Using cricket terms, the former skipper of the national team, which won the World Cup in 1992, claimed to be the best at team selection and that he was fielding a blend of experienced and young candidates in the upcoming elections.

Imran asserted PTI had smashed the PPP-PML-N policy of muk-muka (deal); adding 80 tickets for the assemblies were being given as per the recommendations of the elected district chapters of the party. He also made it clear that on the reserved seats for women, no relative of the party

leader would be given preference and noted that even if any link was traced afterwards; such name would be struck off the list. He maintained that no defaulter was given the party ticket and if anyone found out later on, he would have to give it back. At one point, a few party activists shouted slogans against the award of some tickets. Imran retorted that such tactics could not blackmail him. He said he believed that some 40 million youth voters would play a decisive role in the electoral performance of a political party and claimed 90 per cent young voters were PTI supporters. The PTI chairman maintained that before the elections, his party had changed the direction of Pakistani politics by holding intra-party polls in the election year and putting assets of party leaders on the website.

“No political party ever declared assets of its leaders and lawmakers. Had they done so, 70 per cent tax defaulters had not reached the assemblies,” asserted the PTI chairman. Imran has fielded 30-year-old Muhammad Madni against former prime minister and President of PML-N Mian Nawaz Sharif from NA-119, Lahore. The ticket was given to the pharmacist Monday afternoon and he was present in the news briefing. “I am confident of winning maximum support of my people against Nawaz Sharif because they have made up their mind for a change,” he claimed when The News asked him about his chances in the upcoming polls against the PML-N leader. He claimed the rival party leadership seemed nervous. Madni, who is one of the founding workers of PTI, and had been twice behind bars for supporting the movement for the independence of judiciary, said that the rotten political system stood exposed before the nation. He said Sharifs are billioners but misers and don’t want to spend money on their security, he alleged. These two parties have been power since 1980s, but the masses problems continued to compound and access of justice to them had been a dream, he said. A senior PTI leader Dr Shireen Mazari has been made the party’s information secretary in place of former senator Shafqat Mehmood.

The News - April 16, 2013

Imran Challenges Nawaz to TV Debate

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan challenged Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif to a debate on national issues on any television channel. While addressing a rally in Sahiwal, Khan said, “Mian Sahib you cannot compete in cricket, the least you can do is compete in a debate. Let’s have a debate on any television channel. This debate is important in exposing the truth”. Referring to PML-N’s rule in Punjab Khan said, “They (PML-N) have had five innings; and we will ensure they don’t get a sixth one.” Those who want to get things done take the first chance that comes their way and do not need six chances, he added. He said the PTI would not wait for another turn and implement changes in its first term.

Recalling his time as captain of the Pakistan national cricket team, Khan said when he was in-charge, no one could defeat him. “No one defeated me for ten years. I left the captaincy myself,” said the PTI chief. He promised his supporters if he came to power, a day would come when people from abroad come to Pakistan searching for employment, such will be the level of development in the country. Earlier, on Monday night, Rehman Malik had also invited Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif to have a live debate on topics such as money laundering, morality and Articles 62 and 63 of the constitution. Speaking on Pervez Musharraf, Khan said action against the former president was being taken in accordance with law. Khan promised development funds would not be handed to any member of national or provincial assembly under his party’s rule. “We are bringing a new system and our local government system will empower the people. All development funds will be given to representatives from villages,” he stated.

Khan vowed to end the power crisis and eliminate load shedding in two and a half years if voted into power. Meanwhile, addressing an election rally at Okara, Khan said people of Pakistan would celebrate on May 11 when Punjab will be freed from traditional rulers. Khan said he would free Punjab from the clutches of police and patwaris. Lashing out at Shahbaz Sharif, the PTI chief said PML-N had ruled Punjab for five terms but could not bring effective change in a single department. He said the PPP and PML-N had a covert agreement to rule the country in turns but people would thwart their designs with the power of their votes. "Has the thaana and patwari culture changed in Punjab," he questioned the large crowd that responded with a loud "no". He said Shahbaz Sharif had not been able to redress the systems of education and health in Punjab despite ruling the province for the past five years.

Khan also criticised the Sharifs for enjoying police escorts that drained Rs 640 million each month from the national kitty. Khan said today's PML is not representative of Quad-e-Azam, neither is Pakistan People's Party (PPP) the same as it was during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's time. Khan urged the youth to rise above all differences and reject corrupt rulers to save the country from imminent disasters. He asked the youth to play a pivotal role in convincing their elders and families to vote for visionary, brave and honest leadership in the upcoming elections so that the country could be steered out of the worst-ever crises in its history. Khan vowed his party will lay the foundation of a "new Pakistan," ensuring justice for all.

Pakistan Today - April 24, 2013

Why Youths want Imran's PTI to Win the Elections

Ali Raza, 22, completed his three-year diploma in civil engineering with specialisation in road construction about two years ago, but he is yet to get a job. He wants change in government because he seeks a level playing field in order to compete for jobs on merit. According to him, no one can land a government job without a strong political reference or enough money to line the pockets of people at the top. Raza was one of the thousands of young people who had turned up at the cinema ground, in the heart of Mandi Bahauddin, to welcome the chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan, for an election rally. Raza, who will be voting this year for the first time, said: "Like many of my friends I have come from a nearby village to attend the meeting and have a glimpse of Mr Khan who has promised us jobs after coming to power. Yes, my entire family will vote for the PTI." When asked about his motivation to attend the rally, Ambar Gill, a local Christian, said he didn't know much about the PTI or its manifesto, but strongly believed that if given a chance Mr Khan could deliver. "So I will vote for the PTI," he remarked. There were many others in the rally who knew nothing about the politics of right or left, but came only to demonstrate their support for Mr Khan whose main slogan is to build 'naya Pakistan' (new Pakistan) after winning the May 11 elections.

A group of PTI volunteers who looked after arrangements for the rally, said they had come on their own without any financial support from the party because they wanted to help Mr Khan build a 'new Pakistan'. "It seems that PTI's slogan for change has started picking up momentum," said Dr Arshad Khan, who runs a clinic near the cinema ground. "Most of the local youth are supporting Mr Khan; let's see whether their support actually transforms into electoral victory for the PTI candidates in an area traditionally known for voting on caste basis." Even though wheat harvesting activities are continuing apace in the area, a large crowd, comprising mainly the youth, had gathered at the venue. District administration and police officials, who only last week (on April 22) were on duty for a similar election rally addressed by PML-N leader Shahbaz Sharif in Malakwal, one of the three tehsils of Mandi Bahauddin district, told Dawn that the PTI's meeting had attracted more people. "Frankly speaking, we weren't expecting so many people to

attend the meeting in an area mainly dominated by Gondals and Tarars," said a senior police officer present on the occasion. The officer, who refused to speak on record, said that last year Mr Sharif had addressed a rally as chief minister on the same ground. "That meeting was not as well-attended as this one."

In the 2008 elections, both the National Assembly seats and five provincial assembly seats in the district were won by the PPP. The crowd was simply ecstatic when Mr Khan waved from his chopper to the participants of the rally before landing at a nearby helipad from where he was driven to the venue. Encouraged by the crowd, he refused to go behind the bullet-proof rostrum arranged by the local administration for his security. The PTI chief said he was not the one who needed such protection. Pandering to the crowd, Mr Khan said: "I know many young people from the area have gone abroad in search of jobs. But let me assure you that after May 11 you will have a new Pakistan where you won't have to leave your country for jobs. The PTI will provide you jobs." In his entire speech, Mr Khan mentioned President Asif Ali Zardari only once and mainly targeted PML-N leaders. He said President Zardari had carried out a suicide attack on his own party, destroying the former ruling party to the core. He said the Sharif brothers had ruled in Punjab five times and two times at the centre. Therefore, they should not be given another chance. "How can a party which has repeatedly failed in the past be given another chance?" The slogan-chanting crowd shouted: "No, no." As usual Mr Khan talked about the ongoing energy crisis, local governments, 'pro-American policies' of the previous governments and rampant poverty in the country. He said that after coming to power his party would resolve all these issues on an emergency basis. Later, Mr Khan addressed similar election meetings in Hafizabad and Sargodha, where he again hit out at the PML-N leaders for "misguiding people with their lofty promises".

Dawn - April 29, 2013

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)

Munawar Urges Voters to Reject Feudal Lords in Elections

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Syed Munawar Hassan has urged voters to reject the feudal lords and not vote for them in general elections 2013. He was addressing a public gathering in Baldia ground here on Sunday evening. "If voters will vote for JI, the security of feudal lords and chieftains will be confiscated," he said. He said that the country's situation is demanding for Arab spring like revolution in Pakistan adding that however, the general elections 2013 could be alternative to the revolution. He said that Balochistan has become heap of explosives and the people of this province were deceived in the name of so-called packages. He welcomed the Balochistan's nationalist political parties' decision to participate in general elections 2013. "We welcome Balochistan's nationalists in general elections and we will go to streets, if no change is brought after the general elections," Munawar said adding that former ruler, Gen. (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf should not be allowed to contest general elections.

The News - April 07, 2013

Jamiat Ulema - e - Islam Fazalur Rehman (JUI - F)

Party manifesto: JUI-F pledges to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-Fazl) announced its 22-point party manifesto in Quetta pledging to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state. JUI-F General Secretary Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, announcing the manifesto, said that Islam will be made the official religion of the state and a

comprehensive system of Islamic laws will be evolved for the country. Reflecting upon the foreign policy, he said that they would establish relations with all the countries on the basis of equality. A strong system of accountability would be mapped out for the affairs of government and adherence to them would be made mandatory. The party will make education compulsory up to Matric and free up to Bachelors after coming into power. After establishment of Islamic system of government, our foremost priority would be the promotion of education. We pocket a comprehensive program in this regard and would also impart education in mother tongue. Haideri said that the education budget will be increased by 15 per cent and separate universities will be established for men and women. Acquisition of scientific education would be made easier, the private institutions would be encouraged and the autonomy of the madrassahs would be kept intact," he said, adding that the certificates of the madrassahs would be made equivalent to that of government institutions. Minorities will also enjoy the right to establish their religious education centres.

The Express Tribune - April 11, 2013

JUI-F Announces 12 Points Manifesto

Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) announced the party's manifesto for the upcoming general election. In a press conference at the National Press Club, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman presented a 12-point manifesto and said the party will resolve the problems of the masses on priority basis. He said the 'war on terror' has led to an increase in terrorist activities in the country as well as in the whole region. Rehman said that the country's foreign policy will be formulated inline with its national interest. The manifesto states that relations with neighboring countries will be strengthened and there would be a balance in import and export of the country to strengthen the economy. Rehman said that national resources will be used and extra expenditures, including unnecessary protocol for ministers will be controlled to stabilise the economy. He added that the country's economy will depend on national resources instead of external aids or loans. "Bad governance has made Pakistan into a security state which is against its ideology of being a welfare state," Rehman said. He also stated that security will be given to the lives and properties of every citizen. Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the quality education will be provided in government institutions to everyone and will be made compulsory for every citizen till matric. He said that justice at the door step will be provided for every citizen by changing the old judicial system.

Afghan Peace in Manifesto: "Importance will be given to local government system and Afghan reconciliation will be supported. The Afghan Talibans right to be a party in the reconciliation process will be acknowledged to ensure peace in Afghanistan," Rehman maintained. The JUI-F chief said his party has been against the war in Afghanistan from the very first day, adding: "Dialogue is the only way to maintain peace in the region." "Peace and security will be established in Fata through jirgas, which have already been established. These jirgas will be encouraged to bring peace in Fata and their experience will be used in other parts of the country," the JUI-F chief said. Rehman said the Parliament will find a way to make Baloch people real stakeholders in mega projects like the gas pipeline, Gawadar, Reko Diq and Saindak and any final agreement made will be binding on all stakeholders. He said that semi-independent boards under parliamentary oversight will be established to run ailing corporations like Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Pakistan Steels, Pakistan Railways and Wapda.

Business, Human Rights and More: Rehman said the inter-banking rate will be made attractive to encourage overseas Pakistanis to send remittances through normal banking channels rather than the Hawala system. "Economic experts from Pakistan and abroad will be

engaged to draft present policy options on burgeoning debt burden within six months," he added. The JUI-F chief said that he considered women's right to resources equal to that of men's. He said that harassment of women was against Islam and will be dealt with according to the law of the land. "Family values will be protected through education and persuasion. Efforts will be made for direct election of women to assemblies," he maintained. Rehman said that new provinces will be established in the country only after all stakeholders reach consensus, adding that the said issue will not be used for political point scoring. "Serious efforts will be made for legislation by parliament in line with the recommendations of Council of Islamic Ideology for the country's economic, political and social betterment in accordance with the principles of Islam," Rehman said.

Dawn - April 15, 2013

JUI-F's Election Plan: English, Urdu Versions of Manifesto Termed Incongruent

While the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) wants to transform Pakistan into an Islamic welfare state, analysts raised concerns over mentions of Jihad in its manifesto and differences between the document's Urdu and English versions. In the sixth seminar of its series, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) hosted a discussion on the JUI-F manifesto. Political analyst Hassan Khan pointed out a stark contrast in the contents of JUI-F's Urdu and English manifestos. The English version is more enlightened and inclusive, while the Urdu version has conventional religious undertones. He noted that the chapter on Sharia was missing in the English version while a chapter on women rights was missing in the Urdu version. JUI-F Deputy Secretary-General Malik Sikandar Khan said the party had pledged to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state. He said JUI-F would transform the current system by making changes in accordance with Islamic laws. Khan referred to the welfare state model under Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and during Hazrat Umer's rule and added that society made socio-economic and cultural progress when Islamic laws were implemented in true spirit. "The state will ensure the provision of every citizen's basic needs and ensure that their safety is ensured," Khan said. Analyst and TV anchor Saleem Safi appreciated JUI-F's willingness to work with liberal and progressive political parties, but advised the party to focus its energy on implementing its own manifesto's points. Safi raised questions as to how the JUI-F would abolish interest-based banking; questions which went largely unanswered. He also criticised the mention of compulsory jihadi training in the manifesto, arguing that such actions would only create more chaos in society.

The Express Tribune - April 19, 2013

JUI-F Opens Doors to Non-Mullahs

Politically charged youth has become synonymous with Imran Khan's PTI but in an unprecedented move, Maulana Fazlur Rehman's hardcore religio-political outfit, JUI-F, has awarded tickets to even many of clean-shaved and jeans-clad candidates for the national and provincial assemblies' seats across the country. Maulana Fazlur Rahman, famous for his political manoeuvres, shedding his image as the leader of some specific segment of society for the first time in party's history has opted to give chance to some new faces (having non-traditional getup like JUI-F) for elections. Maulana, around two months back, in a clever move had appointed a former journalist with expertise, knowledge and network having based in London for almost 17 years. Jan Achakzai is the liberal face of Maulana who speaks English with British accent and uses suits and ties most of the time. Political pundits believe that JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazlur

Rahman introducing this visible change in the upcoming elections is trying to reach out to other segments of the society and is shedding his image as the leader of some mullas. According to the details, the JUI-F has accommodated most of the newcomers to the party on national and provincial assembly seats, notably Munawar Khan and Malik Imran who were awarded tickets for provincial assembly seats in Lakki Marwat. Moreover, Malik Riaz was awarded a ticket for Bannu, Javed Khattak for Karak, Attique Ur Rahman in Hangu, Ghulam Habib Khan in Kohat, Zarin Gul at Torghar and several others. It would not be out of place to mention here that like other political factions many of political figures including those looking obviously changed from religio political party's traditional getup changing their loyalties joined JUI-F.

Recently, former Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Abdul Kareem Khan Kundi Joins JUI-F. Out of them some prominent figures include Istiqbal Khan, former MNA from Buner, Fazal Shakoor, former MPA from Charsadda, Sajjadullah Khan from Kohistan, Shokat Habib, former MPA from Kohat, and several other former members of the Awami National Party (ANP) have joined the JUI-F recently. A former PPP MNA from Kohistan, former Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) provincial president Syed Qasim Shah from Mansehra, two former PML-Q MPAs Zar Gul and Zarin Gul from Torghar, and Qaumi Watan Party's Atiqur Rehman, a former MPA from Hangu, have also joined the JUI-F. When contacted, JUI-F spokesman Jan Achakzai said that Maulana has revolutionized the party and has tried to capture centre ground with more emphasis on educations, job creation, and resolving other challenging issues including militancy. Interestingly the Party's media cell for the first time produced party Manifesto in English showing its desire to reach out to media, civil society and diplomatic community. Many observers believe that Maulana is eyeing on the top job of Chief Executive while of course putting a serious stake to CM slot in KPK. It is relevant to mention here that religio-political parties despite their efforts could not restore Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) due to certain reason expressing solidarity in upcoming elections.

The Nation - April 30, 2013

Muthida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

Muttahida at the Crossroads

Despite almost three decades in the political arena, nationwide appeal has eluded the Muttahida Qaumi Movement while it has failed to shake off the 'ethnic' tag. Also, a reputation for strong-arm tactics still follows it. Going into the 2013 polls, it seems the MQM is in a stagnant position, whereby it is in little danger of losing the number of seats it secured in the national and Sindh assemblies in the last elections, while there are slim chances of it bringing in a much larger haul this time around. The MQM seems comfortable with the assumption that its hold over urban Sindh is relatively secure. The party remains centrally controlled — from London that is — with Altaf Hussain in charge. However, there were rumblings earlier this year when Ishratul Ibad, the Sindh governor, tendered his resignation after the MQM left the PPP-led coalition. The rumour mill had it that Altaf Hussain wanted Mr Ibad to resign, yet the governor, through deft manoeuvring, managed to retain the post he has held since 2002. Nine Zero, of course, termed such talk "malicious analyses". Before that, the political scene in Pakistan was shaken by Dr Imran Farooq's murder in London in 2010. Long considered the original brains behind the MQM phenomenon, the party's former convener was reportedly planning to pursue an independent political career. The MQM enjoyed a love-hate relationship with the PPP — what some would describe as a marriage of convenience — which finally ended in a divorce with the Muttahida bidding the PPP adieu in February this year, after sharing almost five years in power. Yet it was a

stormy relationship, which began — after the MQM supported Yousuf Raza Gilani's prime ministerial vote of confidence back in 2008 — with much fanfare.

Asif Ali Zardari, then still only the PPP co-chairman and not president of the republic, made a memorable visit to Nine Zero in April 2008. It appeared that all was forgiven and forgotten. But perhaps not. The MQM threatened to leave the coalition on several occasions over various issues, including fuel prices, rolling back of the local government system, imposition of reformed general sales tax and, what it claimed was the PPP's support for the Lyari-based People's Amn Committee. The Supreme Court's verdict in the Karachi violence suo motu case was a sobering moment for the party, as the apex court suggested the MQM, as well as other political players, were willing to use violence in order to dominate Karachi. The past five years saw plenty of violence; there were vicious turf wars between elements allied to the Muttahida and those apparently supporting the Awami National Party. Yet a point came when the ANP and MQM were confronted by a common enemy in Karachi: the 'Taliban'. The MQM had been crying itself hoarse over creeping 'Talibanisation' in the city, yet it was dismissed at the time as ethnic scaremongering. The party saw two of its provincial lawmakers (Raza Haider and Manzar Imam) apparently targeted by religious militants, while the ANP too saw itself systematically uprooted by the extremists from many parts of Karachi. Ultimately, if the MQM can convince the electorate it is a multi-ethnic, progressive and non-violent force which seeks to empower the working and middle classes, its efforts to expand beyond urban Sindh may bear fruit. Yet much remains to be done on this front.

Dawn - April 14, 2013

Senate Session: MQM Moves Bill for Amending Article 63

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) moved a bill in the Senate, seeking changes in Article 63 of the Constitution. The bill, titled "Constitution Amendment Act, 2013", was moved by MQM's Senator Col (retd) Syed Tahir Hussain Mashhadi and was later referred to the standing committee of law and justice for further consideration. According to the statement of objects and reasons, the mover sought an amendment in Article 63(1)(c), to lift the constitutional bar on dual nationals from becoming members of parliament. The section 63(1)(c) in its original form maintained that a person will be disqualified from being elected or chosen as, and from being, a member of parliament if he ceases to be a citizen of Pakistan, or acquires the citizenship of foreign state. Following the judgment of the apex court, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified more than 11 nomination papers of former parliamentarians in this regard. Mashhadi was of the view that many countries permitted dual nationals to exercise their right to vote as well as run for parliamentary elections. He maintained that overseas Pakistanis were deeply concerned with the events in the country and were keen to play an effective role in national politics. "Through amendment in Article 63 (1)(c), the constitutional bar on the dual nationality holders to be members of the parliament is being lifted," Mashhadi maintained.

ECP Attacked

Political parties also expressed their fear and frustration with the Senate, saying they were being victimised and threatened by the Taliban while campaigning for elections. They criticised the caretaker government for its failure to provide security to candidates. Speaking on a point of order, Awami National Party (ANP) leader Haji Muhammad Adeel said the candidates of his party are facing difficulties while campaigning for polls. He asked the caretaker government for providing security to the candidates being victimised. Caretaker minister for law, justice and parliamentary affairs, Ahmer Bilal Soofi, told political parties that their concerns will be discussed in the cabinet meeting and if needed, the ECP and the Supreme Court will be duly

informed to take notice of their issues. Mashadi moved a motion in the house to debate the law and order situation during the elections. He pointed out that Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) candidates had been targeted in broad daylight and one of the party's candidates was assassinated in Hyderabad. "The only mandate of the caretaker setup is to ensure free and fair general elections and provide security to the candidates, but the caretaker government is not focusing on its responsibilities," he said. Later, MQM members walked out from the house marking their protest over the law and order situation in the country. PPP Senator Farhatullah Babar also expressed reservations over the security of the candidates. He said his party is also receiving threats from the terrorists and they are scared of campaigning.

The Express Tribune - April 16, 2013

MQM Shuts Down Election Camps as Bombings in Karachi, Quetta Mar Electioneering

A string of bombings in Karachi and Quetta on Tuesday once again raised fears for a peaceful general election as the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) closed its election offices in Karachi after two supporters were killed and 18 others were seriously injured in a motorcycle bombing near an election camp of the party, while at least four people were killed and 25 others sustained injuries after four successive blasts rocked Quetta within a short span of time. The bombing in Karachi was carried out near an MQM election camp at People's Chowrangi. Police said the attack was caused by an explosive device planted in a motorcycle. Several people were injured and all nearby shops shut down in the wake of fear caused by the explosion. Several vehicles near the bomb site were damaged while windows of nearby buildings were also broken by the impact of the blast. Five of the injured were reported to be in critical condition. Reacting strongly to the killing of his party workers, MQM Chairman Altaf Hussain ordered party workers to shut down their election offices in view of imminent terror threats. Altaf said that who would gather the courage to come out of their homes on Election Day to vote in such a hostile situation. He said that the caretaker government had failed in maintaining law and order and there was no hope for polling in a peaceful environment. Awami National Party Sindh President Shahi Syed voiced similar concerns and said the government had failed in providing security to the people. He condemned the bombing at the MQM election camp and said the government and Election Commission should ensure security to all political parties. In Quetta, the first blast was reported from the Gawalmandi area, the second explosion ripped through Jinnah Town, while the third one hit Gordat Singh area, which has long history of sectarian and ethnic violence. The police said that five people were injured in Gawalmandi. A fourth explosion that struck near Khuda-e-Dad Chowk in Nechari Colony within an hour of three earlier back-to-back blasts left at least four people, including an Frontier Corps personnel dead and 12 others injured. Police said that heavy shooting was reported from the area after the blast, apparently carried out by a suicide bomber. A Frontier Corps checkpost was the target of the suicide attack. The Nechari area plunged into darkness following the blast, which damaged several power transmission lines.

Pakistan Today - April 24, 2013

MQM to Participate In Polls

Co-ordination Committee of Muttahida Qaumi Movement has announced that the MQM would take part in the general elections under all conditions. MQM chief Altaf Hussain on telephone said that the committee members had their spirits were high and they were undaunted by terrorism, violence, killings and threats. It told Altaf that they would face conspiracies against

the MQM but would not surrender before terrorism under any condition. Altaf paid tribute to the members and said that his nameless workers had always been a source of strength for him.

PML-N Applauds MQM

Staff Reporter adds from Lahore: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has lauded the stand adopted by MQM and other parties to take part in elections braving every threat from terrorists who have unleashed attacks on poll campaigners in Karachi and Quetta. Hopefully the indiscriminate aims of terrorist elements would be frustrated by all the political parties by taking part in upcoming elections, said a PML-N senator. He was of the view that timely and transparent conduct of elections was a must for the country and the masses who have pinned hopes on upcoming polls for “a change”. The PML-N leader said terrorist elements wanted to sabotage elections, but their designs would be failed through a collective approach and a determination of all the political groups to ensure conduct of elections at every cost. “Lately, public meetings and offices of political parties have come under terrorist attacks, yet it was heartening that these parties are undeterred and are keen to take part in election process,” observed the PML-N leader, saying this is a positive way indeed to cope with nefarious designs of evil doers. Azeem exhorted the people not to be budged by terrorist threats and must come out on the polling day to exercise their franchise right. He also affirmed that continuation of the democratic process through timely elections was the principal solution to for extremism-free Pakistan.

The Nation - April 28, 2013

All Pakistan Muslim League (APML)

Elections: Musharraf's Nomination Papers Rejected

Former president Pervez Musharraf's nomination papers for NA-139 were rejected by the returning officer of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). His papers were rejected following six objections made by advocate Javed Kasuri. One of the objections stated that the ex-general does not meet the criteria established in Article 62 and 63 of the constitution. After hearing arguments, the returning officer declared Musharraf ineligible to contest the elections from NA-139. The former president will be able to appeal the decision. Musharraf had submitted his nomination papers from the constituency NA-139 Kasur and was planning to contest elections from other constituencies including Karachi, Islamabad and Chitral. The Election Commission barred Musharraf from the polls in Kasur in Punjab province because of court cases against him. He could also face disqualification in the three other constituencies where he plans to run. The officials, who declined to be identified, also said the decision was based on a clause in the constitution which requires candidates to be of good character and the fact that he had not declared all of his assets. “Musharraf has been disqualified under articles 62 and 63 of the constitution, among other reasons,” an election commission official.

Objections

Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) challenged Musharraf's nomination papers for NA-32 constituency in Chitral. In an application filed to the returning officer, the parties raised nine points which could disqualify Musharraf from the contesting from the constituency. They prayed that Musharraf was not eligible to contest elections under Article 5, 6, 62, 63, and 42 of Constitution of Pakistan. Objections were also raised by other parties on Musharraf's nomination papers filed for NA-48 constituency in Islamabad. The returning officer of the constituency summoned Musharraf on April 7 to present arguments against the objections. PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal also filed an application in the ECP,

earlier the same day, against Musharraf. Musharraf violated the constitution of Pakistan several times, alleged Iqbal. He requested the ECP to reject Musharraf's papers and to disqualify him from contesting the upcoming general elections.

Supreme Court Case

The Supreme Court has approved an application requesting action against Musharraf under Article 6 of the constitution. The application stated that Musharraf is a traitor. The case against him is based on imposing martial law on October 12, 1999 and enforcing emergency on November 3, 2007. The hearing will commence on April 8, 2013 under a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

The Express Tribune - April 05, 2013

Musharraf's Last Poll Hope All But Over

The last hope of former president retired Gen Pervez Musharraf for contesting the election vanished on when an election tribunal here set aside the acceptance of his nomination papers by a returning officer for a National Assembly constituency in Chitral (NA 32) and declared him disqualified. In another blow to the former military ruler, election tribunals comprising judges of the Lahore High Court dismissed his appeals against rejection of his nomination papers for NA 139 Kasur and NA 48 Islamabad. Gen Musharraf's appeal against the non-acceptance of his papers for NA 250 Karachi has already been rejected by an election tribunal headed by Justice Faisal Arab of the Sindh High Court. The election tribunal comprising Justice Mian Fasihul Mulk, Justice Mazhar Alam Miankhel and Justice Mrs Irshad Qaiser of the Peshawar High Court pronounced the verdict after marathon arguments advanced by scores of lawyers appearing for the appellants and a lone counsel for Gen Musharraf.

Gen Musharraf's counsel Saad Shibli told reporters that the tribunal's decision would be challenged in the Supreme Court. The appeals against the retired general's candidature were filed by the Jamaat-i-Islami's candidate for NA 32, Maulana Abdul Akber Chitrali, the Tehreek-i-Insaf's candidate, Abdul Lateef, and some other people. The lawyers appearing for the objectors challenged the acceptance of the nomination papers on multiple grounds. They said Shehzada Khalid Pervez had submitted the papers of Gen Musharraf on March 30 whereas the power of attorney was issued in his name by the candidate on April 5. This meant that on the day of filing of the papers Mr Khalid was not authorised to do so, the lawyers contended.

The President of the Lahore High Court Bar Association, Rawalpindi bench, Taufeeq Asif, contended that under section 12 (3) of the Representation of People's Act 1976, the nomination papers could be filed by a nominee only if he was allowed by the candidate in writing. He cited a number of SC judgments, including one issued in 2009 in which the emergency imposed by Gen Musharraf was held unconstitutional, and argued that he had already been declared a usurper by the apex court. He said the returning officer in Chitral had overlooked all these judgments and several objections to Gen Musharraf's candidature while accepting his papers. Mr Asif contended that keeping the constitution in abeyance was tantamount to subversion of the constitution and amounted to high treason.

Advocates Qazi Mohammad Anwer, Malik Ajmal Khan and Fida Gul, counsel for the appellants, said the nomination papers of Gen Musharraf were full of discrepancies. They said his papers for three constituencies had been rejected by the ROs and the decisions upheld by the appellate tribunals. Then how his papers could be accepted from one constituency, they wondered. The three lawyers recalled that Gen Musharraf had been declared proclaimed offender by three different courts in the murder cases of Nawab Akber Bugti and Benazir Bhutto as well as the Lal

Masjid operation and his property was also attached in the cases. Gen Musharraf's counsel Saad Shibli faced tough time in answering questions put by the tribunal. He contended that his client had not been convicted in any of the cases and no case of treason was registered against him.

When the tribunal asked how a nominee could file nomination papers without power of attorney, the counsel said the authority could be given even verbally. But the tribunal observed that the law clearly suggested that there should be a written permission. In Lahore, the election tribunal comprising Justice Khwaja Imtiaz Ahmad and Justice Khalid Mahmood Khan of the LHC dismissed the appeal of Gen Musharraf against rejection of his nomination papers from NA 139 Kasur. His counsel Salman Safdar argued that the former president had not been convicted by any court and the allegations levelled against him had not been proven so far. But he failed to come up with a satisfactory answer when asked by the tribunal to justify the action taken by the former president on Nov 3, 2007 – the imposition of emergency. The counsel for the objector argued that Gen Musharraf had committed constitutional crimes by imposing the emergency, suspending the constitution and detaining judges of the superior judiciary.

In Rawalpindi, the tribunal comprising Justice Rauf Ahmed Sheikh and Justice Mamoon Rashid Sheikh of the LHC's Rawalpindi bench rejected the appeal of Gen Musharraf against the non-acceptance of his nomination papers by the returning officer for NA 48 Islamabad. His legal team, headed by Ahmed Raza Kasuri, decided to fight the case against his disqualification in the Supreme Court. Advocate Malik Qamar Afzal, the counsel for Gen Musharraf, argued that his client could not be disqualified merely on the basis of observations made by the apex court in the PCO judges' case. Advocate Nadeem Shah, representing objector Nasir Abbasi, said Gen Musharraf had ridiculed and humiliated the superior judiciary and, therefore, he was subject to disqualification under articles 62 and 63 (g) of the constitution. Ahmed Raza Kasuri said Gen Musharraf had been deprived of his fundamental right to contest the election. The judiciary was lenient to the objectors and tough on his client, he alleged. He claimed that Gen Musharraf would launch a movement if justice was not delivered to him. According to Mr. Kasuri if the Chief Justice of Pakistan can start a powerful movement after his sacking, the former military ruler can also start a similar campaign to defend his rights.

Dawn - April 17, 2013

Independent Candidates & Other Parties

Insecurity in Balochistan: Mengal Casts Doubts on Transparency of Polls

Sardar Akhtar Mengal, president of his faction of the Balochistan National Party (BNP-Mengal), cast fresh doubts about the transparency of the May 11 election, saying he had already shared his party's misgivings with Governor Zulfiqar Magsi. Mengal said he informed Magsi of the difficulties his party faced in launching its election campaign across the province. Free, fair and transparent elections are not possible when bullet-riddled and mutilated bodies are thrown in the open for public display. He said the discovery of such bodies indicated the state's policies towards Balochistan and its people. Presumably, the government functionaries are performing the job of population control by killing the Baloch and throwing their bodies in the open. He renewed his claim that the government functionaries had never respected the Constitution and laws of the land.

The BNP leader said that a general strike call was the right of the Baloch National Front. "We have never interfered in the struggle of others or created obstacles in their way. Thus others should also respect our democratic and peaceful struggle," he said. Mengal said that regaining

national rights by using force was not possible at the moment. "For regaining national rights, mass awareness and public support is necessary and without mass support, they cannot be regained." Elaborating further on his party's participation in the polls, he claimed that BNP was contesting on 14 National Assembly and 34 provincial assembly seats. He said he had candidates who were prepared for the elections but in return for the release of missing people from the custody of law enforcement agencies, he would be ready to surrender any seat and the BNP candidates could withdraw their nomination papers. Mengal condemned the government's move to implicate children and teenagers in acts of terrorism in the province. "In the past, our young and old were accused of being terrorists and now I fear that our dead will also face the same charge in near future."

The Express Tribune - April 14, 2013

Independents Outnumber Political Nominees: 850 in Fray for 47 NA Seats in KP, FATA

Over 850 candidates are in the run for 47 National Assembly seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), with the Pakistan Muslim League-N being the only party to have fielded candidates for all the seats. Only two of the 35 constituencies in KP have the number of candidates in single digits and only three of the 12 in Fata less than 20 candidates. In KP the maximum number of candidates for a single constituency (NA 24) is 33. Over one-thirds of the constituencies in Fata have 30 or more candidates and the maximum number of candidates - 40 - is in NA 36. More than half of the candidates for NA seats in KP and Fata - 432 - are independents and the remaining have been fielded by 39 political parties. However, only 13 parties have nominated more than 10 candidates.

The number of contestants from the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) is 46, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) 45, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) 41, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP-P) 38, Awami National Party (ANP) 33, Maulana Samiul Haq-led Muttahida Deeni Mahaz 22, Tehreek Tahuffuz-i-Pakistan of nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan 20, and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) 19 each. The All Pakistan Muslim League and the Pakistan Muslim League-Q have fielded 13 candidates each and the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) 11.

Interesting Contests: PTI chief Imran Khan will confront Ghulam Ahmad Bilour of the ANP in NA 1 (Peshawar-1). The PPP-P and PML-N have fielded relatively unknown candidates - Zulfiqar Afghani and Afzal Khan Panyala - in the constituency. PML-N Secretary General Iqbal Zafar Jhagra will contest election from NA 3 (Peshawar) against Noor Alam Khan of the PPP-P, whose assets are worth Rs32 billion, and Ghulam Ali of the JUI-F. ANP leader Asfandyar Wali Khan has been pitted against Sikandar Hayat Sherpao, son of Aftab Sherpao in NA 7 (Charsadda). Others in the run for the constituency include Maulana Gohar Shah of the JUI-F, Khanim Ullah of the PPP-P, and Kaleem Akbar Durrani of the PML-N and Fazal Muhammad Khan of the PTI.

Former chief minister Amir Haider Hoti of the ANP and Nawabzada Khawaja Muhammad Hoti of the PML-N are contesting for NA 9 (Mardan). Former chief of Intelligence Bureau Masood Sharif Khattak - who had joined the PPP after his retirement and was with the PTI until recently - will be contesting election as an independent candidate from NA 15 Karak. In NA 20 (Mansehra) former federal minister Azam Khan Swati, who was elected as senator in 2006 on JUI-F ticket, is a candidate of the PTI. Another former federal minister Syed Qasim Shah who had quit the PML-Q will be contesting against him from the platform of the JUI-F. Retired Captain Muhammad Safdar, son-in-law of PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif, will contest polls from NA 21 (Mansehra). His opponents include Maulana Abdul Malik of the JI and Nawabzada Salahuddin Saeed of PTI. Another interesting contest will take place in NA 24 (Dera Ismail Khan) where JUI-F chief

Maulana Fazlur Rehman's opponents include film actress Musarrat Shaheen, former minister Waqar Ahmad Khan of PPP-P and deputy speaker of the dissolved National Assembly Faisal Karim Kundi as an independent candidate. Mr Kundi is also contesting polls as PPP-P candidate against Maulana Fazlur Rehman for NA 25 (D.I. Khan). Former chief minister Akram Khan Durrani of the JUI-F, Anwar Saifullah Khan of PPP-P and Professor Muhammad Ibrahim of JI are candidates for NA 26 (Bannu). Saleem Saifullah Khan of the PML-N will be contesting polls against Maulana Fazlur Rehman from NA 27 (Lakki Marwat).

Provincial Assembly: As many as 1,438 candidates are in the run for 99 general seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly. The PTI has fielded maximum number of candidates - 98 - followed by 91 put up by the PML-N, 87 by the JUI-F, 86 by the JI, 82 by the PPP-P and 79 by ANP. The number of independent candidates comes to 571.

Dawn - April 22, 2013

Women Candidates – Nominations & Contesting

Two Tribal Women, Badam Zari and Nusrat Begum, Out To Make History

Two women, one from Bajaur tribal agency and the other from Lower Dir district, made history on Sunday when they became the first tribal women to file nomination papers to contest elections for National Assembly. Election Commission officials told Dawn that 40-year-old Badam Zari, wife of Sultan Khan, filed papers for NA-44, Bajaur. Bajaur has two seats of the lower house of parliament. Asad Sarwar, returning officer in Bajaur, confirmed the filing of nomination papers by Badam Zari for NA-44. Ms Zari said that she would contest the election to work for the tribal women's welfare. She wants to work for the betterment of women in the tribal area, especially Bajaur Agency, which has suffered immensely in the tribal system. She said no lawmaker from the tribal area had ever raised issues of women of the area in the National Assembly. She said she was not scared of anything or anyone and was determined to contest election because this was her constitutional and religious right. She said she would launch her election campaign soon.

The other woman candidate Nusrat Begum of Lower Dir filed her papers for NA-34 constituency as an independent candidate. Nusrat Begum, wife of Karim Khan, is the first woman in Lower Dir ever to pick up courage and decide to contest elections. Talking to journalists, Nusrat Begum, who was the district vice president of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaaf, said she would contest election as an independent candidate because her party had allotted ticket to another candidate. She said that all the people who won from the constituency in the past did nothing for people's betterment and that if elected she would work to provide basic amenities to the people, especially women, children and minorities. Political observers and analysts termed the submission of nomination papers by women candidates from Bajaur and Lower Dir district a major development and said that now no-one could stop women from taking part in elections and exercising their right to vote.

Dawn - April 01, 2013

Badam Zari Vows to Project Soft Image of Tribal Areas

Badam Zari, the first tribal woman to come forward to contest for a National Assembly seat from Bajaur Agency, has said that she wants to become a powerful voice of women of tribal areas. Addressing a press conference at her house, she said that her decision to contest the election

was the result of comprehensive consultations with women of different areas of the region. “Not only women but also men, particularly some elders, have assured me of their full support and have also promised financial assistance to run the campaign. She said “women are half the population of tribal areas, but unfortunately they have always been deprived of their basic rights”. Ms Zari said protecting women rights and providing basic civic facilities to them would be her priorities. She blamed the government and lawmakers from tribal areas for discrimination against women. The government and local administration had done nothing for the wellbeing of tribal women. Women in tribal areas are facing immense problems and difficulties because the government has ignored them. They lacked basic facilities of health care and education. She said she was aware that her decision to contest the election was fraught with risks, but it would give coverage to tribal women.

Ms Zari said she would make all efforts to persuade women to come out of their homes and cast their vote. Replying to a question she said her decision would project a soft image of tribal areas to the world because militancy and terrorist activities had tarnished the reputation of the areas, especially of Bajaur Agency. Ms Zari said she had neither been discouraged by anyone nor received any threats. Assistant Political Agent of Bajaur Asad Sarwar has said the administration would provide adequate security to Ms Zari. The administration is responsible for the protection of Badam Zari and she will be provided security if she asked for it. Bajaur Agency has two National Assembly seats (NA-43 and 44) for which 70 candidates have filed nomination papers, most of them as independents.

AP Adds: Bajaur is one of the many areas in the tribal region where the army has battled Taliban militants. The militants have a history of using violence to enforce their hard-line views on women. Ms Zari, who finished high school and does not have any children, said she filed her nomination papers in Khar and she was accompanied by her husband who she said fully backed her decision. Men in Bajaur and other parts of the tribal region have historically discouraged women to vote, saying they should remain at home, according to local traditions. Out of the roughly 186,000 registered voters in Ms Zari’s constituency, about 67,000 are women, according to government records.

Dawn - April 02, 2013

KP Assembly’s Reserved Seats: Papers of 100 Women Rejected

The provincial election commissioner on Monday turned down around 100 nomination papers filed against seats reserved for women in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly as their names were not present in the priority lists submitted by their respective political parties. An official at the PEC office said around 229 nomination papers were filed against 22 seats reserved for women in the provincial assembly, but political parties had submitted names of 128 candidates in their priority lists, the submission of which was mandatory under the Representation of People’s Act. Provincial election commissioner Sono Khan Baloch, who is returning officer for the reserved seats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, began scrutiny of rest of the 128 nomination papers filed for women reserved seats in the provincial assembly. He conducted scrutiny of around 90 nomination papers which all were cleared. The commissioner will continue the scrutiny, whereas scrutiny of papers filed against seats reserved for National Assembly from KP and those reserved for minorities in the provincial assembly will be conducted on April 3 and 4, respectively. The Election Commission of Pakistan had fixed March 31 for submission of priority lists by political parties.

Under Section 47A of the Representation of People’s Act, it is mandatory for political parties to submit separate lists of their candidates in order of priority for seats reserved for women and

non-Muslim. These seats are filled through proportional representation in accordance with the number of general seats won by a political party. The submission of these lists resulted in controversies among the candidates and those who were left out by their respective political parties. Several of the women were seen exchanging hot words with each other and criticising nomination papers, especially in PTI and PPP. Some of the members of PPP were complaining that the name of former MPA Nighat Orakzai was placed at serial number one of the priority list of women reserved seats for provincial assembly, whereas she was a new entrant to the party. Furthermore, they said the name of another new entrant, Shazia Aurangzeb, was placed at number two for women reserved seat for National Assembly, which was an injustice to the old party workers. Interestingly, some political parties are overoptimistic about their position in the polls and have submitted lists carrying a large number of candidates. Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) has named 23 candidates against 22 seats reserved for women in the provincial assembly.

Similarly, Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) has named 22 candidates for the said category, whereas Awami National Party (ANP) has given names of 21 candidates. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz included 15 names; Pakistan People's Party named 14, and Jamaat-i-Islami and Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) named 12 candidates each. Interestingly, while there are only three seats reserved for non-Muslims the PML-N has named 8 candidates, PPP has given names of five candidates, PTI and JI named four candidates each whereas QWP gave names of three persons. ANP and JUI-F both named two candidates each. Similarly, against eight seats reserved for women in the National Assembly from KP, PPP has named 10 candidates. JI and JUI-F named eight candidates each; PTI has given names of seven candidates; ANP named four candidates, whereas PML-N and QWP named three and two candidates, respectively. One of the candidates, who was on lower in the list, said political parties had tried to make a fool of their candidates by including their names in the lists but at a lower number where their becoming an MPA or MNA was next to impossible. PTI candidate on much lower number in the list told naming 23 candidates against 22 seats by her party was a big joke with them. She said that the number of candidates named by PTI, JUI and ANP were contrary to ground realities as it was unrealistic to believe that any of these parties would win all the 99 general seats in the provincial assembly following which all the reserved seats would go to them.

Dawn - April 02, 2013

Welcome Nominations: Tribal Women Step Forward

AMID the din of election rallies, the clash of political workers and scuffles and more over tickets and constituencies, two women from Pakistan's conservative areas quietly stepped forward and filed nomination papers for the May 11 polls. It was a big step for those two women - Badam Zari from Bajaur and Nusrat Begum from Lower Dir - and an even bigger leap for electoral politics in Pakistan. Indeed the symbolism of the news cannot be highlighted enough. Those women were willing to come forward and contest an election from an area where political parties usually collude to prevent female voters from exercising their choice cannot be celebrated enough. At the same time, these two women candidates remind the rest of the country, in fact the entire world, that Pakistan's tribal areas are not simply synonymous with militancy. Behind the façade of violence, bomb blasts and gun-toting extremists are flesh and blood people who share the same aspirations and dreams as their counterparts elsewhere. And these dreams include exercising their political rights as citizens and women. However, as Pakistan celebrates the message the nominations of these two women brings - even before it is known what their political message as electoral candidates is - it should not be forgotten that they are still campaigning in areas that are afflicted by violence and militancy where even riches

and political influence cannot shield one from harm. As women, Badam Zari and Nusrat Begum are particularly vulnerable to terrorist threats and hence the state must do its best to protect them as they campaign. In fact, the state must provide protection to all other vulnerable candidates - after all, ensuring a free and fair election includes ensuring the equal participation of all candidates and not just those who can afford to keep themselves safe. But it is not simply the state that needs to be reminded of its due role. Political parties also need to wake up to their responsibilities and do their bit to bring more women into the political mainstream. In this regard, they need to do far more than put together lists of their loyalists for the reserved seats in parliament. Instead, they should be nominating more women on their safe seats. And last but not least, they should be actively mobilising women to vote rather than colluding with each other to keep them away on polling day in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Fata. Now that would be a giant leap for the political parties, if they would take it.

Dawn - April 02, 2013

PML-N's Sakina Mengal Tries to Kill Herself

Sakina Mengal, a leader of women's wing of PML-N's Balochistan chapter, was taken into custody on Tuesday for allegedly attempting to commit suicide in protest against denial of a party ticket for the coming elections. While addressing a press conference at the Quetta Press Club along with other women activists against the leadership of her party on the issue of ticket distribution, Ms Mengal stood up and poured kerosene on herself in order to set herself on fire in protest against the decision to ignore her while awarding ticket for a general or reserved seat for women. She told the reporters that she wanted to commit suicide in protest against the central and provincial leaders of the PML-N who had awarded tickets in Balochistan to newcomers instead of senior workers who had rendered sacrifices for the party. She alleged that the provincial PML-N leaders had threatened her when she protested against their wrong decisions. She was later detained by the Civil Lines police.

Dawn - April 03, 2013

Badam Zari Kicks Off Poll Campaign in Bajaur

Badam Zari, the first woman candidate in tribal areas for the upcoming general polls, has launched her election campaign after acceptance of her nomination papers by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). An official of ECP said that Asad Sarwar, the returning officer, accepted the nomination papers of Badam Zari for contesting election for a National Assembly seat from NA-44 Bajaur-II constituency. The nomination papers of Badam Zari, candidate for NA-44, have been found cleared and she is able to contest election from Bajaur Agency. After acceptance of her nomination papers by ECP, Ms Zari launched her election campaign from her hometown Arang Utmankhel. She was accompanied by a large number of her relatives including her husband and sisters on the occasion. A team of local journalists was also accompanying the woman candidate during launch of her election campaign. The residents of the area, especially women, warmly received Ms Zari in her hometown. During her election campaign, she met with score of women, who had come from different villages for her reception. The people of Arang promised her that they would support her in the upcoming elections. The decision of Badam Zari to contest election is an honour for the people of our area. We will make all out efforts for her success in the election. Lal Khan, a 60-year-old resident of the area, said that they were ready for rendering all kinds of sacrifices for the success of their daughter. Speaking on the

occasion, Ms Zari said that she wanted to bring positive changes in the area. She said that she was contesting election for National assembly seat for that purpose. Provision of basic and modern civic facilities to the women of remote areas will be my first priority. Ms Zari urged the women to come out of their houses on the polling day and use their votes in her favour.

Dawn - April 04, 2013

Dir Woman Candidate Too Shy To Answer RO Queries

Nusrat Begum, a woman candidate in NA-34 of Lower Dir district, on Thursday refused to answer questions of the returning officer (RO) in the constituency during scrutiny of her nomination papers. RO Peer Bakhsh had summoned all candidates for NA-34 for scrutiny of their nomination papers. When he put questions to Nusrat Begum, she said she couldn't reply them in front of so many people. She said she would contest election to solve the people's problems of unemployment, health, education and infrastructure in Lower Dir. When the RO asked if Nusrat Begum has been given the PTI ticket for NA-34, another aspirant, Bashir Khan, stood up and said the party had awarded ticket to him. The RO asked former senator and JUI-F leader Maulana Gul Naseeb Khan to provide separate and detailed information of his dependents. He was also asked to describe whether women and children in Malakand division had their due Islamic rights.

Mr Gul Naseeb replied that women and children of the area had been deprived of their basic rights. When asked about the role of politicians in ending corruption, former state minister for inter-provincial coordination Malik Azmat Khan said Pakistan had been facing the menace 'from top to bottom.' The RO asked him to explain his big achievements during the last three years as MNA and state minister. In reply, Malik Azmat counted water supply schemes, supply of Sui gas and construction of Malik Muzaffar Khan Memorial Stadium. A former union council nazim affiliated with PPP objected to Malik Azmat Khan's candidature and demanded his disqualification for making contradictory statements in his nomination form. He said the state minister had disappeared from the area for five years and that he had been involved in massive corruption.

Malik Azmat urged the RO to seek documentary evidence in this respect from the complainant. While responding to a question, Sahibzada Yaqub Khan of JI said ideal Islamic system didn't exist in the world at the moment and that democracy was the safest way for enforcing Islamic law in the country. "All other ways are dangerous and bloody," he replied when asked to elaborate on how Islamic law could be enforced in Pakistan. Mr Peer Bakhsh asked candidates about provincial autonomy, democracy and dictatorship, creation of new provinces, verses of the Holy Quran, creation of Pakistan, present judicial system and 'sharia regulation' in Malakand division. Four aspirants of PPP, two of JI, three of JUI-F, four of PTI, one each from other political parties and several independent candidates appeared before the RO. A candidate representing APMML failed to tell the RO in which month Pakistan had come into being. Two aspirants didn't show up.

Dawn - April 05, 2013

Once a Landlord's Serf, Pakistani Hindu Woman Enters Elections

Veero Kolhi, a freed bonded labourer turned election candidate, carries a digger on her shoulder as she walks out of her home to work in field on the outskirts of the city of Hyderabad in

Pakistan's Sindh province. When Veero Kolhi made the asset declaration required of candidates for Pakistan's May elections, she listed the following items: two beds, five mattresses, cooking pots and a bank account with life savings of 2,800 rupees (\$28). While she may lack the fortune that is the customary entry ticket to Pakistani politics, Kolhi can make a claim that may resonate more powerfully with poor voters than the wearily familiar promises of her rivals. For Kolhi embodies a new phenomenon on the campaign trail – she is the first contestant to have escaped the thrall of a feudal-style land owner who forced his workers to toil in conditions akin to modern-day slavery. According to Kolhi the landlords are sucking blood of their workers. Kolhi lives in one-room home of mud and bamboo on the outskirts of the southern city of Hyderabad. She said that the managers to land lords behave like pimps – they away the worker's daughters and give them to the landlords. To her supporters, Kolhi's stand embodies a wider hope that the elections – Pakistan's first transition between elected civilian governments – will be a step towards a more progressive future for a country plagued by Islamic militancy, frequent political gridlock and the worsening persecution of minorities.

To sceptics, the fact that Kolhi has no realistic chance of victory is merely further evidence that even the landmark May 11 vote will offer only a mirage of change to a millions-strong but largely invisible rural underclass. Yet there is no doubt that hers is a remarkable journey. A sturdy matriarch in her mid-50s who has 20 grandchildren, Kolhi - a member of Pakistan's tiny Hindu minority - is the ultimate outsider in an electoral landscape dominated by wealthy male candidates fluent in the art of back room deals. Possessed of a ready, raucous laugh, but unable to write more than her name, Kolhi was once a "bonded labourer," the term used in Pakistan for an illegal but widely prevalent form of contemporary serfdom in which entire families toil for years to pay often spurious debts. Since making her escape in the mid-1990s, Kolhi has lobbied the police and courts to release thousands of others from the pool of indebted workers in her native Sindh province, the vast majority of who are fellow Hindus. On April 5, Kolhi crossed a new threshold in her own odyssey when she stood on the steps of a colonial-era courthouse in Hyderabad and brandished a document officials had just issued, authorising her to run for the provincial assembly.

With no rival party to back her, Kolhi's independent run may make barely a dent at the ballot box in Sindh, a stronghold of President Asif Ali Zardari's ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP). But her beat-the-odds bravado has lit a flame for those who adore her the most: families she has helped liberate from lives as vassals.

Barefoot In the Night

Like millions of the landless, Kolhi's ordeal began a generation ago when drought struck her home in the Thar desert bordering India, forcing her parents to move to a lush belt of Sindh in search of work harvesting sunflowers or chilies. Kolhi was married as a teenager but her husband fell into debt and she was forced to work 10-hour days picking cotton, gripped by a fear that their landlord might choose a husband for Ganga, her daughter, who would soon be ten years old. One night Kolhi crept past armed guards and walked barefoot to a village to seek help. Her husband was beaten as punishment for her escape, Kolhi said, but she managed to contact human rights activists who wrote to police on her behalf. Officers were reluctant to confront the landlord but they relented after Kolhi staged a three-day hunger strike at their station. More than 40 people were freed.

Now Kolhi spends her days careering along dirt roads in a battered Suzuki minivan decorated with stickers of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the Latin American revolutionary, on her quest for votes. Her only luxury: Gold Leaf, a brand of cigarette. Her only campaign equipment: an old megaphone. While Kolhi clearly enjoys meeting supporters – greeting women by placing two palms on their bowed heads in a traditional gesture of protection – she has still only reached a

fraction of her constituency's 133,000 voters. The favourite remains Sharjeel Memon, an influential businessman and PPP stalwart. Memon was not available for comment.

Daughters for Sale

Despite the struggle Kolhi faces, the fact she is able to run at all has emboldened campaigners for workers' rights in Sindh. Even remote areas of the province have not been immune to the influence of a more assertive media and judiciary that have reshaped national politics during tumultuous years following a 1999 army coup and a transition to democracy in 2008. "The landlords are afraid of court cases so they do not abuse and torture people as much as before," said Lalee Kolhi, another former bonded labourer turned activist, who is no relation to Veero Kolhi. In some areas, land owners can still exploit a symbiotic relationship with the bureaucracy, police and courts to deprive workers of rights and attempt to sway their votes. Although Veero Kolhi works with a local organisation that says it has helped rescue some 26,000 indebted workers in the last 12 years, several estimates put the total figure of bonded labourers in Pakistan at roughly eight million.

Not all landlords are tyrants, but the arrival last month of an extended family of 63 sharecroppers at Azad Nagar, the village for freed workers, provided a glimpse of the time worn tricks they use to ensure debts keep on growing. Lakhi Bheel produced a scrap torn from an exercise book that declared he had accumulated obligations of 99,405 rupees after toiling for three years. Bheel said he had decided to make a break for freedom after the land owner threatened to sell the family's daughters in return for bride prices. Kolhi's supporters say the only way to end the oppression in Sindh would be to give destitute workers their own plots of land. But as long as the feudal class retains political influence, talk of land reform remains taboo. Undaunted, Kolhi - bedecked in a garland of red roses and jasmine - launched her shot at office with an ultimatum.

The Express Tribune - April 14, 2013

Entering the Race: Elections Would Be Counterproductive To Democracy Says Ghinwa

Pakistan People's Party (Shaheed Bhutto) Chairperson Ghinwa Bhutto told a press conference that her party was fielding 107 candidates, even though most of them did not have a reputation for winning. Bhutto said local government elections should precede general elections so that power can be consolidated with common people. The upcoming elections will prove counterproductive in that respect, she said. "It is harvest season. The poor farmers will be expected to leave their work for the election campaigns. This will lead them to the verge of starvation, said Bhutto. She said the Pakistan Peoples Party had declared former dictator Pervez Musharraf responsible for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto because he was in power at the time. "The PPP was in power when my husband was murdered, who should I blame?" she said. There was no hope today for justice in Murtaza Bhutto's murder case, she said. Pakistan has faced immense destruction at the hands of PPP leaders, she said. The country needed unity among its people. Bhutto said the caretaker government must try leaders of the previous government for their corruption. She said the delay in the Iran-Pakistan pipeline project raised a lot of questions. All corrupt officials must be exposed for what they were and the ban on trade unions must be lifted, said Bhutto.

The Express Tribune - April 15, 2013

Parties' Manifestos

With Restoration of Peace on Top, QWP Unveils 12-Point Agenda

The Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) unveiled its 12-point election manifesto, stressing the need for restoration of comprehensive and sustainable peace through building national consensus and introducing a policy framework to identify the root causes of terrorism and militancy. It also underscored the need for taking pro-active and civilian-led initiatives to address the problems of violence, intolerance and militancy. The party's manifesto said that Pakistan was a federal state under the 1973 Constitution and the party would strive for the creation of new federating units on the basis of public demand. Announcing the party's manifesto at a press conference, QWP chief Aftab Khan Sherpao said that every effort would be made to implement the election manifesto in letter and spirit if the party was voted to power. About the fiscal issues, he said, the party believed in the constitutional framework that determined the rights of the provinces on resources generated within the provinces. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was the biggest producer of hydel power, but despite constitutional guarantees, it remained deprived of its due share in the net hydel profits. "The party will initiate a three-tier good governance programme i.e. political, economic and civic governance to introduce institutional reforms for ensuring good governance practices through public participation, transparency, accountability and access to information," the manifesto said.

Outlining the party's policy on addressing the energy crisis, Sherpao said the QWP would address the energy and gas shortages issues by attracting investment in the energy sector mainly in hydel and coal-based sectors. "The current ratio of 30:70 percent (hydel: oil) will be balanced to 50:50 percent to improve the balance of payments due to oil imports," he maintained and added that they would diversify the energy production sector by tapping alternative sources of energy such as solar, wind, bio-gas and bio-mass. Spelling out his party's economic development, the QWP chief said that his party would pursue the post-conflict needs assessment recommendations besides revising and improving the Malakand Comprehensive Stabilisation and Socio-economic Development Strategy and the Sustainable Development Plan for Fata to rehabilitate the province and the tribal areas back to normalcy. Aftab Sherpao said the education budget would be enhanced from the current 2.2 percent of the GDP to at least five percent million to raise the literacy rate and get the out of school children numbering into millions to school. He said public-private partnership would be encouraged in the health sector to provide healthcare facilities to the people living in the far-flung areas. The QWP chairman condemned the acts of terror that took place in Swat and Charsadda districts and said that it showed the failure of the previous provincial government, which had failed to take steps for restoration of peace.

The News - April 15, 2013

Voters & Overseas Pakistanis

Slim Chance of Voting For Women in Slums

In a cramped quarter, Robina Yousuf's face glowed from the diffused light that spilled in from a single window as her small frame rested on the edge of a bed. Robina, 19, is not going to vote but this is not out of choice but because she lacks a computerised national identification (CNIC) card. A dusty television resting atop an old trunk behind her is of little promise, since Robina's

family is unable to afford a cable connection and access to the news and unfolding political events is through a private radio channel, which they listen to ever so often in their modest home at the 66 quarters – a regularised slum near Sitara market. Robina's indifference to the upcoming elections is an amalgam of circumstance: a constant struggle to escape from the grips of abject poverty and the anxiety of continuing to live with it, little exposure to governance or life outside of the slums and a general lack of awareness about national identity and democratic rights.

Pending Documentation

"Her name on the B form is incorrect," said her mother, Saleema Bibi, who sat across on the single sofa-cum-bed in almost complete darkness because the electricity has been out for hours on stretch. She explained the discrepancy in documentation is why Robina has yet to obtain the rectangular green card that would empower her to vote, among other profits such as the procurement of a job after she has completed education. Not far from the slum settlement at Allama Iqbal Colony, women gathered to bewail the loss of the youngest of the house to a domestic accident. The conversation shifted, however, to the upcoming elections. National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) vans have come here several times. "But we are always told to bring in additional documents and paperwork," said an exasperated Mubarra Ishaq who was married much before she was eligible for a CNIC. Cradling a baby in one arm, guarding another with her eyes and a third to her side, the 26-year-old seemed disappointed at her inability to participate in polling, and the opportunity to influence decisions that will mark the future of the country. NADRA workers were unable to facilitate the young mother because she was unable to procure her parents' identity cards. "How could I?" she said bitterly, "They are no longer alive."

Awareness Campaigns

Media Spokesperson for NADRA, Naz Shoeb reaffirmed otherwise. According to Shoeb, campaigns to create awareness among the poor and to educate and mobilise uneducated people about the importance of CNICs, are carried out through the support of local non-government organisations and Mobile Registration Vans, seven of which are active within the federal capital. "NADRA has taken steps to facilitate the poor and uneducated female population," she asserted, explaining that birth certificate exemptions have been made in several cases but in rural areas. Female registered votes in the federal area stand at 0.141 million but if such immunities were extended to slum dwellers within the capital city, these figures could witness a significant swell. Akbari Begum, 22, was asked to bring a receipt signed by the councillor and an official from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) for verification in order to obtain a CNIC. "CDA officials charge Rs4,000 per person for such verification and I cannot afford that kind of expense." National Commission on the Status of Women Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz expressed concern over NADRA and Election Commission of Pakistan's commitment to ensure full female participation in the upcoming elections. "The number of registered female voters is a stronger indicator of the level of gender empowerment within Pakistan," she said.

Patriarchal Influences

Where registration is not a challenge, women's votes are hijacked by the patriarchs in the family. Shamo Tariq may have a mind of her own but much to her husband Tariq Masih's relief, the young mother is unregistered for the elections. "I'm the man of the house, she will vote for whoever I say," he said. While Tariq expressed a preference for PML-N with the unwavering belief that job creation would be its first order of business. In private, Shamo, a domestic worker by profession, admitted that if she were given the opportunity, she would vote, for dictator-turned-democrat Gen. (retd) Musharraf, recalling a time where inflation wasn't as rampant and jobs were plentiful. "Look at this place, there is sewage spilling on the streets and no electricity

or gas. We'll vote for whoever cares enough to change our circumstances," said Anwar Bibi, who has been curiously loitering near the alley, choked with playing children, passersby and cycle-vendors selling fruits and toys.

The Express Tribune - April 05, 2013

Female Voters to Be Encouraged

Although the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) appreciated measures taken to ensure participation of women in the upcoming elections, the statutory body believes there remains a lot more to do. At a press conference, the NCSW urged the Election Commission of Pakistan to increase representation of women in the ECP staff so that maximum participation in the electoral process could be ensured. It also suggested setting up complaint desks in sensitive constituencies to address any violation of women's right to vote. Chairperson of NCSW, Khawar Mumtaz, said the ECP should provide security to women so that they could vote without fear and no one else dictated who their vote was entitled to. The chairperson acknowledged that the country was on the verge of making history as the elections marked the first democratic transition in Pakistan. Therefore, insecurity in some areas such as the 42 'No-Go' areas in Karachi and the prohibition on voting by panchayts and clerics were tantamount to denial of democratic and constitutional rights of women. The Commission also raised concern over the large number of women in remote rural areas and urban slums who had not been issued computerised national identity cards (CNICs), and thus could not vote despite a strong desire to do so. Disappointment was also expressed at the failure of political parties to agree on minimum female participation (10pc) in any constituency for validating the polls, and on the low number of tickets awarded to women on general seats. "The experiences of the past five years has demonstrated the high caliber of female parliamentarians in moving human rights legislation in the National Assembly," said Khawar Mumtaz, adding that it would be an opportunity lost if women legislators were not included in the political mainstream. The chairperson appreciated the women coming forward in areas like Bajaur, Dir and Thar, saying that "these women symbolise their capacity to face challenges." The commission resolved to setup an Election Complaint Cell to receive complaints from women in the pre-election and post-election process, and announced that its members would monitor selected areas. A delegation would also meet the ECP to seek solution of its concerns.

Dawn - April 10, 2013

Pakistan among Countries with Lowest Voter Turnout

Pakistan ranks among the bottom four countries in terms of voter turnout, shows a document of the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). According to the booklet jointly published by Nadra and the ECP on Saturday, Pakistan stands at 164th in terms of voter turnout among the 169 countries that have had democratic elections over the past 50 years. The booklet compared the Pakistani data with some countries in Europe, the USA and Asia, like India where the average voter turnout was 59.4 per cent and Bangladesh where 58.2pc of the registered voters turned up at polling stations. The document explains how Pakistan with its average turnout of 45.3pc was only better than the countries like Egypt (45.1pc) and Ivory Coast (37pc). With 21.3pc turnout, Mali was placed lowest on the list. There were various reasons associated with a low voter turnout which could range from security concerns to sociological issues. According to the ECP, voting in

Pakistan has never been a compulsion, a fact that has been a major reason for the low turnout. Australia is one of the first countries that have adopted compulsory voting, which is why the voter involvement ratio there has been as high as 94.5pc. Emphasising the need for compulsory voting, Nadra Chairman Tariq Malik said people should be encouraged to exercise their right to vote. Radio and TV channels should consume more time advising the masses on why it is imperative to spare 10 minutes and come out to vote, Mr Malik said. Most educated people had been reluctant to register or find out through the 8300 message service if they could vote, he said. The ECP booklet also gave the example of Peru where voters are required to carry a stamped voting card as a proof for having cast their vote. However, former minister for environment Hamidullah Jan Afridi said that introducing compulsory voting depended on time and circumstances. "In my constituency in Khyber Agency (NA 46), over 90pc of the population has been displaced by violence and most people demand shelter for their families," he said. In such circumstances telling them that by keeping away from voting they would be committing wrongdoing would not make sense, he added. Siddiqui Farooq of the PML-N said voting process should be made as simple as possible. Pointing out that voting is not compulsory in the USA, Britain or even India; he said better results could be achieved by introducing some e-system that is safe and transparent.

Dawn - April 14, 2013

Seeking Votes in Name of Religion, Sect Banned

In an apparent bid to discourage politico-religious parties to woo voters by using religion as a tool, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has barred contesting candidates from seeking votes in the name of religion or sect in the upcoming general elections. The ECP has issued new guidelines for the smooth and peaceful conduct of the general elections and one of these is that the contesting candidates will not seek votes in the name of religion or sect. Moreover, the commission declared providing free transport to voters by the candidates a crime. The commission said no voter should be allowed to take a ballot paper out of the polling station while forced eviction of voters from polling stations would also be considered a crime. It also barred candidates from establishing polling camps within 400 yards of the polling stations. The measure is being seen as an attempt to ensure a peaceful and smooth environment for the polling staff and the voters. When asked, a senior ECP official said that the panels formed under each district returning officer would closely monitor the candidates during their campaigns to see that they were abstaining from arousing religious or sectarian feelings for electoral gains. Television channels and newspapers have been a great support to the commission and their cooperation on this particularly sensitive issue will be of utmost importance for us and the nation. In another development, the ECP directed registration of criminal cases in the lower courts against 11 incumbent and former legislators for having fake/invalid graduation degrees after de-notifying them. Besides sitting Senator Mir Israrullah Zehri of the Balochistan National Party-Awami (BNP-A), those de-notified included Mir Mohabat Khan Mari, Rehana Yahya Baloch, five former members of the Punjab Assembly, two from Sindh and one from the Balochistan Assembly. They are Samina Khawar Hayat, Shabina Khan, Rana Ejaz, Semal Kamran and Shumaila Rana of the Punjab Assembly; Nadir Magsi and Bashir Ahmed from the Sindh Assembly and Tariq Magsi from Balochistan. Under the law, they qualify to take part in the elections for the National Assembly and provincial assemblies' seats. However, if convicted, they will stand disqualified. These former lawmakers are bound to return their perks and privileges to the national exchequer.

The News - April 15, 2013

Disenfranchised: The Refugee Voter

As the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) completes its scrutiny of who is allowed or able to run and vote in the elections, much indicates that come May 11 Pakistan's approximately 750,000 internal refugees might find themselves effectively disenfranchised. Most of Pakistan's Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) do not live in refugee camps - the site where the ECP is planning to set up polling booths for those forced to leave their home constituencies against their will. According to Sono Khan Baloch, the Provincial Election Commissioner for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the ECP is only planning to set up polling booths in Nowshera's Jalojai camp, which houses fewer than 12,500 IDPs according to its camp administrator Noor Akbar Khan. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the total number of IDPs in Pakistan stood at 750,000 people at the end of 2012 because of fighting between militants and the military in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata). The recent takeover of Tirah Valley in Khyber Agency by militant leader Mangal Bagh's Lashkar-e-Islam (LeI) and the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has meant that the number has increased by an additional 5,200 families, or 40,600 people. "Preparing voter lists for IDPs is an incredibly difficult challenge, but we are confident that the refugees at these camps will have an opportunity to vote," says Mr Baloch when Dawn visited him in his office in Peshawar. "Polling booths in refugee camps essentially become ghost stations - a bureaucratic ploy to pretend like the IDPs have gotten a chance to vote," says Ali Imran, a faculty member at the University of Peshawar's department of journalism. "Most IDPs do not live in refugee camps. They have gone to stay with friends or family at best, and makeshift tents in big city slums at worst - which includes cities like Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi," says Mr Imran, who adds that these refugees are effectively invisible to the ECP as they prepare their voting lists, since voters have to be present in the constituencies where they are registered to vote. "A lot of the IDPs are also settled in areas that are difficult to access - areas that are still within the tribal areas, but outside their constituencies. So yes, the ECP is not taking those people into consideration who are settled outside of Jalojai camp," says Fazal Tawaf Khan, former vice chairman of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council. IDPs excluded in 2008

Mr Baloch says that the ECP set up polling booths for refugees from Waziristan in the last election. "Contrary to what most people think, the ECP made it possible for refugees in Dera Ismail Khan to vote. For some reason, however, not a single person came to vote," he says. According to Mr Imran, the polling booths in Dera Ismail Khan was "yet another attempt by the ECP to pretend that they were doing their job." "Remember, most of the refugees in Dera Ismail Khan were from the Mehsud tribe, and therefore from South Waziristan or NA-41. NA-41 did not have elections in 2008 because of the law and order situation. You would expect an election commissioner to know that - are they trying to make this out to be a joke. They were ghost polling booths that were there for show, not an actual or sincere attempt to ensure that IDPs could cast their vote and be represented." The courts first took notice of IDPs voting situation in November 2012, when Chief Justice Dost Muhammad Khan took up the matter in the Peshawar High Court (PHC), and summoned the ECP to explain how they planned to address the situation. Other than ensuring that polling booths would be set up in official refugee camps, the PHC also ensured that the National Database and Registration Authority was given the mandate to issue duplicate National Identity Cards if people had left them behind in a hurry to leave their homes. However, even Muhammad Khan's move might be insufficient. Mr Baloch admits that ensuring the IDP votes is an enormous challenge. "Most of these voters are dispersed across the country.

That makes preparing voter lists far more difficult," he says. "We are trying our best, but we are still working on it." Turnout in Fata is historically low. According to data from the 2008 election, only 31 per cent or approximately 400,000 of the over one million people who were eligible to

vote cast their ballot. Authorities have also had difficulty ensuring sufficient registration. Numbers indicate that female voters are underrepresented in the voting statistics. In the current voter rolls available on the ECP website, almost 1,800,000 Pakistanis from Fata can take part on May 11. However, this number includes barely 600,000 women. According to Mr Baloch, dynamics unrelated to the ECP's organisation might cause disenfranchisement of voters. "There is no reason to assume that we cannot prepare something to ensure that every Pakistani citizen has a chance to vote. But there is little doubt that this is always a challenging exercise," says Mr Baloch.

Dawn - April 17, 2013

SC Orders Expedited Efforts for Expats' Voting Ordinance

The Supreme Court directed the attorney general of Pakistan and the Law Ministry to speed up the process for issuing an ordinance to give the right of franchise to the Pakistani expatriates. The three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and comprising Justice Gulzar Ahmad and Justice Sh Azmat Saeed resumed hearing of identical constitutional petitions of PTI chief Imran Khan and others. During the course of proceedings, the chief justice remarked that it was the desire of the constitution not of the Supreme Court and it was court's obligation to follow the constitution. Deputy Attorney General Ali Zai told the court of the government's concern that granting voting rights to overseas Pakistanis is near to impossible and it needs time. The software developed for this purpose was untested and the real problem was its testing, which was not possible before the election. The chief justice observed that prima facie the government was not serious in providing voting rights to the overseas Pakistanis and was using delaying tactics. A delay in issuing the ordinance would deprive a large number of people who contribute a lot to the country's development from an opportunity to vote. Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) director general told the bench that his department was waiting for the ECP's instructions and the Foreign Office was committed to helping carry out the process. He said the FO was ready to work day and night for the purpose and it had nothing to do with the ECP's stance that it would be difficult to manage electronic voting facility for the expatriates. Meanwhile, ECP Director General Shair Afgan appraised the court that the ECP had to follow the law, which did not exist. Several political parties had also expressed reservations on the e-voting system during meetings with the ECP. They feel that the e-voting facility cannot be provided to the expatriates until a workable and transparent mechanism is established.

Daily Times - April 26, 2013

Overseas PTI Supporters to Charter Plane for Upcoming Elections

With no action being taken by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) with regards to voting rights being given to overseas Pakistani's, many have decided to fly in specifically to be a part of the elections. With most of these voters being Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf supporters, US and UK based members of the party are arranging for chartered flights to fly in voters into Pakistan. PTI London president Shahbaz Khan stated that he has been in conversation with several travel agents and was arranging a chartered flight to Pakistan. He added that the average cost of a ticket from UK to Pakistan was from £500 to £700 and if he could not get enough people for a chartered flight, supporters would travel as a group. Similar activities have been reported in USA as well.

Pakistan Today - April 27, 2013

Kohistan Candidates Vow To Ensure Women Participation

Two young candidates, who are contesting the election from PK-62 and PK-63 (Kohistan) under the banner of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), have vowed to ensure the participation of the women voters in the polls. Both the candidates using banners and posters carrying the pictures of PPP founding chairman Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, former chairperson of PPP Nusrat Bhutto, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto and Naheed Khan, termed themselves as the real heirs of Bhutto legacy instead of those contesting elections under the aegis Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP). Terming the candidates representing the PPPP the bunch of opportunists, they held the previous MNAs and MPAs responsible for the existing crises and the deteriorating situation in the far-flung areas. They alleged the previous government and elected representatives had intentionally kept their areas backward.

Mohammad Salim, candidate for PK-62 and Gul Faraz, candidate for PK-63 hailing from the middle class said half of the population in their areas had been deprived of using their right to vote and added they had chalked out a plan to facilitate them. Mohammad Salim, who was former nazim of Palas tehsil and general secretary of PPP, said he had been in politics for five years, but was disappointed to see the role of his party leaders and their attitude towards the workers. Salim, who is doing BA, said the PPP workers had realised the situation and that was why they had united under the leadership of Safdar Abbasi and Naheed Khan. He said the people of the backward areas didn't know about the ideologies of the political parties and they would try to create awareness among the voters.

Gul Faraz, 35, hailing from Dassu tehsil, said PPP was not the property of anybody rather it belonged to the workers. He said they were contesting the election to represent the disappointed party workers. He said the traditional politicians had joined hands to prevent them from winning their respective seats, but the people have also realised the dual character of those deceiving people in the name of democracy, Islam and the creation of Hazara province. Both the PPP candidates are facing 18 rivals each and are confident of scoring victory with the support of their people. The other candidates running for PK-62 include Jamaldar, Sohrab Gul, Muslim Shah, Rozi Khan, Salim, Saifur Rehman Qureshi, Ali Gohar, Ghulam Nabi, Fayyaz Khan, Mohammad Afzal, Mohammad Aurangzeb Khan, Mohammad Riaz, Mohammad Siraj, Mohammad Taus Khan, Mohammad Asmatullah, Mohammad Nazir Khan and Nizamuddin. For PK-63 Asadullah Qureshi, Taj Malik, Afreen Khan, Haji Shah, Haider Malik, Rahimullah Khan, Zar Baland, Sirajuddin, Saeed Khan, Saun Mian Khan, Saifur Rehman, Shah Nazar Khan, Sharakat Khan, Tauta Nosh, Abdus Sattar Khan and others.

The News - April 28, 2013

Polling Assessment, Polling Stations & Polling Staff

Modified Ballots: 'Vote for None' Option Sparks Controversy

In a drastic break with tradition, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to include a 'none of the above' column in the ballot papers for the upcoming elections, giving voters for the first time a choice of rejecting all candidates contesting in their respective constituencies. Election Commission Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan said the commission in its meeting decided to include this option in the ballot papers to be used for the May 11 general elections. Last year, the Supreme Court in its verdict on the Workers Party case had asked ECP to contemplate this option, which is in practice in some countries. In some of these countries, a

run-off poll is held if over 50% of the voters in any constituency use this option. In others, a run-off poll is held if the 'none of the above' votes surpass the number of votes for the highest scoring candidate. The ECP has yet to disclose which mechanism it would adopt in this regard. To obtain legal cover for this step, the ECP will be forwarding a summary to the interim Prime Minister, who will then forward it to the President for promulgation as an ordinance, Khan added. It is not yet clear whether President Asif Ali Zardari will issue a formal decree in this regard since the Pakistan Peoples Party has vehemently opposed the move.

According to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's official twitter account, PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif also rejected the move, saying, "If someone does not want to vote, why would he leave home & come to the polling station?" In a statement broadcast on a local TV channel, the PTI's spokesman also called on the ECP to review its decision, saying that no one will come to the polling stations if they did not intend to vote. The ECP had earlier changed the format of the nomination papers, including columns seeking candidates' financial, tax and criminal history, without the formal approval of the President. Then law minister Farooq H Naek had opposed some of the changes and, did not forward the ECP summary to the President. The SC, however, endorsed ECP's decision to bypass the Presidency and observed that the commission was empowered to do so. When asked if the President will issue an ordinance this time, presidential spokesperson Farhatullah Babar said, "He issues an ordinance only on the advice of the PM or government. No such advice has been received in the Presidency so it is premature to comment." While former Lahore High Court judge Zahid Hussain Bukhari acknowledged that the ECP was empowered to make changes to the ballot papers, he maintained the commission should have taken the political parties on board before making its decision. Abid Hassan Minto, who's Workers Party filed the petition on electoral reforms, said the SC had given ECP such directions and the commission was merely implementing court orders. Justice (ret'd) Tariq Mehmood opposed the idea claiming that once the schedule is announced such changes cannot be made. "You cannot change the rules of the game once the schedule is announced."

No Decision on Voting Procedure of Overseas Pakistanis

A meeting of technical experts from ECP and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) remained inconclusive over taking a decision on adopting a procedure to enable overseas Pakistanis to vote. NADRA had prepared software and wanted the ECP to take a decision by April 5, so that it could install the required database system in the 15 countries where a significant number of Pakistanis live. Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan said the attorney general who was supposed to be part of the meeting was not available as he was out of city. Now the meeting will be held again. Surveillance of returning officers and polling stations According to Khan, the IT ministry secretary has told the ECP that they can assist the commission in conducting video surveillance of returning officers (ROs).

The Express Tribune - April 04, 2013

Poll Assessment: National Observers Need To Follow International Standards

As the country ratifies the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) for free and fair elections, the role of national election observation organisations becomes all the more relevant. This was the crux of a conference on "International Standards in Election Observation". Local organizations and international associations of citizen observation groups attended the conference. They pledged to observe elections according to the recognized methodology defined in Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations. Democracy Reporting International (DRI) Director Vladimir Pran said,

“The standards used by international and domestic observer groups to assess elections are an extension of the commitments that Pakistan has made under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ICCPR. These treaties include the obligation to facilitate election observation.” Reverend Gift Moerane from the Southern African Development Community Election Support Network, highlighted some factors that election observers need to take into consideration. “It is imperative that election observers visit polling stations. Also it is important to sensitise people of their right to vote. Encouragement is the key,” he said. While Ichal Supriadi from Asian Network for Free Elections underscored smooth elections, “all of Asia right now has their eyes on Pakistan. It will set a great example if free and fair elections are carried out,” he said.

Meanwhile, Telibert Laoc, from National Democratic Institute, introduced the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organisations which has been endorsed by 180 independent election monitoring organisations in over 75 countries around the globe. European Union Election Observation Mission Deputy Chief Observer Hannah Roberts emphasised the International Standards in Observation of the 2013 elections. “We are not only here for the current elections but also for the future elections.” Meanwhile, HRCP Coordinators Director Husain Naqi said, “media, especially electronic persists on damning the politicians, constantly condemning them.” The HRCP is planning to monitor the elections in those 56 constituencies which are sensitive in the context of human rights violation. Aurat Foundation CEO Naeem Mirza streamlined the basic duties of the observer groups. “The process of scrutiny has begun. The Supreme Court and election commission are observing the political candidates, and we are observing them in return. Also nothing could be more relevant than the right of vote of women. It’s a constitutional right which has not been practiced in Pakistan,” he said.

The Express Tribune - April 05, 2013

Balochistan Teachers Refuse Polls Duty

Over 70,000 teachers have refused to perform election duties in 11 most sensitive districts of Balochistan after receiving threats from proscribed organisations. The Balochistan Government Teachers Association (BGTA), in a letter addressed to the governor and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), expressed its reservations, saying teachers have been receiving constant threats from banned outfits. Teachers are being warned that they should not perform election duties otherwise they would have to face the consequences. The most sensitive districts include Kalat, Noshki, Chaghi, Makran, Gwadar, Khuzdar, Panjgur, Mastung, Saryab and Kharan. On the other hand, the ECP has warned government servants refusing election duties on any pretext of stern action. The ECP authorised Returning Officers across the country to issue arrest warrants for government employees not willing to perform election duties.

The News - April 28, 2013

Election Reports & Updates

Scrutiny Fears Keep Many Out Of Poll Fray

The fear of strict scrutiny of nomination papers appears to have kept thousands of aspiring candidates away from the electoral arena with the number dropping to about two-thirds of those who had filed nomination papers in the previous general elections held in 2008. Over 10,000 candidates filed the papers for 849 general seats of the national and provincial assemblies as the first phase of the electoral process was completed at the end of the extended deadline. In 2008, over 15,000 candidates had filed the papers - over 10,000 for the provincial assemblies and around 5,000 for National Assembly seats. Scrutiny of the papers will continue till April 7, according to the amended schedule announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). An ECP official said the returning officers would decide about accepting or rejecting a paper on the basis of reports provided by the organisations concerned about financial integrity of the candidate. A special cell comprising officials of the Federal Board of Revenue, State Bank, National Accountability Bureau, National Database and Registration Authority and the ECP has been set up to ensure that tax evaders, loan defaulters, beneficiaries of written-off loans and defaulters of government dues don't enter the legislatures.

The official said that despite the time for scrutiny being less than the arduous task required, an efficient system had been put in place to manage it. "It is a gigantic task but we will meet the challenge." He said those who managed to enter the assemblies by concealing facts would be under threat of prosecution and conviction entailing disqualification for committing corrupt practices. For the first time, they were required to submit copies of their income and agricultural tax returns for three years, besides details of expenses on their foreign visits during the time and the expenses on their children studying abroad. The candidates were required under Section 12(2) of the Representation of the People Act to file a declaration that no loan of Rs2 million or more obtained from any bank, financial institution, cooperative society or corporate body in their own or any of their dependents' names, or any business concern mainly owned by them or their dependents stood unpaid for more than a year from the due date, or had been written off.

A declaration about default in payment of government dues or utility charges in excess of Rs. 10,000 for over six months at the time of filing the papers was also required. Under the definition provided in the law, loan means any loan, advance, credit or finance obtained or written off on or after Dec 31, 1985, but shall not include the loan the recovery of which has been delayed or suspended by any other order or of a court or tribunal, including the high courts and the Supreme Court. Taxes include all those levied by the federal, provincial or local governments, but not those whose recovery has been stayed or suspended by a court or tribunal. Government dues and utility charges include rent, charges of rest houses or lodges owned by the federal, provincial or local governments or corporations established or controlled by them, except those stayed by judicial orders. The ECP official said the candidates are also required to submit a list of their dependents which would be verified through the family tree stored in the Nadra database.

Dawn - April 01, 2013

Larkana to Witness a Triangular Fight

With Sardar Rizwan Kehar of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Nazeer Ahmed Shaikh of the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) opting for PS-36 (Larkana-II) seat in forthcoming election, it has become a triangular fight as Sindh Assembly Speaker Nisar Ahmed Khuhro is already in the field on a Pakistan People's Party ticket. Although the PPP had won the 2002 and 2008 elections in its stronghold - Larkana -, it is likely to face a tough contest this time. The PML-F candidate, Mr Shaikh, is a former PPP general secretary in Larkana and has also remained the taluka nazim. He has recently deserted the party to join the PML-F. PPP information secretary in the district Asghar Shaikh also quit the party. Interestingly, it was Mr Khuhro who had introduced [Nazeer Ahmed] Shaikh to the PPP in a meeting with Benazir Bhutto. The Shaikh community claims to be the deciding factor in elections for Larkana constituencies but at the moment it stands visibly divided into four groups, one of which is led by Nazeer Shaikh.

The other three groups are led by Khair Mohammed Shaikh, PPP Larkana district vice president, Mohammed Ali Shaikh, associated with the PML-F and Ghulam Serwar Shaikh, head of the recently-formed Muttahida Shaikh Political Forum. In terms of strength, the Shaikh community has around 24,000 voters registered within NA-204 and PS-36. According to Ghulam Serwar Shaikh, Akbar Shah Rashdi (Larkana division president) of the PML-F, Nazeer Ahmed Shaikh of PML-F and Rizwan Kehar, a PML-N candidate, has sought the forum's support. An anti-PPP electoral alliance formed by or supported by both PML-N and PML-F could pose some sort of challenge to PPP but Mr Khuhro seems confident about his victory even in such a serious situation. PPP has now developed fissures. While its Larkana city chief Aftab Nek Mohammed Bhutto and his close associates remained with Mr Khuhro but Khair Mohammed Shaikh, PPP Larkana vice president stood by Ayaz Soomro. Some PPP office-bearers in the recent past had observed a hunger strike for removal of certain district and city leaders. Khair Mohammed Shaikh remained the party's vice president over the past five years and sought the ticket for PS-36 (Larkana-II) but he did not succeed. In the 2002 election for the PS-36 Larkana-II seat, Mr Khuhro who had defeated two prominent candidates, Saeed Ahmed Bhutto (PPP-SB) and Javed Ahmed Mithani (PML-Q). In the 2008 election he again defeated Javed Mithani (who contested the seat from the platform of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement) and Altaf Hussain Ansari of PML-Q.

Dawn - April 01, 2013

Election 2013: The Youth Vote

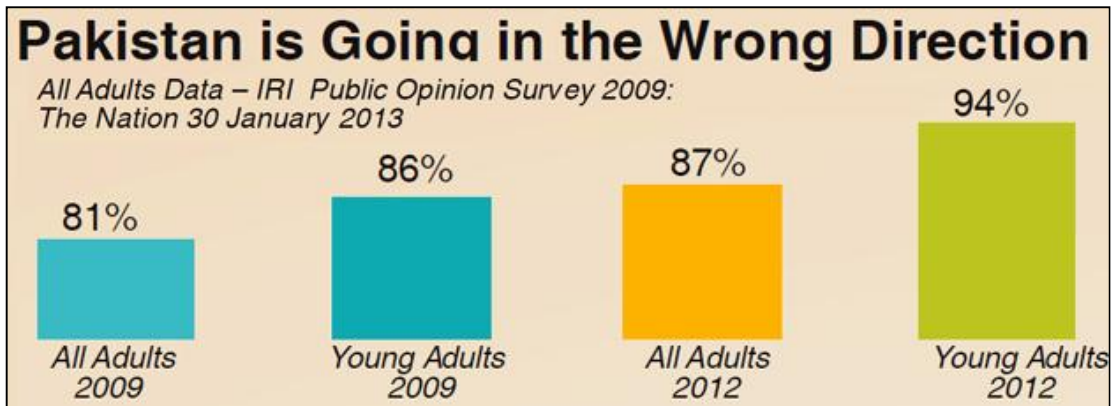
With the polls almost upon us, several questions have emerged: Is this really a youth election? Who is the average Pakistani who will decide the fate of the elections? Below is the visualisation of a report launched by the British Council Pakistan. This research, called The Next Generation Goes to the Ballot Box, focuses on the youth participating (or not) in the upcoming polls. The first report was published in 2009. As Pakistan stands at the brink of transformative change, one thing is clear: the voices of this generation can no longer be discounted. This is a generation that has been scarred by terrorism, inflation and instability, and yet its members still plan to vote.

A conservative generation



- **2007:** 50% of the youth thought the country was heading in the wrong direction
- **2013:** 94% of the youth thought the country was heading in the wrong direction

Today, 64% of the male youth describe themselves as conservative/religious, whereas 75% of women feel the same.



Some key points:

- 1/4 of urban young people have an interest in politics.
- 3/4 of the youth who expressed an opinion in our survey worry about exposure to foreign media, films, music and ideas.
- Youth with access to cable TV were less conservative than those who only had access to terrestrial (conversely, terrestrial watchers were more optimistic than cable viewers). Owners of mobile phones are more likely to want to vote, more interested in politics and more likely to believe they can change Pakistan.

Economic woes, population growth

In the last report the youth mentioned the greatest source of anxiety for them was not terrorism, but insecurity with regards to jobs, exams and justice. Now their greatest worry is not terrorism again, but rather rising prices, inflation.

Key figures:

- Only **10%** of the youth feel the country has enough jobs to go around (of the women only 5% feel the same).
- Overall just **1 in 10** have full time contracted jobs
- **86%** of women describe themselves as homemakers

Growing without a safety net

Since 1947 Pakistan's population has grown by five times (from 35 million) and by 2060 Pakistan's population will be 285 million (61% growth). Today only 8 million people are over the age of 65 by 2060 that figure will be 40 million and start rising steeply then on. By the time a baby born today grows old, Pakistani's aged 65 and above will outnumber those under 18. Pakistan could thus become the first country to grow old before it becomes rich.

Some key figures:

- Currently two-thirds of Pakistani children fail to get enough food to grow normally, with one in five being severely stunted.
- Of the middle class youth 57% worry about their access to consumer goods, 76% to fuels for cars and motorcycles.

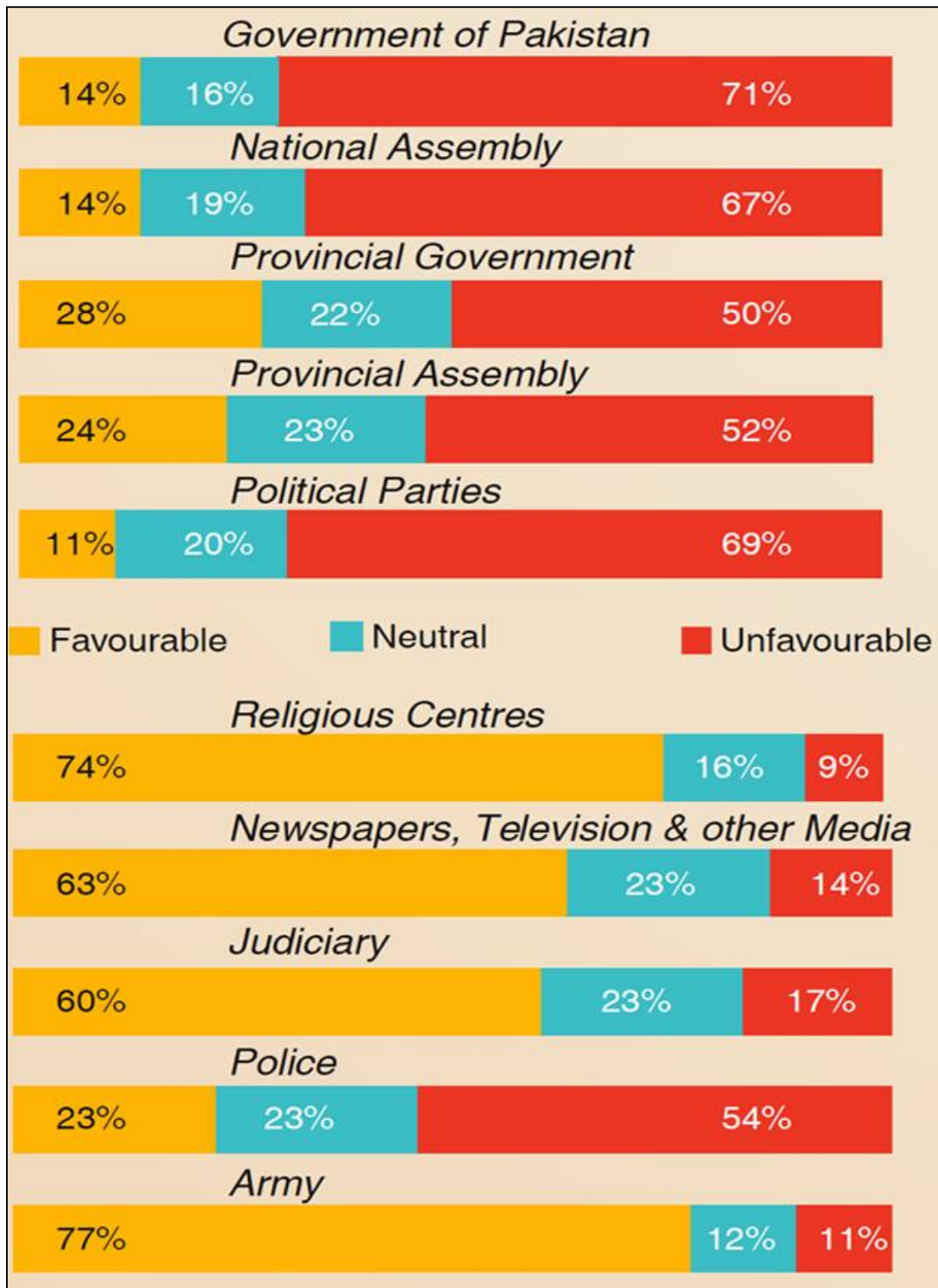
Political inclinations

When asked about the best political system for Pakistan:

- 29% believe in democracy as a system
- 32% believe in military rule.
- 38% believe in Islamic Shariah

Approval of Institutions & Democracy

When asked about the approval of Pakistan's most powerful institutions, the opinion of political institutions was highly unfavourable



The Generation Today

A pessimistic generation: In the last Pakistan: The Next Generation Report, pessimism was a worrying trend. The findings this time around are significantly worse.

An altered voter base: In Pakistani families across the board, the most educated are those below the age of 30, giving a unique opportunity for parties to address them who may look beyond traditional voting parameters.

Key points:

- 13 million new first time voters from the survey.
- 25 million registered voters between the ages of 18 and 29 years of age.
- Only 40% are certain to vote, whereas 21% are undecided.

A generation marked by violence: When the youth were asked about the most important events in their lifetimes, they didn't point towards a positive event or collective achievement. Rather, it was the earthquake, the floods and the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. A quarter of all young people has been directly affected by violence, or witnessed a serious violent event.



The Express Tribune - April 03, 2013

Lawmakers Get Prison Terms In Degree, Nationality Cases

The issue of fake degrees involving lawmakers took a surprise turn when courts in different parts of the country handed down prison terms ranging from one to nine years along with fine to one former MNA and two former MPAs. In addition, the seminary qualification of a former MNA was declared invalid by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and, on a different plane, a former MPA got one-year imprisonment in a dual nationality case. Three former lawmakers, among them a federal minister, were taken into custody, the fourth managed to escape from the courtroom immediately after the verdict was announced, the fifth was declared proclaimed offender, the sixth got arrest warrants issued against him and the case of the sanad-holder was referred to the court concerned for further action. Analysts believe these judgments are likely to deter candidates of the May 11 general elections from continuing with their ambitions if they have submitted any misstatements along with their nomination forms.

Former federal minister Humayun Aziz Kurd was awarded one-year imprisonment and Rs. 5,000 fine by the session's court of Sibi in a fake degree case. Judge Sadatullah Bazai announced the verdict after the prosecution proved that Mr Kurd of PPP had submitted a fake degree to the ECP to contest election from the National Assembly constituency NA-267, Kacchi-Jhal Magsi. Mr Kurd was arrested when he came out of the courtroom. Additional Sessions Judge, Quetta, Nauroz Khan, declared Nasir Ali Shah, a former MNA of the PPP, proclaimed offender for not appearing before the court in the fake degree case. The court ordered confiscation of Mr Shah's movable and immovable properties and issued non-bailable warrants for his arrest. Mr Shah was elected from the NA-259 Quetta City constituency in 2008. Rashad Mahmood, judge, sessions court Quetta, issued arrest warrants for a former MNA, Haji Rozuddin Kakar of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, for not appearing before the court in the fake degree case. Mr Kakar had won election from the NA- 262 Qila Abdullah-Chaman constituency.

In Dera Ismail Khan, Additional District and Sessions Judge Hayat Khan sentenced a former MPA, Khalifa Abdul Qayyum, to three years in jail and Rs. 5,000 fine for submitting the degree of an unregistered seminary during the 2008 elections. Mr Qayyum was taken into custody soon after the verdict and shifted to the central prison in D.I. Khan. Mr Qayyum had won the election from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly constituency PK-64 as an independent candidate. He had later joined treasury benches. Deputy Election Commissioner Ahmad Nawaz had lodged a case against Mr Qayyum on March 4, 2011, for possessing a fake degree. In Sargodha, Rizwan Gill, a former member of the Punjab Assembly, was sentenced to nine years in prison and Rs. 15,000 fine by the district and sessions judge Sargodha, Abdus Sattar, in the fake degree case. Mr Gill was elected from PP-34 constituency on a PML-N ticket, but was disqualified when his degree was found fake. His degree was challenged by PPP nominee Dr Nadia Aziz and his appeal was rejected by the Supreme Court. Besides disqualifying Mr Gill from holding the seat, the apex court ordered registration of cases against him under sections 420, 468, 471 of the PPC.

The former MPA fled the court after the pronouncement of judgment. He was awarded three years' imprisonment and Rs. 5,000 fine in each offence. The case of Syed Javed Hasnain, who won the NA-68 Sargodha seat in 2008, is in the final stages and a judgment is likely to be announced on Wednesday. Mr Hasnain of PML-N was disqualified for producing a fake degree. ECP declared the sanad awarded to former MNA Maulana Agha Mohammad by a seminary invalid and referred the case to the session's judge concerned for further proceedings. ECP members retired Justice Shahzad Akbar Khan and retired Justice Fazal-ur-Rehman heard the case. In the lower house of parliament, the Maulana represented NA-261, a Balochistan constituency. In Swabi, Javid Khan Tarakai, a member of the recently dissolved KP Assembly, was sentenced to one year imprisonment and Rs. 5,000 in a dual nationality case. Mr Tarakai appeared in the court of District and Sessions Judge Tariq Yousufzai. Mr Tarakai is the uncle of

Shahram Khan Tarakai, chairman of the Awami Jamhoori Ittehad Pakistan (AJIP). The AJIP had decided to field Mr Javid Tarakai as its candidate from PK-32. However, after the ECP's rules on dual nationality, Shahram Khan stepped in and filed nomination papers from that constituency. He has also filed nomination papers for NA-13, Swabi-II. Reports were filed by Amanullah Kasi from Quetta, Muhammad Irfan Mughal from D.I. Khan, Sajjad Abbas Niazi from Sargodha and Muqaddam Khan from Swabi.

Dawn - April 03, 2013

Scrutiny, Sexism and a Spelling Bee

The scrutiny of electoral hopefuls has seemingly turned into a theatre of the absurd. Returning officers (ROs) sought comments from former chief minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif on four applications submitted against him seeking rejection of his nomination forms for the May 11 polls. While the filing of such applications is normal, some of the grounds seeking Shahbaz' rejection are anything but. In one application, the petitioner pointed out that, since the former CM had no beard, he was clearly in violation of Articles 62 and 63. He also said that Shahbaz had taken no action against a person who wrote 'Pakistan murdabad, Paktoonkhwa zindabad' on his ballot paper in the 1997 elections. The other petitions against him are on a more serious note, alleging corruption and claiming that Shahbaz is not in fact 'Sadiq' and 'Ameen' as he has, in the petitioner's words, failed to give correct information about his sources of income. Yet another petition refers to the former CM's involvement in the Asghar Khan case. By and large, nominees had to face a great deal of embarrassment when they showed up for scrutiny only to face what amounted to a religious studies exam, with many hopefuls fumbling recitations of the Dua-e-Qanoot. Former Pashto film actress Musarrat Shaheen, however, was not one of them. Shaheen, who is now the chairperson of the Tehreek-e-Musawat and is contesting NA-24 Dera Ismail Khan against Maulana Fazlur Rehman, had her papers accepted by the RO after breezing through the scrutiny process. After flawlessly reciting Sura Akhlas and Dua-e-Qunoot, Shaheen offered to recite Surah Yaseen and any other Quranic passage of the judge's choosing. The offer was declined. Shaheen attributed her knowledge of Islam to her father, whom she also said was the only love of her life.

Scrutiny or Sexism?

Other female candidates had to face questions of quite a different nature. In Lahore, aspiring candidate Tayyaba Sohail Cheema was told by the provincial election commissioner Punjab, Anwar Mehboob that she didn't look her age. "You don't seem to be 35, show your face to all around so that people can see that you seem much younger," Mehboob directed her.

Another candidate, Sadia Sohail, who was accompanied by her husband Shahid Sohail, got a lesson in parenting. "When your wife will become MNA or MPA, all the arrangements at your home will be ruined and no one will be there to attend your children and they will be ruined," Mehboob told her husband.

On the other hand, aspiring candidate Shoaib Khan Niazi of NA 121 used the occasion to profess his love for his wife. When asked if he had any children by RO Rai Ayoub Khan Marth, Niazi replied that he did not. He went on to tell the court that he had a wife whom he loved very much and who loved him in return. "I am nothing without my wife," said Niazi. Seemingly satisfied with this response, the RO then asked him if he offered prayers to which Niazi candidly replied that he did not.

Spelling Bee

Over in Karachi, Sunni Tehreek's Ps-128 candidate Zahid Ahmad had to face embarrassment when he was asked 3 simple questions by Additional district and session's court judge Farzana Iqbal. Ahmad was asked what the abbreviation LLB stands for and how to spell 'graduation' and 'superintendent'. He was wrong on all three counts.

The Express Tribune - April 04, 2013

Papers of Dozen More Candidates Rejected

Returning officers at the city courts rejected nomination papers of a dozen of candidates during the process of scrutiny for the upcoming general elections. The nomination papers of one candidate of the Pakistan Peoples Party, four independent candidates, two candidates of Majlis-i-Wahdatul Muslimeen, one candidate of the Awami National Party, two candidates of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and one candidate each of the All-Pakistan Muslim League and the Mohajir Qaumi Movement were rejected. Earlier, the papers of five candidates were rejected by the returning officers at the city courts. The nomination papers of PPP's Mohammad Ilyas Gabol for the provincial assembly seat PS-126, independent candidate Sajid Hussain for PS-121, MWM's Syed Iqbal Hussain and Ali Akbar for PS-107, independent candidate Hakim Abdul Mehboob for PS-121, Shahid Shah of the APMU for the national assembly seat NA-253, independent candidate Mohammad Shahzad for PS-124, PTI's Mohammad Shafiq for NA-254 and ANP's Karam Darwesh for NA-241 were rejected. Similarly, the nominations papers of independent candidate Sajjad Nadeem for PS-125, PTI's Mehwish Amjad Ghoury for PS-124 and Waseem Ahmed of the Mohajir Qaumi Movement for PS-125 were also turned down.

Most of the nominations papers were rejected on the ground that seconders and proposers of the candidates were not from the said constituencies, while the papers of one candidate were rejected for being found a defaulter of the Karachi Electric Supply Company and another for being underage. Khushbakht Shujaat (NA-245) and Abdul Rasheed Godil (NA-252) of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Shahjehan Baloch (NA-248), Sania Naz (PS-109) and Adnan Baloch (PS-111) of the PPP and Saleem Zia (NA-250) and Aslam Khattak (NA-245) of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) were among the candidates whose nomination papers were accepted. Meanwhile, Jan Mohammad of the Jamaat-i-Islami, who is a candidate from NA-248, raised objection against his opponent Nabeel Gopal of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement on the ground that he was holding dual nationality. The presiding officer said it would be best if the same was made at proper time. He added that he would make a decision in this regard on April 6. Earlier, PPP candidate Shahjehan Baloch, who was recently arrested in the Arshad Pappu murder case, was brought to the city courts in an armoured personnel carrier and produced before the presiding officer for the scrutiny of his nomination papers on Thursday.

Dawn - April 05, 2013

Time for Filing of Appeals over: Over 4000 Out Of Election Race

Over 4,000 candidates for the upcoming polls are out of the race as their nomination papers have been rejected by the respective returning officers, revealed the data released by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). April 10th was the last day for filing appeals with election tribunals against the rejection or acceptance of nomination papers. The tribunals will have seven days to decide the appeals after which a final list of candidates will be published. The

strength of the National Assembly is 342, Punjab 371, Sindh 168, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 124 and Balochistan 65. A total of 8,059 nomination papers had been filed for 272 general seats of the National Assembly from across the country, out of which 1,209 were rejected. More than half of the nomination papers submitted for the NA's general seats were from Punjab; out of 4,076 papers filed from this province, 620 stand rejected.

As regards other provinces, 388 papers out of the total 2,007 filed in Sindh were rejected; 106 were rejected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa out of 945; 51 papers were rejected out of 445 submitted from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas; 25 rejected in Balochistan out of 439, and returning officers threw out 19 nomination papers out of the total 147 filed from the Federal Capital. In all, 19,016 nomination papers had been filed for general seats in the four provincial assemblies. According to the data, 9,583 forms were filed for general seats in the Punjab Assembly, of which 1,205 were rejected; 1,067 were rejected out of 5,213 filed for the Sindh Assembly; 285 were rejected out of 2,572 filed for the KP Assembly and the ROs rejected 230 nomination forms out of 1,648 submitted for the Balochistan Assembly. A total of 360 nomination papers had been received for reserved seats for women in the NA, of which 105 were rejected. Likewise, 162 papers had been filed for reserved seats for non-Muslims in the NA, of which 93 were rejected. In all, 826 nomination papers had been filed for reserved seats for women in the four provincial assemblies, out of which 269 were rejected. Likewise, 307 nomination papers for reserved seats for minorities in the provincial assemblies had been filed, of which 139 were rejected.

Dawn – April 11, 2013

ECP Wants Action on Media Directive

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has asked regulators of electronic and print media to ensure compliance of its directive requiring media houses to provide details of political advertisements aired and published by them. The commission had issued the directive on March 26 seeking details of all paid and unpaid political advertisements and other broadcasts and publications containing the name, election symbol or photograph of candidates or leaders of political parties. In a letter to the chief executive officers of television and radio channels and editors of newspapers, the ECP had said details should include duration, timing and frequency of broadcasts and publications and tariff charged by the media houses. It had also sought details of payments and contributions received or due from political parties or any other person in relation to political advertisements. The commission has now asked the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority and the Press Information Department to ensure compliance of its directive by April 15. In its latest letter, the ECP said it may also be ensured that such information was submitted to it on a weekly basis on every Monday failing which strict action would be taken and all political advertisements would be banned for the respective media houses.

Dawn – April 14, 2013

Mrs Faisal Saleh Hayat First Victim of FBR Scrutiny

The ongoing scrutiny by FBR to catch tax defaulters from amongst the candidates has got Faisal Saleh Hayat as the first target with his wife allegedly having found to be a tax defaulter of Rs55.8 million. The FBR formally informed the Election Commission of Pakistan and the concerned Returning Officer that the wife of Faisal Saleh Hayat, who is contesting elections from NA-87

Jhang, owes an amount of Rs55.8 million (Sales Tax and penalty) to the FBR as Sales Tax against M/S Shah Jewana Textile Mills. The ECP was informed that Faisal's wife is a Director of M/S Shah Jewana Textile Mills. "The Sales Tax Arrears were adjudged vide OIO No.02/2005 dated 18-01-2005, 381/2006 dated 27-07-2006 and 38/2007 dated 08-02-2007. These liabilities have got finality due to preference of appeals before any legal forum. It is further informed that recovery steps, issuance of requisite notices and attachment of bank accounts have already been completed." The FBR letter added, "Mr Faisal Saleh Hayat is contesting the Election-2013 from NA-87 Jhang. The nomination papers of said contestant have been accepted by the Appellate Tribunal."

Meanwhile the FBR has asked all its regional commissioners to dig out on top priority basis the cases of tax default, if any, by Tuesday evening against 1017 candidates whose appeals are still pending before the Election Tribunals. Referring to the Lahore High Court directions, the FBR approached all its regional commissions seeking immediate information within 48 hours about "Tax Default" of the cases where either the candidates have filed appeals against the rejection of their nomination papers or appeals/objections have been filed by candidates against acceptance of their rival candidates. The information sought is in regard to undisputed recoverable demand where no litigation is pending; outstanding tax demand upheld up to the level of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunals; penalties, surcharge or additional tax, either levied or leviable, for failure to file or late filing of the tax returns and wealth statements for the Tax Years 2010, 2011 and 2012; and penalties, surcharge or additional tax, either levied or leviable, where tax returns were required to be filed electronically for the tax years 2010, 2011 and 2012 but the same have been filed manually." The FBR sources said that this top priority information would immediately be provided to the Election Commission of Pakistan for necessary action against the concerned candidates. About the complete scrutiny of the taxation matters of all around 14,000 NTN (National Tax Number) holders, the FBR sources said that this job would be completed before the Election Day.

The News - April 16, 2013

ECP, FBR Holding Details of Defaulters, LHC Told

The Lahore High Court learnt the Election Commission of Pakistan, Federal Board of Revenue and others were not producing details about 1,329 election candidates who defaulted on taxes, utility bills, agriculture or other government dues. A full-court bench, headed by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, was also told that the election commission and returning officers had cleared nomination papers of some 14 contestants whose names had been listed on the commission's website among the defaulters. As the bench resumed the hearing on a petition seeking implementation of Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution for the scrutiny process of candidates and loopholes in it, Azhar Siddique, counsel for the petitioner, while advancing his arguments, pointed out that the court orders were being violated, as the ECP and FBR had not produced the data about the defaulting election candidates before the bench. The bench had sought the data of 1,023 contestants, and also the details of 228 those whose appeals were pending before the election tribunals, but nothing had been submitted before the court despite repeated orders. The FBR had just uploaded the list of 389 candidates on the ECP website, he added. He pointed out that among these defaulters 14 candidates included Rana Asif Tauseef, Dildar Ahmad Cheema, Zahid Tauseef, Muhammad Tayyeb Mir, Saiful Allah Sial, Gulzar Ahmad, Hafiz Shabir Ahmad, Muhammad Arshad Tarerr, Usman Ibrahim, Hizer Ilyas Virk, Muhammad Usman Saeed, Nadeem Khadim, Muhammad Iqbal and Shafqat Ali.

The counsel argued that the defaulter of Rs. 10,000 could not contest elections under Article 63(1) (o) of the Constitution, but the aforesaid defaulters' nomination papers had been cleared. The ECP had failed to implement the constitution in letter and spirit, he added. Upon this, Justice Ijazul Ahsan inquired about the details of the 14 candidates from the election commission counsel, Rana Ameer, who replied in nix. Azhar contended that the FBR was not providing the tax defaulters a date deliberately. In reply to the court query, an FBR representative told the bench that the ECP had not provided the candidates' details to the board. Justice Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, another member on the full-bench, remarked Parliament was a sacred institution and its sanctity should be maintained. The judge observed that it was the responsibility of the judiciary to ensure implementation of the Constitution. After recording the arguments in detail, the bench directed the ECP to produce the details of 1,329 candidates who were either defaulters of taxes, utility bills, agriculture or other government dues till April 29. The bench also sought a report from the election commission about an action, if taken, against the 14 defaulting contestants.

The Nation - April 26, 2013

Elections 2013 - A Nemesis

Elections 2013 are being held at a defining moment in our history because one democratic dispensation will be replaced by another for the first time since the creation of Pakistan. Another significant factor is the unanimous belief of state institutions that democracy is the only guarantee of freedom and sustainable development for the country. The media, coupled with judicial activism and an election commission constituted strictly under the provision of the Constitution, raises the hope that democracy will now be built up into Pakistani polity with little chances of wrecking of the due process. The May 11 decision of the electorate will determine whether this country will be able to deal with militancy and also reshape its political, economic, cultural and sociological landscape. Any mistake, as a nation, at this critical juncture will threaten human rights, fundamental freedoms, and peace, stability and security. Furthermore, our persistent problems relating to governance, corruption, energy shortages, inflation, macroeconomic stability, financial irregularities and tendencies like subordinating institutions to individuals, personalisation of power with a family of destiny, inability to build a viable system that is not sustained by appeasement of banned extremist and terrorist outfits, debt burden and shrinking resource flows will hamper our march towards building a knowledge economy.

Keeping in view the significance of free, fair and transparent elections, it is incumbent upon the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the caretaker set-up to ensure a level playing field for all political parties, candidates and political activists. The fact that terrorist outfits have effectively targeted election rallies and killed candidates and workers of secular parties in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Karachi and Balochistan has eroded the efficacy of the elections as a source of legitimacy. Those having seat adjustment with extremist religious parties or advocating a soft approach towards the Taliban are carrying out their election campaign unhindered while others are busy offering funeral prayers for their dead workers and are being compelled to choose between the right to live and the right to be elected to a political office. Added to their pain and anguish is either the absence of or a half-hearted condemnation by the right-wing parties.

The terrorist outfits will like to create an environment of fear to forestall a respectable turnout of voters. In case they succeed in preventing voters from exercising their right to choose their representatives, election credibility will erode. This is fraught with dangerous consequences. If

the election results are not accepted or are of doubtful efficacy, the very purpose of the electoral exercise will be defeated. If the past can be of any guidance, the unacceptability of results and a perception of disenfranchisement under the threat of violence will be retrogressive steps.

While it is heartening to see the passion and enthusiasm amongst those sections of our society who have never utilised their vote in the past, the worrying factor that is being overlooked by many is that the political parties that we plan on voting for have not accorded due priority in their manifestos to the challenge of extremism, terrorism, intolerance and violence. Even if the problem has been mentioned, the strategy to tackle it is evasive and ambiguous. It may also be added that the electoral strategy of political parties revolves around electable candidates with scant regard to ideological affiliation. The result is that those who may have catered to banned militant organisations in the past may still get elected again and may, intentionally or unintentionally, be instrumental in implementing their ideology.

To ensure fair and free elections, the ECP and all government institutions should make foolproof security arrangements for all candidates, political workers and voters. Contingency plans should be carefully prepared with due regard to local teleology and on ground conditions. Intelligence coordination, impartial law enforcement, a proactive approach punctuated with sharp, short and swift action against the perpetrators of violence may go a long way in damage control and restore the credibility of the electoral process.

The Express Tribune - April 26, 2013

Old and New Faces Compete For NA-35

An intense competition is expected among traditional politicians of major political parties and new entrants into politics on NA-35 (Malakand Agency) where the young voters are aspiring to bring about revolution through this election. Active participation of voters in hoisting their respective parties' flags, banners and posters throughout the constituency has changed the scenario in the areas affected by militancy and later military operations. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has nominated its former MNA, 89-year-old Lal Mohammad Khan and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) fielded former district nazim Fida Mohammad Khan to contest for the seat. Awami National Party (ANP) has put up prominent Pashto poet Rahmat Shah Sayal, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) candidate is Bakhtiar Maani, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F's Hafiz Saeed Ahmad in also in the run and so is Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s Junaid Akbar. Mohammad Ibrar Yousafzai from Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) and independents Mohammad Khan, Alamgir Khan, Ijaz-ur-Rahman and Bacha Hussain would also contest the election from NA-35. Comprising two tehsils Swat Ranezai and Sam Ranezai, the NA-35 also covers two provincial assembly constituencies, PK-98 and PK-99. The ANP and JI have their solid vote-bank in parts of the constituency. The JUI-F has support in the areas adjacent to Shergarh, where the madrassa founded by the late Maulana Mahmood Ahmad is located. The JUI-F candidate is the son of the founder of the madrassa. The PPP, whose candidates Ahmad Hasan Khan, Muzaffar Khan, Hanif Khan and Lal Mohammad Khan in the past won this seat, is facing internal crisis. The PPP activists, who had been terming Malakand Agency as mini-Larkana, now concede that their differences could benefit their opponents not only in NA-35 but also in PK-98 and PK-99. PPP Malakand President Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha and former provincial minister for finance Humayun Khan on PK-98 and PK-99, respectively, are facing two-time MPA Jehangir Khan and Haji Qasim Qasab, who are contesting as independents.

The News - April 28, 2013

Election Postponed In Jhal Magsi After Candidate Killed

Unknown gunmen killed three persons including an independent election candidate of PB-32, Abdul Fatah in Jhal Magsi. According to police, unidentified culprits gunned down Abdul Fatah and two others in Jhal Magsi area of Balochistan. He was busy in running the election campaign in his native area when he became the victim of firing. The Election Commission of Pakistan has announced to defer elections in the area and the schedule for election in Jhal Magsi will be announced later.

The News - April 30, 2013

A Hypothetical Column - 2013 Election Results

Today, political prognosticators and pollsters are able to precisely predict election results by applying advanced modelling techniques or scientific pre-poll surveys and multiple regression methods. In this piece, I'm not predicting the outcome of the forthcoming elections in Pakistan but a couple of possible scenarios based on "historical analogy" theories, i.e., the voting behaviour in the past nine elections. As far as the "conspiracy theory" is concerned, it is the PML-N's turn. After the 2008 elections, international guarantors supposedly gave this assurance to Mr Nawaz Sharif. According to this theory, the PTI will also be given a "reasonable share" in power along with the status of a "party-in-waiting".

There will be a coalition government as there will be a "hung" parliament with a strong opposition. Small parties and independents will play a major role in the formation of the government. None of the PML-N, the PTI or the PPP and PML-Q alliance will get a simple majority, i.e., 137 general seats out of the total 272. As far as the popular vote is concerned, the PML-N will be the single-largest party. The PTI will also gain a huge number of votes. The real test though is the gain in seats. Both the PML-N and the PTI will have more popular votes but less seats compared with their popular vote. Pakistan follows the "first past the post" electoral system where winning candidates have to lead in votes without having the simple majority of total votes polled. In other words, a minority candidate can also win if the votes of other candidates are divided. There will be a huge vote split in the forthcoming elections and the PPP-led coalition could benefit the most.

Let me show you the vertical Manhattan bar chart indicating the gains of three major political forces, i.e., the PML-N (91 general seats expected with the margin of error plus or minus three), the PPP-PML-Q alliance (84 total seats or 68 and 16 respectively), and the PTI (33 seats). The PPP alliance's net gain fluctuates due to a strong correlation between the PTI bar and the PML-N bar. The higher the PTI bar goes, the PML-N bar decreases and vice versa. Hence, the smaller the difference between the PML-N and the PTI bars, the greater the chances of the PPP bar to go up. The formation of the government depends upon two major factors: 1) the performance of the PTI in terms of seat gains and 2) the seat difference between the PML-N and the PPP-PML-Q alliance. If the difference of seats remains under 12, the PPP-PML-Q alliance with its previous partners (the MQM's 19 seats, the ANP's eight seats, the JUI-F's nine seats, independents/small parties 17 seats) will also be in a position to form the government.

There are two strong reasons of the above-mentioned scenario taking place. The PPP-PML-Q alliance still has a chance to win because of: 1) the PPP's solid vote bank and 2) historical analogy i.e., in the past, ruling parties which completed their terms got huge electoral success in subsequent elections. Let me put it this way, the military-ousted governments or governments dismissed under Article 58-2(b) never ever came back to power immediately after new elections. It is the first time in history that the PPP is contesting elections after the completion of

its constitutional term. As far as the first reason is concerned, the average vote share of the PPP in the previous eight elections is slightly over 30 per cent. This is out of the 43 per cent overall voter turnout percentage in all elections. Statistically, the PPP has a one-third vote share among abstained voters (registered voters who don't vote), too. My point is that only the PPP's vote bank is safe, tested and consistent. The PPP can win if it mobilises just its own voters, particularly those who abstained in the last two elections. If the PPP brings 10 to 15 per cent of its "abstained" voters out on polling day, along with its regular voters, it can win the majority seats due to the "vote-split" factor. In a nutshell, the electoral exercise on May 11 is just a trailer and the real movie starts when the elections are over.

The Express Tribune - April 30, 2013

Violations, Rules & Regulations - Elections Updates

Angry Activists Storm PPP Office in Rawalpindi

Angry activists of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) stormed the party office at Liaquat Bagh in protest against what they said unfair distribution of tickets for the forthcoming general elections in the district. The protesting PPP workers, numbering over 200, were led by Chaudhry Asad Pervez, an aspirant for the party ticket for NA-56, Banaras Chaudhry (PP-13), Jamil Qureshi (PP-14), Imran Hayat (NA-56) and Nasir Mir (PP-12). The workers gathered at the monument of slain PPP chairperson Benazir Bhutto and chanted slogans against the party leadership, including Faryal Talpur, the head of the PPP parliamentary board and sister of President Asif Ali Zardari. Carrying banners and placards, the protesters also burnt tyres and blocked the road. In the meantime, some of the protesters entered the premises of the park and pelted the PPP office with stones, smashing its windowpanes. Shujaat Haider Naqvi, the information secretary of the PPP, told that he was inside the office along with 84-year-old party worker Ghulam Ahmed Shah and Khawaja Imtiaz when all of a sudden two stones hit the windowpanes and smashed it. He said he informed the PPP city President Amir Fida Paracha about the incident, who was at the district courts at that time.

When contacted, Mr Paracha told that "some miscreants had tried to tarnish the image of the party. Our party workers will never do this and there was a conspiracy behind this to spoil the image of the party leadership." He said he had requested the police to lodge an FIR against the miscreants who attacked the PPP office under the guise of party workers. "We have also asked the electronic media covering the event to provide us the footage so that we can identify all those involved in it." Mr Paracha said the PPP had not yet announced the party tickets and it was premature to speculate about who would get the tickets. "The PPP will announce the tickets after the death anniversary of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on April 4," he added. On the other hand, those who staged the protest demonstration alleged that the "London Group" at the Zardari House, patronised by Faryal Talpur, had given the green signal for the tickets to some party leaders in different constituencies. Asad Pervaiz, a PPP aspirant for NA-56, said the tickets were being doled out by the parliamentary board headed by Faryal Talpur, Yousaf Raza Gilani and Manzoor Watto without taking the local leaders and workers on board. "This is not fair," he added.

"How can the central leadership ignore the district organisations in awarding tickets for the elections," he said and added that the local board consisting of Sultan Mehmood Qazi, former prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and others had suggested their names. He said the central leadership awarded party ticket to Israr Abbasi Advocate for NA-56 ignoring those who had been affiliated with the party for the last 30 years. He said the 'London group' of Faryal Talpur did not know the ground realities. Nasir Mir, another local PPP leader, and aspirant for a ticket

from PP-12, said the old and diehard workers were being ignored in ticket distribution. He said the "London Group", comprising those who had fled the country in 1996 after the PPP government was dissolved, had returned to Islamabad and was influencing the party decision makers.

In reply to a question, Mir said those who ransacked the party office had no affiliation with the PPP. It is a plot to create differences between the PPP workers and the central leadership. "The workers were protesting peacefully and had invited us to join them to convey their grievances to the party leadership." However, sources said the local leaders had instigated the angry workers to storm into the party secretariat. Amjad Iqbal adds from Taxila: The distribution of tickets by the PPP has also deepened rifts in the party in Taxila. Many disgruntled applicants have decided to contest the upcoming elections independently, reports Amjad Iqbal. Two PPP groups have filed their nominations on the last day of filing nomination papers. On this occasion, one group led by Amir Iqbal Khan, who contested the 2008 elections for a provincial assembly seat on the PPP ticket and is an aspirant for PP-8, raised slogans against the party parliamentary board outside the judicial complex. Mr Khan said he contested the 2008 elections from the party platform and got 29,763 votes.

Raja Mohammad Khusro, the president of the PPP Wah Cantonment chapter; former MPA Waqar Ali Khan, who is also close relative of PML-N leader Nisar Ali Khan, and Haji Dildar Khan, who recently parted ways with the PML-N and formed an independent group, also joined the protest of the angry PPP workers. Faisal Iqbal, who is commonly known as the "Edhi of Wah Cantt" and who contested the 2008 elections as an independent candidate from PP-8 and NA-53, is also supporting this group. The other group led by Justice (retd) Syed Intikhab Shah, comprising former provincial parliamentary secretary Kamran Ali Khan and Sardar Waqas Khan, has recently joined the party. Mr Khan is vying for the provincial assembly seat of PP-8 and his entry into the party has caused cracks among the party workers. Najeibur Rehman, the PPP Taxila chapter president, and other party workers are supporting this group. Talking to this reporter, PPP Taxila chapter President Malik Najeibur Rehman said tickets had been allotted by the party high command and parliamentary board keeping in view the previous progress of the candidates. He said all the party workers and office-bearers should follow the party discipline and avoid agitation.

Dawn - April 03, 2013

The TTP Threat and Elections

We would all like to believe that the ballot is more powerful than the bullet, and that the pen is mightier than the sword. They are, but only in the long run. In the heat of battle, a pen is rather useless. Similarly, the positive effects of the ballot can be diminished, if not destroyed, by the use of the bullet. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) understands this, just as they understand that in the long term, the greatest threat they face is from a sustained and pluralistic democracy. Military operations may roll back their physical gains and efficient policing and prosecution - almost non-existent at this stage - may hamper their freedom of operation, but only an inclusive democracy can hope to drain the swamps that breed these monsters.

The mission before the TTP then, is a simple one: to try and prevent the elections from taking place. It is unlikely that this strategy will succeed, and therefore, their fallback plan is to try and disrupt the elections through violence and the threat of violence. In a clear bid to this end, the TTP has threatened to strike at the ANP, the PPP and the MQM. These parties have been singled out for being "secular" and have been warned that their election rallies and leaders will be

targeted, with the caretaker prime minister noting that prominent leaders from these parties face significant threats to their lives.

These are no idle threats. The TTP and their terrorist allies have shown their ability to strike at even the well-protected targets with ease and apparent impunity. The ANP, in particular, has been a target of their attacks for years now, in both Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Karachi. The MQM has also been in the crosshairs of the militants and has seen attacks on its party members, though on a far lesser scale than the carnage that has been unleashed on the ANP. Keeping in mind these threats, the ANP has announced that the party will generally try to avoid huge gatherings and instead carry out a door-to-door campaign. The PPP, meanwhile, has launched a constituency-based campaign. While the MQM has decided to continue its public meetings, the party has demanded foolproof security. Other parties, not directly threatened, are also being cautious in holding large rallies, expressing concerns over security.

In this backdrop, calls have been made for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the Supreme Court to take note of the threats and ensure that the elections can take place in a safe and secure atmosphere. It is difficult to see how that will be possible or how these bodies can, in fact, ensure the protection of candidates and voters alike. In the last five years and even before, we have seen that the state is seemingly unable to protect itself, let alone ensure the safety of common citizens. Therefore, to expect the ECP and the SC to do so is unrealistic. At most, these bodies can push for a delay in elections until a safe atmosphere is ensured, but there is no way of telling how long that will take. In any case, a delay will be exactly what the terrorists want, and as we have seen, acceding to their demands simply emboldens them.

There are, however, some encouraging signs: the ANP has held an election rally in South Waziristan, defying the express threats of the TTP against holding public rallies - the TTP have said they will not otherwise stop people in the area from voting - and Badam Zari has become the first woman to stand for elections from Pakistan's tribal areas. All these are indications that the pall of fear, though intimidating, cannot silence every single voice. For the opponents of the PPP, the ANP and the MQM, there is also little cause for rejoicing. Sooner or later, the TTP will turn their guns on them as well, as they, too, are part of a system the terrorists deem unacceptable. The sooner these parties realise that we face a common enemy, the better. The alternative is only a choice between a swift death and a slow one.

The Express Tribune - April 14, 2013

ECP Election Code Violations Go Unchecked

The guidelines for electioneering provided by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) are being violated by political parties in the Garrison City but no government authorities have taken notice of it. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) are violating the ECP code of conduct by holding rallies that block traffic and use very big loudspeakers that cause too much public nuisance. According to the ECP's provided guidelines, no candidate could hold a public meeting close to any other candidate's rally and that the rally must not cause any traffic jam. The political parties are also printing oversized banners in disregard to the ECP code of conduct. Residents irked with blaring obscene music in election camps. Election camps in Sector G-6/1-1 play music all night at a very high-pitch, which is a continuous source of inconvenience to the residents. Indian songs continue to blare the whole night long from these camps. As evening falls, elections camps become a battlefield where Indian songs are abusive comments are speared at each other. Abusive and indecent remarks continue to echo within these camps on loudspeakers. It seems sound systems have been placed in the camps to transmit vulgar songs and indecent comments.

Residents of the area have demanded of the district management to close down such camps or at least shift them to other areas.

Pakistan Today – April 24, 2013

Violence Takes Seven More Down

Seven people were killed in various incidents of violence. A leader of Jafferia Alliance was wounded while his police guard was killed near Gujjar Nala, Liaquatabad within the remits of Supermarket police station. Police said that Mulana Baqar Zaidi along with his police guard Assistant Sub-Inspector Qasim Jafferri was on the way to his residence in Riziva Society from his school in Liaquatabad, when armed riders intercepted his vehicle at No 4, Liaquatabad and opened indiscriminate fire. Both victims were rushed to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital where Jafferri succumbed to his wounds while Maulana's condition was said to be out of danger. Police handed over victim's body to the family after autopsy while the case of the murder was not registered till filling of this report.

Separately, Hassan Kashmiri, a worker of Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen, was shot dead near Ali Basti within the remits of Rzvia police station. Police said that victim had been nominated in various cases of target killing and was shot dead near his residence by unidentified assailants riding a motorcycle. Tension engulfed the area after the above said killings on sectarian grounds and commercial activities were suspended when unknown protesters forced shopkeepers to shut the markets. Meanwhile, a man was killed in Pukhtoonabad area n Manghopir Police precincts. Police said that victim Ghulam Abbas, resident of the same area, was a worker at a sweets shop where gunmen reached and targeted him. The victim was shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

Elsewhere, another man was shot dead at Orangi Town within the remits of Pakistan Bazaar police station. Police said that Tariq Jivan was passing through the Orangi riverbed where unidentified gunmen targeted him and managed to flee. Police rushed to the spot and shifted the victim to hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Police suspected personal enmity the reason behind the murder. Similarly, another man was shot dead over personal enmity in Korangi area within the remits of Zaman Town police station. Police said that two armed men barged into the house of Muhammad Akram and shot him multiple times. Assailants managed to flee while victims died on the way to hospital.

Meanwhile, a shot dead body of a man was found from the remits of New Karachi Industrial Area police station. Police said that residents informed about the body lying in the bushes at sector 11/A, New Karachi. Police shifted the body to morgue for identification after autopsy at hospital. A boy was killed by his friend and guard in Darakhshan Police precincts. Hamza Hussain and Shoaib were having an argument over the issue of their fellow schoolgirl when Sohaib's guard shot Hamza, killing him on the spot. Both managed to escape.

The Nation - April 28, 2013

Blasts Hit MQM Election Office, PPP Meeting In Karachi

Poll-related violence gripped the city once again as three bomb attacks rocked the city on Saturday, killing four people and injuring 45 others. The first two attacks took place at the election office of the MQM in Peerabad, while the third targeted a corner meeting of the PPP in Lyari. The injured include veteran PPP leader and NA-249 candidate Aziz Memon as well as a

candidate for the Lyari provincial assembly seat, Adnan Baloch. The Additional Inspector-General of Police, Iqbal Mehmood, told The News that time bombs had been used in both the incidents. He said that the first bomb in Peerabad contained about one kilogram of high explosives and the second bomb contained two kilograms of high explosive material which was placed in a container under a Suzuki. The bomb also contained ball bearings and nuts and bolts. The first explosion took place in Qasba Colony No-2½, Peerabad near the MQM office and close to the Ali Murtaza Imambargah, followed by another huge explosion nearby. Two persons were killed while 25 others were injured in the blasts.

Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Zafar Abbas Bukhari, of the West Range, said that the police shifted the victims to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH) with the help of rescue teams. During investigation, it was found that unidentified armed men riding on motorcycles had entered the area where they lobbed a hand grenade near a unit office of the MQM. Just a few minutes after the hand grenade went off, a car, which had been parked opposite the Ali Murtaza Imambargah, exploded, killing two passers-by and injuring many others and damaging the MQM office and the walls and the main gate of the Imambargah. According to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital sources, they had received 27 injured from the Peerabad explosions in which two unidentified persons died while the injured included Athar, Shoaib, Anas, 12, Roqaiya Anees, 12, Ali Anees, 11, and Yasir.

Soon after the blasts in Peerabad, a huge explosion took place in the Kumharwara area of Lyari. Two of the injured in that blast died at the Civil Hospital later. The CHK MLO, Qarar Abbasi, identified the deceased as Muskan, 10, and Kamran, 25. The police personnel with rescue teams immediately rushed to the scene of the crime where they found that the explosion had taken place at a corner meeting of the PPP. DIG Ameer Ahmed Sheikh of South Range said that a corner meeting of the PPP candidates from PS-111 and NA-249, Adnan Baloch and Aziz Memon, respectively, was being held which was attended by the residents and activists of the PPP. Suddenly a huge explosion took place in which about 20 people were injured. The injured were rushed to the Lyari General Hospital and the Civil Hospital where the condition of Aziz Memon was stated to be stable. DIG Sheikh said that the bomb had been attached to a motorcycle which was parked near the venue of the meeting. Till our going to the press, the situation in the areas remained tense. Our correspondents add: MQM chief Altaf Hussain and Awami National Party (ANP) Sindh chief Senator Shahi Syed said separately that their parties would fully participate in general elections despite terrorist attacks on their leaders and workers.

Meanwhile, in Peshawar, a candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) was attacked by unknown people in Ittehad Colony. The PML-Q candidate from PK-9 Maulana Shoaib and his guards, however, remained unharmed. Reports said Maulana Shoaib was on way back from a rally when attacked by armed men. The attackers managed their escape during an exchange of fire with the Maulana's guard. No casualty was reported. A case has been registered against unknown attackers. Earlier, the election office of an independent candidate was blown up in Miranshah, headquarters of North Waziristan, sources said. The sources said that the election office of Aqal Zaman, a candidate for NA-40, was blown up with explosives at 10pm. It was the second such attack in North Waziristan. The office of the former MNA, Muhammad Kamran, was blown up in Miranshah Bazaar two weeks ago. No group or individual has claimed responsibility for the incident.

Meanwhile, in an ambush, two leaders of the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf (PTI) were gunned down at Gulyana More near Gujar Khan by two masked bike riding gunmen on Saturday night, police said. The police said as the local leaders of PTI - Naseem Yousaf and Shahid Mehmood - came out of the PTI election office located at Gulyana More, two gunmen, covering their faces with masks, opened fire at them killing them on the spot and sped away. Both the bodies were shifted to the hospital for autopsy. The police rejected the aspect of the killing on political reasons

claiming that it could be sequel to personal enmity. However, the police registered the case and started investigation.

Meanwhile, at least four people were injured when suspected militants lobbed a hand grenade at an election office of the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) in the Sibi area of Balochistan, police said. A police official, who requested not to be named since he was not authorised to speak to the media, said that two militants riding a motorcycle lobbed a hand grenade in Jinnah road area of Sibi. He said four persons were injured in the attack, adding that the blast also damaged the election office of JI candidate for PB-21, Mumtaz Nazar Abro. The militants escaped from the spot unhurt.

The News - April 28, 2013

ANP Seeks Bomb Blast FIR against ECP, Government

The Awami National Party has nominated the election commission, Sindh caretaker chief minister and the police chief in the case for the night bomb blast at a public meeting of the nationalist party in Mominabad. The party leadership has filed an application in the area police station to register a criminal case against the authorities for their poor performance and the security situation, said ANP Sindh President Shahi Syed at a press conference held in Mardan House. The party wrote a letter to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) a couple of days ago, warning that the election authorities would be held responsible if any activists or workers of the party were targeted, he said, appealing that the Supreme Court chief justice, Rangers director general and Sindh corps commander take serious notice of the bomb attack. The ANP leader said the caretaker government, chief minister and election commission were responsible of providing foolproof security to the candidates but they had failed to do so. "We have even handed over several contact numbers of the terrorists to the law enforcement agencies but no action has been taken against them," he alleged. He termed the bomb attacks on the offices of certain political parties "part of a serious conspiracy".

At least 11 people died and around 40 were hurt as bomb ripped through the public meeting of Bashir Jan in the PS-93 constituency. "But the party did not take law into its hands and did not damage any public or private property," the senator claimed. The ANP Sindh observed a "black-day" on Saturday to mourn the death of its activists. "Not a single shop was forcibly shut down while public transport also remained on the roads," Syed said. "The public did not face any kind of problems during the day." He said the party believed in the policy of non-violence given by its founders and this was why the party workers and activists observed a peaceful mourning day. While the caretaker government took back the security, it was now condemning such attacks on the media, Syed alleged, claiming that free and fair elections would be "a sheer joke" keeping in view the recurring terrorist attacks in three provinces. "This is a conspiracy to deter the progressive and liberal forces to compel their leadership and candidates to refrain from elections." "Under a conspiracy, the number of elected representatives of moderate, enlightened and progressive political forces will be reduced in the upcoming parliament to alter the national political scene in connection with the withdrawal of US-led international troops from Afghanistan," the ANP Sindh president alleged.

Meetings as Per Agenda: Earlier, the ANP Sindh leadership decided that all election-related meetings would be held as per the schedule and the party would not surrender to the terrorists under any conditions.

The News - April 28, 2013

Election Security: Balochistan Braces for Surgical Operation

Amidst surging pre-poll violence in Balochistan, Pakistan Army and paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC) will launch a 15-day-long 'targeted operation' across the volatile province in order to ensure the May 11 elections are held in a peaceful atmosphere. "The operation will begin 10 days before the elections," provincial Home Secretary Akbar Hussain Durrani told a select-group of journalists at a special briefing on Sunday. However, he clarified that army troops would not be deployed at the polling stations. "The army is being called out to assist the law-enforcement agencies to build confidence of political parties and their supporters in the administration," Durrani said. "As many as 6,500 army soldiers, 17,000 FC men, 28,000 police and 15,000 Levies (tribal police) will be deployed in all 30 districts and 92 tehsils of the province," he added. "Quick Response Units will provide security to the election staff and voters." A senior military official told The Express Tribune that unlike the other provinces, the army would have a different role in Balochistan. He did not elaborate. This comes a day after thousands of schoolteachers refused to perform election duties in the 'sensitive districts' of the province due to threats from Baloch separatist groups.

A medley of Baloch separatist groups has vowed to sabotage next month's elections. They have stepped up attacks on election candidates and their supporters since the announcement of election schedule in order to deter them from taking part in the elections. Caretaker Chief Minister Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Barozai, meanwhile, said that he was satisfied with the security arrangements being put in place for peaceful elections in the province. He has recommended aerial surveillance by army to keep a tab on the movement of insurgents and saboteurs. Home Secretary Durrani added that army helicopters would conduct surveillance of the towns bordering Iran and Afghanistan. One of the three factions of the Government Teachers Association, Balochistan – which claims to represent over 6,000 schoolteachers – refused to perform election duties in 11 districts of the province citing security reasons.

However, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) warned that disciplinary action would be taken against any teacher who refused to show up for election duty. Home Secretary Durrani said that they have a contingency plan in place for such an eventuality. "We'll send the employees of other provincial government departments for election duties," he added. The decision to launch the 'targeted operation' was prompted by frequent complaints by nationalist and mainstream political parties – including Balochistan National Party-Mengal, National Party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Pakistan Peoples Party and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam – that their candidates were unable to campaign freely in some districts due to the fluid security situation.

Political parties are especially concerned about the security situation in the Baloch-dominated areas of the province where violence continues unabated. Four workers of Jamaat-e-Islami were wounded in a crude bomb attack on their office in Sibi. Police also defused two explosive devices which were planted outside the houses of two election candidates in Pasni and Turbat. Similarly, police also defused three bombs planted near the house of a National Party candidate, Kabda Khan, in Pasni. Police has also received complaints of harassment of voters and election candidates by the Balochistan Liberation Army and Lashkar-e-Balochistan in Khuzdar and Qalat districts. In Quetta however, election activity is gradually gathering momentum. Candidates from PkMAP, JUI-F, PML-Q, BNP and PML-N are defying threats from insurgents and holding corner meetings under the protection of police and FC. The security situation in the provincial capital is far from satisfactory. An election rally of Shams Mengal, an independent candidate for PB-5 (Quetta), was attacked with a homemade bomb on Sariab Road. "The bomb was planted in a bicycle in the Faizabad neighbourhood of Sariab Road".

The Express Tribune - April 29, 2013

GOVERNANCE WATCH

Government Working

Federal cabinet: Caretaker ministers assigned portfolios

The caretaker prime minister allocated portfolios to his ministers, but some important portfolios are still vacant. Key ministries of petroleum, finance and the foreign affairs have yet to be allocated. Sources told that four to six more ministers are expected to be inducted in the caretaker cabinet from all four provinces. Premier Khoso allotted portfolios to 13 members of his cabinet. Wajahat Hussain has not been allotted any portfolio, though. Malik Habib has been assigned the portfolio of Interior and Narcotics Control; Ahmer Bilal Soofi, Law, Justice, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights; Dr Musaddaq Malik, Water and Power; and Arif Nizami has been handed the Ministry of Information and Postal Service. Shahzada Ahsan Ashraf Sheikh has been made Minister for Industries and Production; Maqbool HH Rahmatoola, Minister for Textile and Commerce; Abdul Malik Kasi, Minister for Railways and Asadullah Mandokhel has been made Minister for Ports and Shipping and Communication. Mir Hassan Domki is the new minister for Food Security and Inter-Provincial Coordination and Sania Nishter is Minister for Science and Technology, IT, Professional Training and Education. Feroze Jamal Shah Kakahel has been assigned the portfolio of Overseas Pakistanis Foundation; Younis Soomro, Housing and Works and Dr Shahzada Jamal has been made Minister for Religious and National Harmony.

The Express Tribune - April 04, 2013

Judiciary

Musharraf 'Arrested' in Benazir Murder Case

Former military ruler Pervez Musharraf was formally arrested over the murder of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Musharraf will remain in his villa on the edge of Islamabad where he is already under a two-week house arrest over his decision to sack judges when he imposed emergency rule in November 2007. A court in Rawalpindi rejected Musharraf's bail application. According to the details, the formal proceedings for Musharraf's arrest were completed by an FIA deputy director at his farmhouse in Chak Shahzad which had been declared sub-jail. During the interrogation, the former president was asked why Benazir Bhutto was not provided security upon her return to Pakistan. Upon this, Musharraf replied that she was provided complete security. He also refused to accept the allegations against him by saying that Benazir Bhutto became the target of terrorists. It has also been learnt that the FIA will file a petition seeking the physical remand of Musharraf in the anti-terrorism court. Earlier, the ATC had allowed the FIA to include Musharraf in the investigation of Benazir Bhutto murder case.

Daily Times - April 26, 2013

SC Refuses To Remove Journalists' Names from Its Website

During the hearing of the case about accountability of media, Asma Jahangir, counsel for two female journalists, contended that the Supreme Court is defaming the media persons by putting

their names on its website. On the other hand, the court refused to remove the names of renowned journalists, who approached the court to delete them from its website. Asma Jahangir appeared on behalf of two female journalists, namely Fareeha Idrees and Rameeza Nizami, whose names were mentioned in the list of the 282 journalists who received Rs 177,988, 450 in payments and also visited foreign countries, payments for which were made from the secret fund of the Information Ministry. The counsel said that the Supreme Court's website was not a gossip column and her clients had not visited foreign countries, but their names were included in the list of people who received money from the secret fund. Giving arguments about Article 19-A of the constitution, Asma questioned why was the Supreme Court not putting the names of over 7,500 death penalty prisoners on its website. She further asked to post details of SC details of accounts expenditure. The hearing of the case has been adjourned until May 2.

Daily Times - April 26, 2013

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Government & Human Rights

Fair Process: Blasphemy Trials in High Courts Suggested

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has recommended that the first trial in a blasphemy charge should be heard at a high court and that no case should be registered without investigation by a senior police officer and endorsement by a senior prosecution authority. The recommendation is part of the report State of Human Rights in 2012. The HRCP believes that the blasphemy-related provisions of the law need to be withdrawn. It also recommended changes to the procedure of blasphemy cases on priority. The report states that 23 cases were registered against 27 Muslims, including two women, in 2012 for offences related to religion. Eight of them, it says, were charged under the blasphemy provision 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the rest under other sections. It says that the addresses of the accused were available in 22 cases only. Of these, 15 were from Punjab, five from Sindh, one each from Islamabad and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Two of the suspects were burned to death, one each in Punjab and Sindh. It says one of the accused was acquitted, one sentenced to death, two imprisoned for life and one for 25 years in cases initiated before 2012.

Eight cases were registered against members of the Christian community. Three of these were registered under 295-C [use of derogatory remarks etc against the holy prophet (PBUH)]. Of these, six were registered in the Punjab. One of the prominent cases decided in 2012 involved a 14-year-old Christian girl named Rimsha who was arrested for allegedly desecrating the Holy Quran. The case was filed on a complaint by prayer leader of a neighbourhood mosque. Justice Iqbal Hameedur Rehman of the Islamabad High Court ordered the quashment of the FIR against Rimsha for lack of evidence. A Christian couple, Munir Masih and his wife Ruqayya Bibi from Kasur, was also acquitted in a case registered under 295-C. The trial court had awarded them imprisonment for life in 2010. The Lahore High Court acquitted them in May 2012. The report says that five cases had been registered against members of the Ahmediya community during 2012 - four of them under Section 298 C (member of the Ahmediya community calling himself a Muslim or preaching or propagating his faith) and one under Section 295-A. All of these were registered in the Punjab.

The Express Tribune - April 15, 2013

GENDER WATCH

Violence against Women

Planned Abduction: 14-Year-Old Rape Victim Seeks Justice

At 11am on March 23, 14-year-old Samia* and her mother Sartaj Bibi* who were returning home from work in Chaklala Scheme III, could not have anticipated what was about to befall them. From nowhere, three armed men appeared in a car, halted it near them, and bundled Samia inside before she could understand what happened as everything took place so quickly. Her mother rushed home to inform her husband about the incident and he was shocked. They were in a fix over whether to file an FIR and spent four sleepless nights praying for the safe recovery of their daughter. Meanwhile their neighbour Waqas* came over and suggested to keep quiet as their daughter has eloped and if the news spreads, it will bring a bad name to the family. Samia, who has been reunited with her family, said the rapists had drugged and intoxicated her before abusing her. When she refused to take hashish and drink wine they started beating her and threatened to kill her while showing the injuries on her face. While recalling the rapists' names - Salman*, Happy, Captain, Jameel*, Amir* and her neighbour Waqas* - Samia burst into tears. She was however confident that she would be able to identify them if they were brought before her. Samia said Waqas had tried to frighten her, asking her to go with him to Karachi as her parents would kill her if she returned home. Samia's brother, Shabbir*, said that he had suspected Waqas from day one when he visited their home and asked us not to lodge an FIR, promising us he would find her. Shabbir had been monitoring his activities since then and saw him enter a house alone in his car in Gulzar-e-Quaid. When he was leaving, Shabbir spotted a girl in the car with him which upon chasing him discovered that his sister was in the car. He escorted Waqas to a nearby police post who directed them to the Airport Police Station. Benazir Bhutto Hospital confirmed after the medical tests that she had been raped. Samia's lawyer, Raja Muhammad Tariq Khan said the police had registered an FIR four days after she was found and sent her to Darul Aman even though she was underage.

**Names have been changed*

The Express Tribune - April 05, 2013

SECTARIAN CRISES & CONFLICT WATCH

Conflict & Sectarian Crisis in the Month of April

Incidents of Attacks in Sindh in the Month of April

Date	Incident	Killed	Injured
April 2	Five WAPDA employees, including a SDO, and three community Police personnel were found dead in fields near Sheikh Muhammadi area in Badhabar, a suburb of Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, after a militant attack on a grid station.	8	0
April 3	Four paramilitary soldiers were killed and three others were injured in a bomb blast near paramilitary complex of Korangi area.	4	3
April 4	Eight militants were killed when Army fighter jets bombed suspected militant positions in the Kotkhel area of Orakzai Agency in FATA.	8	0
	Three militants were killed and some of their hideouts destroyed when fighter jets bombed their positions in Tirah valley of Khyber Agency.	3	0
	Four militants were killed and five others sustained injuries when militants across the border attacked Bhattai checkpost in Shabak area of Alizai sector in Kurram Agency.	4	5
April 5	At least 14 militants, four soldiers and three pro-government volunteers were killed in clashes ensued after the Security Forces launched search operation against the LI in Akkakhel area of Tirah valley in Khyber Agency of FATA.	21	0
April 7	Ten militants were killed and five soldiers injured during the clashes between SFs and LI militant in remote areas of Akkakhel in Tirah valley of Khyber Agency in FATA.	10	5
	Seven militants were killed when SFs targeted their hideouts with gunship helicopters in Gowak and Mithari areas of Orakzai Agency.	7	0
April 8	Thirteen soldiers and an unspecified number of militants were killed during heavy fighting between troops and militants at a flashpoint near the Afghan border in Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency in FATA. The clashes signalled a fresh military push in the Tirah valley, where the military has been targeting TTP and	103	0

LI.			
	Security Forces claimed to have killed eight militants and five others were injured in shelling through gunship helicopters in Gorak area of Orakzai Agency.	8	5
▪ April 10	Nine militants were killed and two security personnel injured in a gunbattle in Kago Qamar village of Dabori area in Orakzai Agency in FATA. Sources said a group of militants launched a two-pronged attack on a security post in Kago Qamar village.	9	2
▪ April 11	18 persons, including nine soldiers, seven militants and two volunteers of TI, a pro-Government armed group, were killed during heavy fighting between troops and militants at a flashpoint near the Afghan border in Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency in FATA. Sources said that SFs and volunteers of TI, moved forward into Sipah area and took control of LI strongholds of Sandana and Sheikmal Khel after heavy fighting which left nine soldiers and seven militants dead. Twelve militants were injured.	18	0
▪ April 13	Nine persons were killed in a bomb blast in a bus passing through the Matani area of Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	9	0
	SFs have killed seven militants in the ongoing military operation in Tirah valley of Khyber Agency in the FATA. Two important hideouts of militants have been busted and areas of Kata Kanrai and Sniper Morcha in Sipah area have also been captured.	7	0
▪ April 14	Four militants were killed by a US drone strike in the Manzarkhel area of Dattakhel town, 35 kilometres west of Miranshah, the main town of North Waziristan Agency in FATA.	4	0
	Three persons, including a retired employee of the District Government, his son and a servant were killed by unidentified assailants in Goth Shadi Khan locality of Bala Narri area of Bolan District.	3	0
▪ April 15	Nine militants and a soldier were killed in a clash between the SFs and militants in Dabori area of Orakzai Agency in the FATA.	10	0
▪ April 16	Eleven militants and a soldier were killed in clashes at Kago Kamar locality of Dabori area in Orakzai Agency of FATA.	12	0
	Nine soldiers were killed and eight others injured in a suicide attack on a military vehicle and nearby	9	8

	roadside checkpoint in the Saidgai area of North Waziristan Agency.		
	Six militants were killed and five others received injuries during a clash with SFs when dozens of militants attacked the Shan Khel Kore checkpost near Mohammad Ali Chowk in Akkakhel of Khyber Agency.	6	5
	16 persons, including SHO, were killed and more than 35 were injured when a suicide bomber targeted the senior ANP leader Ghulam Ahmad Bilour and his nephew Haroon Bilour in Mundabheri area of Yakatut in Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	16	35
▪ April 17	Nine militants, including five foreigners, were killed in a US drone attack in Bobar Samal area of South Waziristan Agency of FATA.	9	0
▪ April 18	Four persons were killed when gunship helicopters pounded residential areas and suspected militant positions in Mir Ali sub-division of North Waziristan Agency in FATA.	4	0
▪ April 19	Five militants were killed in retaliatory action by Security Forces (SFs) when militants try to ambush security personnel in the Dabori area of Orakzai Agency in FATA.	5	0
	Four persons were killed and eight others injured in a rocket attack on an election rally in Wana town of South Waziristan Agency. Unidentified militants fired four rockets at a rally for independent National Assembly (NA) candidate Malik Naseerullah Khan, who is running to represent NA-41, South Waziristan.	4	8
▪ April 20	A female suicide bomber blew herself up outside a hospital in a lawless tribal area of northwest Pakistan and killed at least four people and wounded four others, officials said.	4	4
▪ April 21	A roadside bomb targeting a military convoy killed four Army soldiers and injured four more in Mir Ali town of North Waziristan Agency in FATA.	4	4
▪ April 23	At least three persons were killed and 30 others injured in a huge explosion near an election office of the MQM in Chowrangi area of the Taimuria Police Remits in Karachi (Karachi District), the provincial capital of Sindh.	3	30
▪ April 25	Two Policemen and four militants, one of them an Iranian national, were killed in an encounter in	4	0

	Barbara area of Banda Daud Shah tehsil of Karak District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.		
▪ April 26	At least 11 persons, including a minor, were killed and 45 others were injured in a bomb blast at an election gathering of the ANP in Orangi town of Karachi (Karachi District), the provincial capital of Sindh.	11	45
▪ April 28	Five supporters of independent candidate Syed Noor Akbar for NA-39 (Orakzai Agency in FATA) seat were killed and 22 others injured when his election office was targeted with bomb in the Kacha Pakka area of Kohat Town in same District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	5	22
	Three persons were killed and 26 others injured in bomb attack on the elections office of independent candidate Nasir Khan Afridi for NA-46 seat was targeted on Charsadda Road in Peshawar, the provincial capital of KP.	3	26
▪ April 29	At least 10 persons, including two Afghan diplomats and a journalist, were killed and over 60 others sustained injuries in a suicide attack on the University Road in Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	11	60
	The dead bodies of three missing SF personnel were found in Adamkot area of North Waziristan Agency in FATA.	3	0
▪ April 30	An independent candidate, Abdul Fateh Magsi, was shot dead along with his three supporters while two others were injured in Jhal Magsi area of same District of Balochistan.	3	2

[Compiled from different dailies]

ECONOMIC WATCH

Facts & Figures

FDI Improved By 3.9 Percent in 9 Months

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan improved by 3.9 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year, the State Bank of Pakistan reported. However, analysts believe that the repayments to the International Monetary Fund, with little chances of fresh money coming into the country, will continue to exert pressure on the capital and financial accounts in the months ahead. FDI inflows are unlikely to maintain a stable trend, they said, predicting that foreign investors will be reluctant to make new investments in the country in the short-to-medium term. Non-economic factors like the poor law-and-order situation already continue to hamper commercial activity. The State Bank data revealed that the country attracted \$621.9 million worth of foreign direct investment in the July-March period, compared to \$598.6 million during the same period in FY12. FDI inflows raised to \$117.5 million in March, compared to \$40 million in March 2012, a growth of more than 190-percent. Oil and gas exploration and financial business and transport were sectors which attracted a considerable amount of foreign direct investment during the period under review. Multinational companies invested an amount of \$1.591 billion in various sectors of the economy, and 969.1 million dollars left the country in terms of divestments and repatriation of profits and dividends from foreign investors. The major part of FDI went to the oil and gas explorations sector, followed by financial businesses. The oil and gas and financial sectors attracted net inflows of \$426.1 million and \$225.8 million during July-March FY13.

In contrast, the telecommunication sector continued to record outflows during this period, offsetting the significant growth in net inflows in the oil and gas and exploration sector. Analysts said foreign direct investment showed modest growth despite the hefty payments of \$2.2 billion to the IMF and decline in external borrowing during the first three quarters of the current fiscal year. The reports were unanimous that non-economic factors like poor law-and-order continued to hamper commercial activity. The State Bank paints a gloomy picture of the external current account for the remaining months of the current fiscal year, saying the balance of payments position continues to be driven by low financial inflows and high debt repayments. The external current account deficit is expected to widen further in the months ahead as net capital and financial inflows are not likely to increase considerably. The provisional figures released by the SBP showed that foreign private investment increased to \$820.7 million during July-March. Due to the improved performance of the stock market, foreign portfolio investment posted net inflows of \$198.7 million in July-March, against outflows of \$83.1 million during the corresponding period of the last fiscal year. During March, portfolio investment amounted to \$28.8 million, compared with \$17.2 million outflows in FY12. The SBP report said that after recording a surplus for the last five years, financial and capital accounts posted a deficit in July-December FY13. This was caused by Pakistan's inability to secure loans from the international financial institutions, as well as increase in repayments.

The News - April 17, 2013

IMF Ready but New Govt Should Decide On Loan Programme: PM's Adviser

Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance, Dr Shahid Amjad said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has offered a new loan plan to Pakistan but the matter will be left for the upcoming government as the caretaker setup does not have the mandate to decide such issues. Briefing reporters on his recent meetings with IMF and other international financial institutions, Dr Amjad said during the meetings choices of re-engagement with IMF were discussed, especially with regards to conditions when the new government comes in. Both sides decided that repayments will not be made quickly and a timeframe between five to ten years has been agreed on. Amjad said the caretakers were determined to keep the economy stable and hand it over to the new elected political setup with energy shortages and other issues under control. He said the Pakistani side had also discussed getting the country the leverage to negotiate with all international financial institutions on separate conditions. If there were additional measures required, the substantial part will be given in social protection. Amjad said during the next four to six months, Pakistan has to pay \$883 million to IMF- in May and subsequently in July and September. Responding to a question, Amjad said in the past old payments were overloaded with conditions. He clarified that their meetings with IMF officials were part of the "spring meetings" and no agreement had been signed with IMF.

Pakistan Today - April 24, 2013

DEVELOPMENT WATCH**Health Projects****National Immunisation Drive: Over 33 Million Children Targeted In New Campaign**

A three-day national polio immunisation campaign will kick-off from April 15 with the goal of immunising 33.5 million children under five from across the country. Around 77,735 mobile teams will go house-to-house in 163 districts, towns and agencies to deliver 38 million doses of the vaccine. In addition, 9,756 fixed centres and 5,642 transit points will be operating. However, after the killing of at least 21 polio workers in a spate of attacks over the last year, it has become a challenge for the Pakistani government to ensure a secure environment for polio workers. Dr Altaf Bosan, national coordinator at the Prime Minister's (PM) Polio Eradication Cell said the cell has written to the health secretaries in all four provinces, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan and the health services director in Islamabad requesting liaison with the Provincial Security Coordination Committee to ensure that necessary security arrangements are in place. Mazhar Nisar, spokesperson for the PM's polio coordination cell, said the recent announcement by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) - "If they can convince us that these polio drops are Islamic and the spy agencies are not using it to kill our fighters, we would have no opposition to any vaccination drive in the public interest" - reflects that there could be a platform to negotiate on the issue, which is currently one of the biggest hurdles in vaccinating over 300,000 children in the tribal areas. The last national anti-polio campaign was held in October 2012. It missed around one million children, while there were 45,000 refusals. Later in March, during a sub-national immunisation drive, around 500,000 children were missed. On this Nisar said there remained a few issues during the anti-polio drives such as accessibility for polio workers and refusals by the families. The vaccinators said that before every campaign, they are told that each polio team will get one police constable as an escort, yet at the end of the day, 75 teams in the region only got 30-40 constables.

The Express Tribune - April 14, 2013

Government Measles Vaccination Report Draws Ire of International Health Bodies

Several international health organizations have rejected the government report on the countrywide measles vaccination project the Extended Program on Immunization (EPI). According to sources, few weeks ago the government presented its report to the World Health Organization (WHO), USAID, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Global Fund. The government in this report claimed that between 60 and 70 percent children had been vaccinated against measles in the country, especially in the province of Sindh. However, when a joint team - consisting of representatives of WHO, USAID, UNICEF and Global Fund - visited Pakistan it found the EPI report misleading as the number of measles cases is on the rise in the country. The team later issued a report which claimed that only 20 to 30 percent of Pakistani children had been vaccinated against measles which is why the disease was on the rise. Commenting on the situation, Inter Provincial Coordination (MIPC) Secretary for the Ministry Fareedullah Khan Afridi said that health had become a responsibility of provinces under the devolution of power through the 18th Amendment. He said the provinces were yet not completely ready to conduct vaccination campaigns as they lacked necessary facilities. Afridi said that incorrect reports bring disgrace to the country in the international sphere. He said the

MICP was supervising health departments in the country and it had found that only 20 to 30 percent of vaccinations had been utilized. After affecting the province of Sindh, measles has now entered Lahore where on Monday at least 46 children were found affected with this disease.

Pakistan Today – April 17, 2013

Health Reports/ Controls

Measles: 59 Cases Reported In the Past Three Months

Nine children have been admitted to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) Children's Hospital after being clinically diagnosed with measles and other complications like pneumonia. According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Weekly Epidemiological Bulletin – Disease early warning system (DEWS) and response in Pakistan, 59 cases of measles have been reported in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) so far this year. According to the WHO, this figure climbs to a staggering 8,532 cases across the country, including 218 deaths. Dr Javed Hayat, head of the infectious diseases section at Holy Family Hospital (HFH), seven cases of measles had been reported at the hospital this week. He said over 160 cases of the disease had been reported at HFH so far this year with a majority of the victims from Rawalpindi. He added that many children who had been vaccinated against the disease were still suffering from it, but said the situation was under control. DEWS Senior Surveillance Officer Dr Musa Rahim confirmed that eight cases of measles had been reported in different areas of Islamabad last week including Bhara Kahu, Tarlai, Tarnol and Sabzi Mandi and Golra Sharif. Rahim said peak incidences of measles usually occurred in March and April and therefore he wasn't overly concerned with current number of reported cases. He stressed on the need to focus on suburbs of the federal capital as these areas were most vulnerable to the disease.

The Express Tribune - April 05, 2013

REGIONAL WATCH

Pakistan & India

Iran, India Set To Discuss Extension of IP Gas Pipeline

Iranian and Indian oil ministers are due to discuss extension of a gas pipeline project which is due to take Iran's rich gas reserves to Pakistan and then to India in a meeting. Iranian Oil Minister Rostam Qassemi was slated to visit New Delhi to hold a meeting with Indian Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Veerappa Moily on the peace pipeline. Earlier this month, Iranian Oil Ministry Spokesman Alireza Nikzad Rahbar announced that New Delhi has renewed interest in the extension of Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline to India. Since India has been motivated by Pakistan's seriousness in construction of the (Iran-Pakistan) peace pipeline, New Delhi is negotiating to join the project. The Iranian official noted that "there has been considerable progress in the IP gas pipeline, with Iranian contractors starting work on the Pakistani section of the pipeline, after finishing nearly 900 kilometers of the pipeline on Iran's soil". Last month, Iran and Pakistan officially inaugurated the construction phase of a gas pipeline project which is due to take Iran's rich gas reserves to the energy-hungry South Asian nation. The 2700-kilometer long pipeline was to supply gas for Pakistan and India which are suffering a lack of energy sources, but India has evaded talks. In 2011, Iran and Pakistan declared they would finalize the agreement bilaterally if India continued to be absent in the meeting. According to the project proposal, the pipeline will begin from Iran's Assalouyeh Energy Zone in the south and stretch over 1,100 km through Iran. In Pakistan, it will pass through Baluchistan and Sindh but officials now say the route may be changed if China agrees to the project.

The News – April 28, 2013