



PAKISTAN
GOVERNANCE
FORUM

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GOVERNANCE WATCH**Government Working****Rabbani Hits out at Abbasi's Remarks**

The author of the landmark 18th Amendment, Senator Raza Rabbani criticised the recent statement of federal Minister for Petroleum Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in which he had hinted at the 'rollback' of the amendment and proposed to bring change in article 158 of the constitution. He assumed that the petroleum minister was uninformed of the fact that article 158 had not been amended by the 18th amendment and in fact, it was in its original form since 1973. Therefore, when he talks about amending the 18th amendment and article 158, he is talking of undoing the natural consensus first built in 1973 and then in 2010 when the 18th amendment was passed. Mr Rabbani explained that the national consensus 'cannot be undone' by a party, which had just about no representation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh. This demand of amending article 158 is not for the working class of Punjab but to promote crony capitalism. He said that the government instructed Sui Southern to give 110 million cubic feet (mcf) of gas to Sui Northern instead of 90mcf was unconstitutional according to article 158, and called for its withdrawal.

Similarly, he pointed out, the creation of the planning commission into a ministry was also unconstitutional as it had assumed the role of the National Economic Council under article 156 of the constitution. He further added that this is a violation and the planning commission be restored to its original position. Senator Rabbani explained that the article 172 of the constitution continued to be violated as 50 per cent ownership of oil and gas companies had been shifted to the provinces but the same had not been implemented. The rules of business of the federal government should be amended immediately. He further expressed that the PPP wanted to give this government a honeymoon period of 100 days and not make such demands (before that), but this attack on provincial autonomy has forced us to do so. He said that immediately after Eid, his party would contact all the political parties on the question of provincial autonomy. Besides, the party would get in touch with those 'elements' in the PML-N who was architects of the 18th amendment 'like Ishaq Dar and Mehtab Abbasi'. He said the PPP would contact all the chief ministers to apprise them of the situation and consult the opposition parties in the Senate to requisition a session after Eid on the question of provincial autonomy. We hope that after Eid when the provincial assemblies of Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will meet, they will register their protest on this issue," Mr Rabbani said.

Dawn – August 05th, 2013

Government, Opposition Agree On Bhagwandas as NAB Chairman

The government and opposition have agreed on the appointment of Justice (Retd) Rana Bhagwandas as the NAB chairman and Ishaq Dar has convinced the opposition to draft an ordinance for his appointment and submit the same to the government. The draft ordinance will amend the FPSC Act to remove the FPSC chairman's designation from the category of Service of Pakistan. According to the existing law, the FPSC chairman cannot hold another office after retirement. Opposition leader Khursheed Shah has confirmed that the draft ordinance has been submitted to the government and after Eid the government and opposition will hold a dialogue on the issue. The opposition leader had put up the names of Justice (Retd) Rana Bhagwandas

and Justice (Retd) Sardar Raza Khan while the government proposed the names of Justice (Retd) Rehmat Jaffery and Hassan Zaheer for the office of NAB chairman.

The News – August 05th, 2013

Whistleblowers Get Protection in New KP Law

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Ordinance (RTIO) was unveiled by the provincial government. The ordinance makes it binding upon the government to set up an independent information commission and makes obstruction in access to any record a penal offence punishable by up to two years imprisonment. The ordinance, promulgated by the governor on Aug 13, was made public at a ceremony attended by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chief Imran Khan, Chief Minister Pervez Khattak, ministers and MPAs. For the first time in the country, the law provides protection to “whistleblowers”, stating that no one may be subject to any legal, administrative or employment-related sanction, regardless of any breach of a legal obligation, for releasing information on wrongdoings, or which would disclose a serious threat to health, safety or the environment, as long as they acted in good faith. Mr Khan said the RTIO was the most important component of the PTI’s election manifesto and through it the government intended to ensure transparency and accountability in its affairs. He said other major items on the party’s agenda would also be implemented soon, including setting up of an independent accountability commission for which final touches were being given to a proposed law; introducing a genuine local government system aimed at empowering people at the grassroots level and bringing revolutionary changes in education and health sectors. Chief Minister Khattak and Information Secretary Azmat Haneef Orakzai explained the salient features of the ordinance, whose constitutional life was 90 days. After that it would be laid before the provincial assembly for making it an act.

The ordinance envisages establishment, within 120 days, of an information commission to be headed by a retired senior government servant as chief information commissioner and three other members, including a retired judge of the high court to be appointed by its chief justice; an advocate to be appointed by the bar council; and a representative of the civil society to be appointed by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Anyone who believes that his request seeking information has not been dealt with in accordance with the law has a right to lodge a complaint with the commission, which shall take a decision within 60 days. The commission shall have the power to order a public body to disclose information to a requester and to impose a fine of up to Rs. 250 per day, up to a maximum of Rs. 25,000 on any official acting willfully to obstruct any activity required to be undertaken under the ordinance. The law makes it a penal offence if a person willfully obstructs access to any record with a view to preventing the exercise of a right provided for in the ordinance; obstructs the performance by a public body of a duty under this law; destroys a record without lawful authority; or interferes with the work of the information commission. Anyone committing any of these offences shall be liable to a fine of up to Rs. 5,000 or imprisonment for up to two years. Although Sindh and Balochistan had introduced a similar law in 2006 and 2005 respectively, experts termed the KP law more progressive since it envisaged the setting up of an information commission. However, Ahmad Bilal Mahboob of the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development (PILDAT) and Zahid Abdullah of the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, suggested that the role of the HRCP and the bar council in appointment of members of the commission should be done away with and a committee comprising members of the provincial assembly, from both the treasury and opposition benches, should select its head and other members.

Dawn - August 19th, 2013

Reconstitution of National Security Committee (NSC) Approved

The meeting of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC) decided to revive the National Security Committee (NSC) and reconstitute the DCC into the Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS). It also made a conditional peace offer to the militants that a dialogue would only be held if they disarmed; otherwise force would be used against them. The Cabinet's Defence Committee met with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the chair and was attended by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Prime Minister's Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and the three services chiefs. The meeting also decided to revive the defunct National Security Council to deal with the security challenges being faced by the country. This was the first DCC meeting since the new government took office in June 2013. The agenda included matters relating to national security. In his opening remarks, the prime minister highlighted that Pakistan was facing formidable challenges domestically while far-reaching developments were taking place in the region. The DCC provided the platform to deliberate on these issues and craft an appropriate response.

Presentations were made by the Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs, foreign secretary and Director General Military Operations (DGMO). During the meeting, the reconstitution of the DCC into the Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS) was approved. The CCNS will be chaired by the prime minister and will include ministers of foreign affairs, defence, interior and finance, the CJCS and chiefs of staff of Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force. The committee will focus on the national security agenda with an aim to formulate a national security policy that will become the guiding framework for its subsidiary policies - defence policy, foreign policy, internal security policy and other policies affecting the national security. In the context of regional peace and stability, the DCC deliberated in detail on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. It was emphasised that a peaceful, stable and united Afghanistan was in Pakistan's vital interest and would contribute positively to peace and security as well as progress and prosperity in the region. Pakistan will fully support the international community's efforts for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Pakistan will also work to comprehensively upgrade its bilateral relations with Afghanistan in all dimensions.

The DCC received a briefing on the situation along the Line of Control (LoC) and took note of the continued violations of the ceasefire. Pakistan's policy of restraint and responsibility was highlighted. The committee condemned in the strongest terms the unprovoked firing in the Shaqma sector which resulted in the martyrdom of Army Captain Sarfraz and offered Fateha for the martyred captain. It was strongly emphasised that the ceasefire should be maintained in letter and spirit. All military and diplomatic channels should be used to prevent ceasefire violations. It was emphasised that Pakistan will also continue to seek a dialogue and resolution of all outstanding issues with India peacefully. The CCNS would be the new nomenclature of the National Security Council (NSC), which had functioned during the era of General Pervez Musharraf. The need for the CCNS was felt as Pakistan is faced with a host of security issues, from defence to internal security, and socio-political to economic involving internal and external players. It was being felt that no single individual, institution or stakeholder can handle the wide-ranging security issues facing the state.

Recognising that consultative process always pays the democratic states to take the right kind of decisions at right time, it was thought that the CCNS is an appropriate forum for the purpose. The decision taken by the government to establish the CCNS is a leap towards democratic transformation of Pakistan. The idea of formation of the National Security Council was conceived in 1969 and it remained in place till 1971. Later, former President Pervez Musharraf also formed the NSC that worked between 2004 till 2008.

However, it is for the first time that a democratic government itself has taken up the case to involve all stakeholders in the consultative national process from the forum of NSC. Decisions from the forum of NSC would greatly support the democratic government because of prior input and institutional agreement of all stakeholders and remove any misunderstanding between the elected government and the establishment. Political and military observers believe that the CCNS would lend legitimacy and approval to the national decisions, both at home and abroad, and would ensure security against traditional and non-traditional challenges and would serve well in the interest of civil-military relations.

The News - August 23rd, 2013

President, PM Unanimous On Upholding Rule of Law

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had a unanimous view about maintaining peace and upholding the rule of law in the country at all costs as both agreed to extend the talks offer to only those who conformed to the law of the land. These views were expressed by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Asif Ali Zardari during their meeting at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. Both the leaders discussed the overall situation of the country. Over half-an-hour meeting focused on the latest political scenario of the country, during which President Zardari congratulated Mian Nawaz Sharif on the success of PML-N's newly-elected president Mamnoon Hussain. Nawaz Sharif in turn briefed the president on various issues, including relief in loadshedding, policies of the new government and meeting of the defence committee. Sources disclosed that both executives also discussed the issues of death sentence and clemency for prisoners while both also agreed that politics of reconciliation and harmony should continue and prosper.

According to sources, both agreed that the rule of law should be maintained at all costs and no one would be allowed to take the law into his hands and play with lives and honour of people. Nawaz also assured president that the government had kept its doors to dialogue wide open, "but only for those who conformed to law and Constitution and certainly not for anti-state elements and terrorists". Afterwards Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif joined President Zardari and other major leaders of PPP, including former premiers Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani and Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, along with opposition leader Khurshid Shah, in the dinner hosted for ambassadors.

The News - August 23rd, 2013

Nawaz Wants Peace with India, Taliban

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has stressed the need for having cordial relations with India, as well as holding peace talks with the Taliban. Talking to the Telegraph in his first interview since returning to office, Nawaz said that made it clear that he sees his election victory as a mandate for peace with India. He said that he made his position very clear that "if we get a mandate, we will make sure we pick up the threads from where we left off in 1999 and then reach out to India, sit with them, resolve all our outstanding issues, including the issue of Kashmir, through peaceful means". On his telling, Nawaz offers continuity not change; after all, he believes his previous governments were success stories, the Telegraph reported. "We did deliver," he said. "We were able to meet the expectations of the people to some extent. That is why we were re-elected in 1997 and that is why we have been re-elected in 2013." "If I take you back to Nineties, our party came up with very bold reforms in the country, economic reforms. They were really revolutionary reforms."

During his first premiership between 1990 and 1993, Nawaz privatised banks, insurance companies and key industries. In his mind, he brought the free market not only to his homeland, but to India as well. "India was taken aback, frankly. India felt that India must also have same reforms in India as Pakistan," he said in the interview. "There was tremendous pressure on the Indian government, I know, that India should also copy the reforms that Pakistan has introduced." During his first premiership between 1990 and 1993, Nawaz privatised banks, insurance companies and key industries. In his mind, he brought the free market not only to his homeland, but to India as well. "India was taken aback, frankly. India felt that India must also have same reforms in India as Pakistan," he said in the interview. "There was tremendous pressure on the Indian government, I know, that India should also copy the reforms that Pakistan has introduced."

If Nawaz achieves peace with India and a settlement with the Taliban - two monumental ifs - he could yet be a transforming leader. He seemed aware of the burden of responsibility. "I have to make sure we do the right things," he said. "We have to make sure we tread the right path, pursue the right policies - and not make any mistake." As for Pakistan's tortured relations with America, he described the drone campaign on the Afghan frontier as the No 1 'irritant', adding, "The drones are counter-productive, they are violating our sovereignty and we must respect each other's territorial sovereignty and if the drones are challenging our sovereignty this is not a fair thing."

Daily Times - August 24th, 2013

Parties Endorse Nisar's 'Grand Consensus' Move

Despite an MQM protest in the National Assembly over overnight arrests of what it called hundreds of its workers in Karachi, the government seemed moving towards what Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan sought as a "grand consensus" for a targeted operation against criminals infesting the country's commercial capital. And the minister's ideas about the federal government helping a transparent and non-discriminatory operation led by the Sindh government of the PPP received a rare support from most opposition parties in the house, after two days of heightened tensions over a Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) call for handing over Karachi to the army and then a combined opposition walkout against absence of a government assurance for a briefing to the house on some key foreign policy and security issues before it ends its present session. While the MQM demand for handing over its electoral base to the army was rejected by the ruling PML-N and all major opposition parties as an undemocratic prescription in a democratic era, the row over the briefing ended with the interior minister telling the house that the prime minister's adviser on foreign affairs and national security, Sartaj Aziz, would appear before it respond to questions raised about the government's positions on issues such as the so-called Doha dialogue for Afghan reconciliation, a proposed peace dialogue with the Pakistani Taliban, tensions with India over the Line of Control in Kashmir and widely expected US military strikes in Syria over the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Damascus regime.

Those issues were raised by opposition leader Khurshid Ahmed Shah and parliamentary leaders of other opposition parties. The MQM, which had demanded army rule in Karachi over the killing of some members of the Kutchhi community in the city's Lyari area and alleged patronisation of criminals by the provincial authorities, came with another grouse that the Sindh government had arrested what MQM parliamentary leader Farooq Sattar called "hundreds of our workers without justification" and voiced fears that he and some other party figures could also be arrested. The party's lawmakers wearing black armbands as a mark of

protest also staged a token walkout. The interior minister said he also received a telephone call from Sindh Governor Ishratul Ibad, who belongs to the MQM, complaining of an operation against his party and that on being contacted by telephone, Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah assured him there were no arrest orders against MQM politicians.

While no information was given to the house about the affiliations of the arrested people except the MQM's claim of "hundreds of its workers" picked up, Mr Khurshid Shah told reporters later that only alleged criminals had been arrested without any political considerations, with 40 to 50 of them being from the PPP-stronghold of Lyari. While the two successive MQM protests against the Sindh government indicated little chances left for the PPP to pursue its invitation to its ally in the previous PPP-led governments at the centre and in Sindh to join the present Sindh cabinet, the PML-N, which won MQM's support in the election of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif by the lower house in early June and the presidential election last month, too seemed to cold-shoulder the Muttahida.

Mr Sattar had asked for an assurance against any resort to torture of his party workers, forced confessions and "extrajudicial murders" like those of the decade of 1990s during what he called the "so-called democracy of that time" and warned the house that a repetition of such happenings would "lead to an irreversible anarchic and chaotic situation". Despite some recent friendliness between the MQM and the PML-N, Mr Sattar's reference to the 1990s could hardly please the treasury benches as an army crackdown in Karachi then, about which the MQM often claims, was ordered during the first prime ministership of Mian Nawaz Sharif. Yet the interior minister assured Mr Sattar that "your fears will be addressed" within legal and constitutional bounds though he repeatedly said that he could not give directives to the Sindh chief minister who, he added, would be "team captain" of the envisaged operation with federal security and intelligence agencies acting on his command. While parameters of the operation would be finalised by a special cabinet meeting before which the prime minister would visit Karachi and hold a meeting with provincial authorities at the Governor's House, he said.

He said he also envisioned formation of a committee including representatives of all political parties, some senior businessmen, journalists, and senior citizens to oversee the transparency of the operation. From the PPP, its senior lawmaker Naveed Qamar said his party "fully welcomes" the interior minister's stated plans, particularly his assurance that they would be within "the limits of constitution and law". Similar endorsement came from the opposition Jamaat-i-Islami and Awami National Party, government-allied Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-F and the independent group from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

Dawn - August 30th, 2013

National Assembly & Senate

National Assembly Session: 34 Parliamentary Panels Elected

National Assembly (NA) elected 34 standing committees. This comes after the government's failed attempt to cover up undue delay in formation of committees through its own interpretation of rules. The parliamentary panels were set up following the house's vote in favour of a motion moved by Minister for Defence Production Rana Tanveer Hussain to condone the delay in constitution of the standing committees. Awami Muslim League leader Sheikh Rashid Ahmed had previously warned the government that without a motion condoning the delay, the committees would be deemed unconstitutional. Rashid referred to Rules of business (Rule 200) and said that the government was bound to constitute standing committees within 30 days of the election of Prime Minister. Minister for Science and Technology Zahid Hamid had

previously tried to cover up the delay by using a different interpretation of the rules. Referring to Reports of the Committee (Rule 235) he said that the period of 30 days is meant to start after the first NA session whereas it has only been 28 days' sitting since the PM took oath. Therefore, it should not be considered as a delay, he added. However Zahid's interpretation was not entertained and the government moved a motion to condone the delay on the insistence of Sheikh Rashid. Later, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab moved a motion that standing committees be elected. The motion authorised the NA speaker "to include any member and make such changes in the composition of these committees, as and when he may deem fit."

The Express Tribune - August 22nd, 2013

Provincial Assemblies

Sindh Assembly Passes Local Government Bill

Amid severe criticism from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the Sindh Assembly passed into law the Sindh Local Government Bill 2013. The ruling Pakistan People's Party, as expected, was able to get the support of the opposition's legislators belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League (Functional) and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). Despite criticism, the MQM lawmakers did not observe a walkout from the House on the occasion of adoption of the bill but their walkout came a few moments later when all of a sudden Sindh Law Minister Dr Sikandar Mandhro, under supplementary order of the day, introduced the Sindh Universities Law (Amendment) Bill, 2013.

The session, chaired by Speaker Agha Siraj Khan Durrani, continued for more than four hours without any recess. The speaker gave around two hours to the lawmakers to debate the bill. Later, it was passed through clause-by-clause reading of the bill, which also included an amendment proposed by Shehryar Mahar of the PML-F whose two amendments to the bill on holding of local bodies' election on a non-party basis and authorising the Election Commission of Pakistan to delimit the constituencies for local government elections were rejected. Only one of his proposed amendments regarding deletion of a section of the bill was adopted with majority vote. Sindh Senior Minister Nisar Ahmad Khuhro, who presented the Local Government Bill-2013, informed the House that it was probably the first time in the history of Sindh Assembly that the bill was introduced after due consideration, deliberation, and after holding dialogue with the concerned political parties whether they had representation in the House or not.

Nisar Khuhro conceded that the bill contained many features of the local bodies system of 1979. He said prior to the local bodies' ordinance 1979, a local bodies system had been introduced during the era of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto that had also envisaged a Metropolitan Corporation in Karachi and other Karachi and other municipal institutions similar to the local government system of 1979. But Khuhro said in the present legislation the people's representation has been increased, especially the seats reserved in local bodies for representatives of women, minorities, labourers and farmers. He said that local bodies system of 1979 had already been under practice in the province and its re-imposition did not cause any serious setback or threat to normal functioning of civic and municipal governance in towns and cities of Sindh. To another point raised by an MQM's lawmaker, Khuhro said that PPP as a political party had participated in all local bodies' elections in the country except the one held in 1983 when the Movement for Restoration of Democracy of which the People's Party was a part, had decided to stay away from the local bodies' polls.

Earlier, MQM's parliamentary leader Syed Sardar Ahmed said the proposed bill was erroneous in nature as it did not properly state the reasons and objectives for presenting the legislation for consideration of the House. He said that Article 140-A of the Constitution had provision for setting up local governments in the country while fresh legislation was only envisaged for setting up local bodies that too under the system introduced during the era of military ruler General Ziaul Haq. He said the present legislation for local bodies would give opportunity to the government to divide and rule the masses. Khawaja Izharul Hasan of MQM said that since the municipal governance of Karachi had been managed under the local bodies' system of 1979, law and order situation and civic structure of the city had been adversely affected and there had been no respite for the concerned citizens. He said the proposed legislation for local government should be sent to a bi-partisan committee for consideration and proposing amendments to the bill. Imtiaz Sheikh of PML (F) said that keeping in view the demands of the concerned MQM lawmakers, the proposed legislation could be handed over to a special committee of the House for proper considerations and further improving the bill.

Faisal Sabzwari said that MQM rejects the proposed local bodies' legislation, as it did not envisage full-fledged empowered local government system. He said the Constitution calls for setting up of local governments with due financial, administrative and political powers as major municipal institutions should have the authority to prepare and adopt their own budgets. He said the municipal agencies, which would be established under the proposed bill, would not be able to do much to resolve civic issues, as they would be powerless. He said the metropolitan corporations should have the authority to collect motor vehicle and property tax to improve their financial standing. He said the PPP by proposing this legislation has deviated from its own agenda, manifesto and vision of its martyred leader Benazir Bhutto who had wished effective and empowered local bodies system. The session of Sindh Assembly, which was later prorogued on the orders of Sindh Governor, also adopted the Sindh Universities Laws (Amendment) Bill 2013 and the Sindh High Density Development Board (Amendment) Ordinance 2013. The Sindh Universities Laws (Amendment) Bill 2013 authorises the chief minister to appoint vice chancellors in the universities. Earlier, the House expressed its deep concern over the recent deaths caused by consuming locally brewed liquor.

The Express Tribune - August 20th, 2013

KP Unveils Draft Bill for Accountability Commission

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has unveiled a draft-bill for Accountability Commission in the province to overcome 'corrupt practice.' The commission once formed would automatically replace the existing accountability and anti-corruption departments at the provincial level, said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Minister Shah Farman. According to the draft-bill, an allocation Rs200 million would be made for the commission to operationalise it by September 15, 2013, through an ordinance. Shah Farman said that it would be an independent and autonomous commission with budget to take fearless action against the corrupt elements even if they were found within the government functionaries. He said in the first place, a legislative committee comprising 10 members - five each from the treasury and five from opposition benches - would be formed. This committee would be responsible for appointment of seven-member search and scrutiny committee for a four-year term. On formation of the search and scrutiny committee, the legislative committee would stand abolished so that the recruitment process could remain free of political interference, he added.

The search and scrutiny committee would be responsible for appointment of five accountability commissioners, who would oversee the functioning of the commission to ensure its effective

operations and keeping it safe from becoming corrupt itself, he added. He said only men of high integrity would be appointed as members of the search and scrutiny committee and accountability commissioners. The members of search and scrutiny committee would not be less than 40 and more than 75 years of age domiciled in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They could be retired civil servants - grade 22, social worker with the record of distinction in public service, business and industry community representative, academia, former professor or vice-chancellor, retired judge of Supreme Court or High Court, senior journalist or former president of the press club, credible overseas Pakistan. "Women representation in the committee would also be ensured and no serving government official would be made member of the committee," the draft-bill says.

According to the draft, the eligibility criteria for accountability commissioner should have high moral integrity, be Pakistani citizen having Khyber Pakhtunkhwa domicile with a bachelor degree. They won't be less than 45 and more than 65 years of age. Defining corrupt practices, the draft says, "a public servant taking a gratification, other than legal remuneration in respect of an official act; a person taking a gratification in order to influence a public servant by corrupt or illegal means; a person taking a gratification for exercising personal influence over a public servant; abetment by a public servant of the above offences; a public servant obtaining anything of value, without consideration or with consideration the public servant knows to be inadequate, from a person concerned in any proceedings or business conducted by such public servant; a public servant exercising authority other than on the consideration of merit ; and a public servant failing to exercise authority in accordance with law to grant undue benefit to any person or entity." "Gratification" has been defined in the draft as money, gifts and any other service, favour or advantage of any description. The draft recommends a punishment up to 14 years and fine up to Rs 10 million for corrupt practices and no plea bargain would be made. The draft also explains trial, jurisdiction and removal procedure for different office-holders of the commission.

The News - August 21st, 2013

Punjab Assembly Adopts LG Bill 2013 with Majority

Writing a new history of misuse of authority, the Punjab Assembly adopted the new Local Government Bill 2013 in the absence of opposition. The opposition staged a walk out over their stance against the proposed LG bill, which provided an ample opportunity for the treasury benches to adopt the bill. Discussion on only one amendment proposed by the opposition could be done. And for differences on the second amendment proposed by the opposition, the opposition lawmakers boycotted the assembly session and staged a walkout. The House also rejected 14 amendments proposed by a treasury member, Tahir Ahmed Sindhu. Arguing in favour of his amendments, Tahir Sindhu said that many clauses of the new LG bill clashed with the real spirit of the constitution and if any one after the adoption of the bill by the assembly challenged these clauses in court then these would be declared annulled. But the treasury, rejecting his point of view, declared his amendments useless.

Many lawmakers asked the chair to reduce the time of Sindhu's arguments. When the speaker gave three minutes to Tahir Sindhu to make his arguments, the speaker and Sindhu exchanged harsh words. Over this the speaker warned him to avoid such behaviour. Upon this Sindhu said that under the Article 2 of the constitution, he has complete liberty of speaking on the floor of the House. Upon this the speaker made it clear to Sindhu that he has the authority under the rules of business to curtail his time. During debate on the bill, the assembly proceeding time was exhausted, over which the opposition asked the speaker to adjourn the House till another day as

they have to attend an all parties conference convened by the opposition. The speaker, rejecting the request of the opposition, extended the assembly proceeding time for an hour. He argued that if a minister could be called for the discussion on the LG bill from flood duty then the session could also be continued. He asked the opposition to present its amendments and those members who did not have to attend the APC or have already took part in the debate could stay.

The opposition insisted on allowing a member who had already spoken to speak for another time to present proposals. This stance of opposition started another debate and for several minutes the assembly proceedings remained suspended. The opposition continued with their stance but the speaker ruled out the opposition objections. At this the opposition lawmakers walked out of the House with the allegation that the speaker was supporting the treasury benches. Then the law minister said that the opposition had given all its suggestions and had nothing new to speak on the LG bill 2013. He proposed to hold voting over the amendments proposed by the opposition. Consequently voting was held and the House with a vast majority rejected the opposition's amendments. After this, Tahir Sindhu presented his amendments and took a long time to present his point of view. This irritated many legislators of his own party and treasury's Azma Bokhari staged a walk out. The health minister then brought her back in the House. The House after rejecting all the amendments proposed by Tahir Ahmed Sindhu adopted the LG bill 2013 with a vast majority.

Daily Times - August 22nd, 2013

Local Governance

Sindh Okays Draft of Local Government Laws

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) tabled the bill on local government system during the Sindh Assembly session. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah chaired a meeting of parliamentary party of the PPP to evolve a strategy for the assembly session. Addressing the meeting, Shah said that consultation was made with all political parties for developing consensus on new local bodies system, to be introduced in the province. He said proposals of other political parties have been included in the draft of new local bodies system. Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Syed Owais Muzaffar, Agha Siraj Durrani, Dr Sikandar Mandhro, Makhdoom Jameeluzzaman, Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani, Manzoor Wasan, Ali Mardan Shah and Shehla Raza attended the meeting. The PPP is all set to reinstate the Local Government System, 1979, with certain amendments.

Despite constituting a ministerial committee, the PPP government has been unable to draw a consensus among political parties over the bill. The PPP, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Pakistan Muslim League-Functional and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have reached a consensus over 80 percent draft of local government system bill. However, few points in the bill still lack support of major political parties in Sindh. Among those points is one about which representatives of the parties have been unable to decide whether the elections for local government system will be held on party basis or non-party basis.

Meanwhile, the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) still stands rigid on its demand of reinstating the Sindh People Local Government Act (SPLGA), 2012 - in order to achieve consensus on the bill. Talking to a private TV channel, MQM leader Faisal Sabzwari said the contents of the draft bill were in clash with the spirit of Article 140 of the constitution. "We will oppose the bill if it is presented before the assembly," he added. He said that under the proposed bill, local governments will not enjoy financial, political and administrative powers. The public representatives are unable to resolve issues without having the necessary powers, he said. The Qaumi Awami Tehreek (QAT), which was an ally in the PML-N-led 10-party electoral

alliance in Sindh, has also recommended changes in the draft of the local government bill. According to a press release, QAT President Advocate Ayaz Paliyo has said that his party believes that local problems could be solved at the local level “as the communities are diverse and have distinct issues and needs”.

Daily Times - August 19th, 2013

LG System in KP Will Be Role Model for Country: Imran

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said on Sunday the local government system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be a role model for the country. “The system we are bringing in will be beneficial to the residents of this province,” Imran told a meeting. He said the country does not lack resources but what it lacks is good governance. Earlier, the meeting unveiled the ‘Right to Information’ law giving public access to official documents to make the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led coalition government transparent. “This is a revolutionary step and part of PTI manifesto,” Imran Khan, who flew in from Karachi to attend the meeting, said. “When the people know where their tax money is spent they will pay taxes and this law will help people know where their tax money is spent.” To make the governance even better the KP government is also considering conflict of interest law, the PTI leader said. Iqbal khattak

Daily Times - August 19th, 2013

Winds of Change: Capital Moves One Step Closer To Local Govt System

The urban areas of the federal capital might finally get local government representation. This comes after the Interior Ministry approved the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Local Government Act 2013. The act — which must now be sent to the federal cabinet for formal approval — is aimed at bridging the rural-urban divide by introducing a single-tier system based on wards rather than union councils, a local government commission and effective enforcement of municipal functions. Earlier, on July 31, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan had directed the ICT Administration and the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to initiate the necessary paperwork and formulate proposals for local government elections in Islamabad. On July 22, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had ordered that local body elections in the country be held by September 15. The functions currently being performed by the CDA’s directorates of municipal administration, sanitation, water supply, parks and health services would fall under the purview of the proposed local government.

Similarly, the federal directorate of education, ICT’s local government department, and three government hospitals including Pims and Polyclinic will also be given to representatives of the local government. The act also calls for development projects across Islamabad irrespective of rural and urban divide.

Earlier, the ICT Administration had also submitted a set of proposals to the Interior Ministry for conducting local bodies’ elections in urban areas of the federal capital. Under the first proposal, the 1979 ordinance would be implemented in urban areas. District councils would be established in rural areas, while municipal committees would be set up in urban areas. The second proposal envisages a metropolitan corporation system in which urban and rural areas would be divided. It was also reported that the chairman of the metropolitan corporation would oversee the affairs of the city, but minor issues like the issuance of birth and death certificates would be handled separately in urban and rural areas. The chairman would also look after development-related projects. According to the third proposal, the metropolitan corporation’s

chairman would directly oversee the affairs of the capital. This system envisages a uniform pattern of municipal administration and there would be no divide between rural and urban areas.

The Express Tribune - August 26th, 2013

Judiciary

Benazir Assassination Case: In a First, Ex-Military Ruler Charged With Murder

For decades Pakistan's military rulers have revelled in their untouchable reputation. But the unthinkable happened against a veritable member of the untouchables: ex-military strongman Pervez Musharraf was charged with the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The beginning of the downfall came soon after Musharraf ended his four years of self-imposed exile in Dubai and London in March this year. Once back home, to his dismay he found himself entangled in a slew of court challenges. Musharraf was also barred from contesting the May 11 general elections. Rawalpindi's Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) indicted him on three charges: criminally conspiring, abetting and murdering Benazir who was assassinated in a gun-and-bomb attack outside Liaquat Bagh on December 27, 2007. At that time, the government had blamed the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. It is the first time an ex-army chief has been charged with a crime, exploding a myth that the military is immune from prosecution. Musharraf's brief appearance before ATC Special Judge Chaudhry Habibur Rahman was accompanied by massive security. He was protected by scores of officers and roads leading to the court were shut down. In the courtroom, an eight-page charge sheet was read out. Musharraf signed the charge sheet but denied all the charges.

Earlier Musharraf's attorney, Ilyas Siddiqui, requested the court to exempt his client from personally appearing before the judge as there were serious threats to his life. Giving counter argument, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)'s special prosecutor Chaudhry Azhar Ali said that Musharraf was a murder accused and could be only granted exemption on medical grounds. However, Ali's argument couldn't impress the judge who granted the exemption in the end. Another accused in the case, former superintendent of police Khurram Shehzad, requested for a speedy trial and suggested hearings be held. The FIA prosecutor, however, said it was not possible for him. The judge asked the prosecution to produce its witnesses on the next hearing. The court will again take up the case on August 27.

The FIA special prosecutor said Musharraf was "charged with murder, criminal conspiracy for murder and facilitation for murder" because he did not provide Benazir the VVIP security she deserved. "He will be tried for 11 charges," Chaudhry Azhar Ali added. Musharraf's spokesperson Raza Bokhari dismissed the indictment as 'false, fabricated and fictitious' and "an undignified attempt to smear the honour and integrity of the former president". His defence lawyer Syeda Afshan Adil added that they would contest the charges. "We are not afraid of the proceedings. We will follow legal procedures in the court," she added. In all, seven accused have been charged in the Benazir assassination case. They are Musharraf, Sher Zaman, Rashid Ahmad, Qari Hasnain Gul, Razaqat Hussain, former DIG Saud Aziz and former SP Khurram Shehzad. The eight accused, Aitezaz Shah, is a minor and hence cannot be indicted. He will be tried in a juvenile court.

Similarly, American journalist Mark Siegel, who is the key witness among all 141 witnesses, has repeatedly refused to travel to Pakistan to record his statement. Interestingly, the FIA's charge sheet against Musharraf is based on a statement of Siegel who claims that Benazir had told him that if anything happened to her Musharraf would be responsible. Analysts say while murder

will be difficult to prove, the indictment may embolden efforts to try Musharraf for treason for violating the constitution by sacking judges and imposing emergency rule in 2007. Treason can carry the death penalty. "There is a long way to go and it will be very, very difficult to prove that he engineered the murder conspiracy or that he was the mastermind," political analyst Imtiaz Gul told AFP. "All we have seen is a politically motivated indictment, which may be of no real significance in the long run." Musharraf, who is facing a barrage of court cases, has enjoyed the comparative luxury of house arrest at his villa on the edge of Islamabad since April after returning from self-imposed exile. He has been formally granted bail in two of three cases against him. Analyst Hasan Askari said that though the indictment would stoke tensions between the military and civilian institutions of the judiciary and government, the army would play a quiet game. "They will quietly monitor the situation as to how this case proceeds and to what extent it reflects negatively on the military," he told AFP. "They are not on the back foot but... they will be concerned about implications of this case for the military."

The Express Tribune - August 21st, 2013

Parked In Hayatabad, Mobile Court Disposes 28 Cases on First Field Trip

Parked at the Peshawar Development Authority office in Hayatabad, the country's first mobile court decided 28 cases on its first actual working day, without moving an inch. Of the total, 23 criminal and five civil cases were decided inside the court. Two other cases were referred to mediators to bring both parties to a mutual understanding. The first case resolved was an ongoing dispute over splitting Rs. 0.6 million in commissions. Through mediators, both sides agreed to divide the amount in half. For the purpose of the mobile court, mediators are lawyers trained in settling through negotiation. After both parties reach a decision, they present it to the judge. In this case, mobile court judge Fazl-e-Wadood issued the verdict. At a media briefing, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy Director General Hayat Ali Shah said cases of civil matters and petty crimes would be solved through mediators at the petitioners' doorstep.

Responding to a question about increasing the number of buses and types of cases, the director said it would depend on feedback based on the current mobile court. At the moment, there were plans to have mobile courts in each district of the province. If disputes between two organisations could be resolved through mediators, then these will also be taken to the mobile court, added Shah. "We have trained 18 mediators and eight judges specifically for this court. We plan to conduct four more training sessions before the year ends. The total number of mediators should reach 72 with 32 judges." District and Sessions Judge Shabbir Khan explained cases which come to him through the lower court would be compiled on a schedule and the mobile court would then travel to the relevant area. The Justice on Wheels project was inaugurated by Peshawar High Court Chief Justice Dost Muhammad Khan in July with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The mobile court was inaugurated on July 27 when it disposed off six cases.

The Express Tribune - August 28th, 2013

Government's Stance on Afghan Refugees

Just Like Home: Afghan Refugees Can Open Accounts, Get Driving Permits

Afghan refugees can open bank accounts and obtain driving licences and mobile phone SIM cards in Pakistan now that Islamabad has agreed to extend their stay until the end of 2015. Both sides formalised the agreement to extend the stay of registered refugees during talks between

the Afghan Minister for Refugees, Jamaheer Anwari, and Pakistani officials in Islamabad, the Afghan Embassy Refugee Affairs Attaché, Misri Khan Momand. The decision came a day after the National Assembly was informed that there are 1.62 million registered Afghan refugees in the country - which incidentally matches the figure of unregistered refugees. Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions Lt General (Retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch told the house during the question hour that the registration of unaccounted for refugees is under way. He said a policy submitted to the cabinet for consideration suggests multiple steps aiming at creating conditions conducive for voluntary repatriation and the creation of livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan to facilitate return and resettlement. Some of these steps were formalised in the meeting between Afghan and Pakistan diplomats. Refugees will be able to use money-transfer facilities in Pakistan and will now get new Proof of Registration (PoR) Cards. PoR cards had expired on December 31st last year. These cards, issued by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), legalise the temporary stay of Afghan refugees until the time agreed between the two states.

The former Pakistan Peoples Party government had agreed to extend its period for six months until June 30 this year. However, the incumbent government extended the PoR period until 2015 at a trilateral meeting in Kabul last month. New cards will be issued in September. Pakistan has also assured Afghan authorities that no refugee will be forced out of the country, the attaché said. "We want all refugees return with dignity but conditions are not suitable right now for the accommodation of such a large number of refugees." "The Afghan government is thankful to the Government of Pakistan for these decisions for they will have a positive impact on bilateral relations," the Afghan diplomat reiterated. Meanwhile, Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions Abdul Qadir Baloch will be visiting Geneva on August 20 to discuss the issue of Afghan refugees with the head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He said that 3.8 million Afghan refugees have been repatriated to their homeland during the last 11 years. According to the UN refugee agency, Pakistan still hosts nearly 1.6 million registered Afghan refugees, the world's single largest refugee community.

The Express Tribune - August 18th, 2013

Government's Negotiations with Taliban

Terrorism to Be Wiped Out At All Costs: Nawaz

Following the new wave of terrorism in the country, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif emphasised the need for effective coordination among the provinces to curb the menace of terrorism as terrorists were attacking the roots of the country and vowed that they would be eliminated at all costs. The prime minister visited the Ministry of Interior where Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan and Interior Secretary Qamar Zaman Chaudhry briefed him about the outline of the new counter-terrorism policy. The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to formulate such a security policy which would envisage an effective mechanism for the elimination of terrorism. He said that terrorism was not confined to one area and collective efforts were required for maintenance of peace in the country. The prime minister said the government was determined to ensuring protection of lives and properties of the people. Security institutions should enhance cooperation with the intelligence agencies to check the terrorist incidents.

Meanwhile, in the Independence Day messages, President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif felicitated the nation and urged to celebrate this occasion with traditional zeal and enthusiasm. Both urged the nation to stand firm and united for safeguarding and strengthening democracy and they believe that the well-being and security of the country hinges on the

continuation of the democratic process and respect for the people's rights. The president, in his message, extended his heartiest felicitations to all the Pakistanis living in the country and abroad. He regretted that unfortunately Pakistan's past history was marred by repeated assaults on democracy and abrogation of the Constitution, which was also endorsed by some state institutions. "Let us resolve that we will never allow the Constitution to be subverted nor the democratic process derailed," the president said. Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in his message said that the government was committed to eliminating all evils from the country and to take it to new heights of development and prosperity. He extended his heartiest felicitations to all the countrymen and offered gratitude to Almighty Allah for giving them a beautiful country like Pakistan.

The premier said a new era of hope and optimism had dawned upon the country with the inception of a democratic government. "The Pakistan Muslim League, the founding party of the country, has taken over the reins of government with renewed zeal and determination. It is our utmost effort to eliminate hunger, unemployment and inflation so that there is prosperity in the country and its status is further elevated," he added. The prime minister reiterated that the government was also fully committed to weeding out extremism and terrorism from the country, and would ensure its safety and security by all means, adding with the grace of Almighty Allah and the active support of the people, they would not only surmount all the challenges but also put the country on the trajectory of development. "The Independence Day demands from us that we should plan our future strategy in the light of our past experiences. If we fail to correct our mistakes today, do not choose the right path, and continue to serve our personal interests instead of the national objectives, the future generations will never pardon us," the premier noted. He further said that they had to transfer a peaceful, strong and prosperous Pakistan to the future generations where they could live in respect, adding for this purpose, the nation has to demonstrate exemplary unity and solidarity. "Let us renew our pledge today that regardless of our personal interests, we will dedicate our energies for Pakistan and lead it to high level of development and prosperity as envisioned by Allama Iqbal and Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah," he stressed. He said, "Pakistan is our identity that we earned through immense sacrifices. Countless people gave their blood to kindle the light of freedom and millions had to migrate for this purpose. Our elders sacrificed their present for our future. Today we remember our forefathers and pay our gratitude to them for making extraordinary sacrifices to give us an identity." The prime minister also reiterated the words of Quaid-i-Azam which he expressed on the eve of Pakistan Day, 23rd March 1944, "Let's go forward, full of hope for the coming years, with faith in our heart, unity in our camp, discipline in ranks, and I am confident of our success."

The News - August 20th, 2013

TTP Removes Punjabi Taliban Chief: Hakeemullah, Muawiya at Odds over Talks

The Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan fired the head of the Punjabi Taliban for welcoming the government's offer of peace talks. The sacked leader, Asmatullah Muawiya, said the TTP had no authority to remove him. The TTP's recently-installed spokesman, Shahidullah Shahid, told media that its central Shura, which met under its chief, Hakeemullah, took serious notice of Muawiya's statement and decided that he had no relations with the umbrella organisation representing Pakistani militant groups. Shahid said that the Shura had removed Muawiya and would soon name his successor to head the Punjabi Taliban. He further said that while the TTP did not appreciate the government's threat of use of force, it would nonetheless mull over the peace talks offer and respond to it later. Asmatullah Muawiya responded immediately, saying the TTP had no authority to remove him. He said that the Punjabi Taliban was an independent

group and had its own Shura to decide matters. The row between the two militant groups erupted after a statement by the head of the Punjabi Taliban, welcoming Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's "political maturity" by offering peace talks. In a letter issued to local newspapers, Muawiya had asked the government to introduce Sharia laws and end its alliance with the United States.

Earlier, he had also praised the government for staying the execution of three militants, including his close associate Dr. Usman, convicted and sentenced to death for his involvement in the attack on General Headquarters in Rawalpindi four years ago. The statement had followed a threat to the government that execution of any militant would be regarded as a "declaration of war". But security officials familiar with the state of militancy in Pakistan said the row between the two militant groups would not change anything on the ground. "At the tactical level, there may not be any change", the official said. He said those claiming that the row reflected a rift within Pakistani militant groups did not know much about the situation on the ground. He said the Punjabi Taliban was an independent group that had a loose association with the TTP, but was not part of the umbrella organisation. Punjabi Taliban, a group of what the official described as "hardcore, well-trained, sophisticated one hundred and fifty to two hundred militants", was heavily involved in operations inside Pakistan. "They are involved in classic operations, ala Al Qaeda," the official said. "The matrix is, however, different." "The only reason they have had association with each other is because both the groups co-habit North Waziristan", the official observed.

Dawn - August 25th, 2013

Books & Books' Reviews

'What's wrong With Pakistan': Exploitation of Religion Discussed

Journalist Babar Ayaz has, with a lot of courage and bravery, discussed the creation of Pakistan and the exploitation of religion, and has highlighted issues which are only taken up in private meetings. This was stated by speakers during the launching ceremony of a book titled 'What's wrong with Pakistan' at the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA) office on August 22nd, 2013. President SAFMA Nusrat Javed, while talking to participants, said the issues raised by the author were being discussed in meetings of intellectuals but people lacked the courage to talk about them in public. "We have to discuss why people were attracted to a separate country. I personally believe they wanted a parliamentary form of government," he said. The book's author, Babar Ayaz, said he started thinking about the reason behind Pakistan's current turmoil. He said before the creation of Pakistan, there were only 15 per cent Muslims in India but they demanded 33 per cent share in the parliament. This could not happen therefore the country was divided. "Today people claim Pakistan was created for Islam. There is a difference between creation for Islam and creation for Muslims. We exploited Islam and after 1948, Pakistan created the largest number of extra military armed groups (Jihadis)," he said. Intellectual Zahid Hussain said the book would start a debate in the society. He said religion was not dominant in the Pakistan Movement as even the communist party of India supported the creation of Pakistan. Islam was used by the dictators, he added. Journalist Raza Rumi said debates on the creation of Pakistan for Islam were going on at various platforms and the subject had been discussed in the book. He said Kamal Ahmed, a character of the novel Aag Ka Dariya written by Quratul Ain Haider in 1956, says every thing has been linked to Islam in Pakistan, so much so that Islam comes into danger if Pakistan loses a cricket match. "The character said one day the projection of Islam will become a problem for us," he added. Kishwer Naheed, a participant in

the event, said the ideology of Pakistan was never part of the parliamentarians' oaths but two decades ago, it was included. This showed things were changing in the country, she added.

Dawn - August 23rd, 2013

'What's wrong With Pakistan': New Book Lauded For Its Journey into Uncharted Waters

Religion was exploited during the creation of Pakistan by the ruling elite to strengthen their economic and political rights. This was general consensus of speakers at the launching ceremony of the book, "What is wrong with Pakistan?" at the South Asian Free Media Association on August 22nd, 2013. Authored by veteran journalist Babar Ayaz, the book investigates key points wherein Muhammad Ali Jinnah's idea of a secular and liberal Pakistan became obscured by a wave of religious fanaticism. In his book, Ayaz has explored why Muslims came together to demand a separate country and has raised questions no one else has ever dared to ask before. A panelist and renowned journalist Nusrat Javeed lauded the research that went into writing the book, calling the effort a product of patience, time and devotion. "To me the most important part was the extra effort in academic pursuits in the way the Indian Muslim middle classes started a separatist movement," he said. He cited the examples of other Muslim countries, namely Egypt and Turkey and the conflict on the basis of religious factions therein.

"This is a very brave and bold book because as on one hand we say that freedom of expression is increasing while on the other hand, journalists are restricted from speaking their minds, said Jinnah Institute Director Raza Rumi. "The book is very direct and unapologetic where we are afraid to make any statements on matters of religion." He cited the example of the author Qurratulain Hyder, who was forced to leave the country for writing a controversial novel that the then authorities did not agree with. Another journalist, Zahid Hussain, said the book could spark a controversial public debate. He spoke about the polarisation of political parties and progressive forces highlighted in the book. On the other hand, senior journalist Ayaz Amir countered the argument by saying that the creation of Pakistan was not possible religion at its centre, which gave way to the two-nation theory. Religion, he said, was a logical necessity which led to the demand for a separate state and partition. Whether that was a good decision or not, he argued, is a separate matter. Furthermore, Awami Workers Party Punjab General Secretary Aasim Sajjad Akhtar commented that ideology can be a part of the democratic process but not the determinant.

The Express Tribune - August 23rd, 2013

'What's wrong with Pakistan': Book Triggers Debate about Pakistan's Basic Ideology

As Zahid Hussain, a veteran journalist, puts it, Babar Ayaz, in his freshly launched book titled 'What's Wrong with Pakistan' has triggered a serious debate about the very basic ideology and concept of Pakistan in an entirely different perspective. No doubt that Babar Ayaz has come up with an all encompassing account or one can say if not 'all', at least 'almost all' of the history, hurdles and hiccups this 66-year-old nation has confronted and the plethora of contradictions and confusions, which have made society reckless and indifferent, still floating amidst the ocean of comity of nations as a rudder-less ship. But what one can gather from the introduction or the comments of experts, who apparently have gone through the book before coming to formal 'Book Launching' ceremony, it seems as if Babar Ayaz has stirred up a hornet's nest or like he has hit a football with a ping pong bat.

“We see that Babar, in his book, on one side has discussed about the gradual emergence and strengthening of the fundamentalist and extremist forces in the country and how these elements, which everyone believes to be a major destabilising factor in our society, have been being supported by the ‘institutions’, while on the other he has discussed the emergence of a liberal, outspoken and pro-democracy force in the country,” Zahid Hussain said while talking to ‘The News’ after the formal book launching ceremony.

“While these ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘extremist’ forces are busy pushing the country back in time, a class of moderates and liberals has emerged, which is confronting these elements with arguments and challenging them in their debates. This indeed shows a positive change that is emerging in the society,” Zahid Hussain said. Now, while these ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘extremist’ elements, being openly or stealthily supported by the ‘agencies’ are destroying the fabric of society and pushing the country back in the history, the liberal and pro-democracy elements have emerged to challenge them openly at the same time.

While the ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘extremist’ elements have been reckless and cruel in their efforts, the moderate and liberal class, which evidently has emerged as a reaction to these elements, is no more afraid and have been speaking out loud, confronting the incessant volleys of suicide attacks, bomb blasts, IED explosions and gunning down of innocent people by the fundamentalist and the extremist elements with the barrage of clear arguments, open debates and free dialogue.

Well-known political analyst and journalist, Raza Rumi, while speaking on the occasion said that this was a bold and brave book to have come out at a juncture when Pakistan was beset by the ‘gravest of existential challenges’. Raza Rumi, Director of Jinnah Institute and a political think tank said that the great Urdu novelist, Quratulain Hyder, who had written in 1950s that religion was being used to gain political mileage and the society, was being transformed to justify arbitrary rule and misgovernance in the name of Islam. The ‘book launching’ ceremony was held at the Safma Islamabad office in Sector F-7/4. Prominent among the present were Kishwar Naheed, the famous poetess and writer, veteran journalist Afzal Khan, Nusrat Javed, journalist-politician Ayaz Amir, Shahidur Rehman, Khaleeq Zuberi and many others.

The News - August 24th, 2013

‘What’s wrong With Pakistan’: Telling It As It Is

As Pakistan’s problems multiply, publications on Pakistan receive a corresponding boost. Never before have so many books on the country hit the shelf. Hence an author has to come up with something really new to justify writing about the country. Not many can do it and that is why many books appears to be a rehashed version of the same old story. Seen from that perspective, Babar Ayaz’s book, ‘What’s Wrong with Pakistan?’ might at first glance appear to be a narrative of Pakistan’s history that one would take up with a yawn. But once you start reading it, you find a freshness of approach to the issues that have nagged historians for many years. More so, Ayaz’s focused style makes this book a compelling read. One may also call this a brave book. Ayaz minces no words in spelling out exactly what has happened in the subcontinent since the ‘40s, which reflects poorly on the political judgment and strategy of our leaders who spearheaded the freedom movement. He is not afraid to call a spade a spade even when it runs against the current of conventional opinion. But so convincing is he that you are forced to listen and also agree with him. The underlying thesis of ‘What’s Wrong with Pakistan?’ is simple but profound.

After the uprising of 1857, two strands emerged in the Muslim politics of India. On the one hand were the ulema that were inspired by Shah Waliullah and looked towards Islam to create a

framework for their political, social and economic life. The other strand was led by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and it turned to modernism to improve the life of the Muslims. Both these strands remained aloof from the majority Hindu community. The Muslim League turned to the religion card when it failed to win many seats in the Muslim majority provinces in the 1937 elections. It was thereafter that the two-nation theory was conceptualised to identify the Muslims as a separate nation and demand a separate homeland for them on that basis. "Pakistan was born with a genetic defect. Religious extremism and terrorism that Pakistan suffers from are the logical outcome of the communal politics of the pre-Independence movement (sic)," Ayaz writes. Ayaz goes on to demonstrate that initially Jinnah's emphasis was primarily on the political and economic rights of the Muslims. His Fourteen Points did not focus on religion and he stressed provincial autonomy to safeguard the socio-linguistic identity of the people of different regions.

Once Pakistan was created "the founders of Pakistan conveniently betrayed the basic objective of the whole movement," he says. Instead of provincial autonomy, the state centralised all powers and the rhetoric that the Muslims of India were one nation swept aside the fact of Pakistan being a multi-ethnic and multi-structural society. The fear factor — Islam in danger — was used to impose the rule of a centralised state. Thereafter it became conventional to use Islam as a political tool. That, according to Ayaz, is what is wrong with Pakistan. All its ills can be traced to this malaise. The author is candid in showing how Jinnah too used religion for political ends and spoke of the "renaissance of the Islamic culture," "deriving inspiration and guidance from the Holy Quran" and the Constitution "embodying the essential principles of Islam." And all this was said by Jinnah, a highly secular man whose lifestyle was not at all orthodox. In fact, the author asks if Jinnah was intellectually dishonest. He gives no answer but concludes that he became victim to his own propaganda that was used to mobilise Muslim support. Similarly, Bhutto also played with religion, going to the extent of declaring Ahmadis non-Muslims. Later Ziaul Haq's Islamisation policies made religion a key force in Pakistan's politics. Thenceforth, was it surprising that extremism, militancy and jihad came to dominate all aspects of life in Pakistan? Throughout the book, Ayaz draws the reader's attention to the fact that all the wrongs that can be identified as the underlying cause of Pakistan being a failed state can be attributed to the use of religion in politics. Ayaz identifies these ills as the failure to carry out economic reforms, a questionable defence strategy, the secession of East Pakistan, the tight-rope-walking in foreign policy, a high population growth rate, poor health status and failure in delivery in the education sector. In places the connection between these failures and extreme religiosity is stretched too far, especially when Ayaz himself admits that religious parties have never won more than 10 per cent of the votes cast in an election. Even the madrassahs account for a small percentage of student enrollment. Ayaz fails to explain this seeming contradiction. But it cannot be denied that the parties that do not have an Islamic nomenclature are also exploiting religion quite blatantly. The fact is that many factors are at work in this sorry situation. Failure of governance, corruption, lack of motivation, and above all, the failure to impart education of a high standard to the people have contributed to the malaise that has overtaken the country. More effective policies in the social sector could have, to an extent at least, neutralised the regressive impact of religion as it is interpreted here. The message of the book is a powerful one and one hopes it will be heeded. It contains a plea for a secularist approach, a change in foreign policy by seeking friendly relations with India, economic reforms and preserving democracy.

Dawn - August 25th, 2013

BALUCHISTAN WATCH**Governance Watch****Balochistan Unrest: 13 Labourers Slain In Grisly Assault**

The Baloch Liberation Army, one of several proscribed groups responsible for most separatist and ethnic violence in Balochistan, claimed credit for the grisly killings in the Machh area of Bolan, some 80 kilometres away from Quetta. The assault was carried out by 150-200 insurgents, who were dressed in the uniforms of paramilitary Frontier Corps and Balochistan Levies. The militants blocked the road at two places. First, they took away five paramilitary troops from an FC patrol vehicle, trussed them up and snatched their walkie-talkies and weapons," Home Secretary Akbar Hussain Durrani told AFP. Then they stopped two Punjab-bound passenger buses and took away 13 labourers. Security personnel chased them, but the militants fired a rocket that killed one security officer, Durrani said. "Then they lined up the labourers in the mountains and killed 13," added Durrani. They were heading home to Punjab to celebrate Eidul Fitr with their families. The top local government administrator, however, gave a different account. Bolan Deputy Commissioner Abdul Waheed Shah pointed out that the militants also kidnapped seven Balochistan Levies personnel from the same area, who were later released.

Two of the slain passengers belonged to the security agencies: one was from Pakistan Army and the other from Kalat Scouts. The militants spared two Seraiki-speaking passengers. Shah said that the security forces have cordoned off the area and have mounted a search operation. "We are going to launch an air strike on militant hideouts in the mountainous areas of Bolan," he added. Machh Assistant Commissioner Khasif Muhamamd Shai confirmed the incident and said the bullet-riddled bodies had been recovered. The bodies were shifted to Quetta's Civil Hospital in the afternoon. All the victims were shot in the head. They were identified as Ahmed Ali, Shakeel Ahmed, Muhammad Bakhsh, Muhammad Asif, Muhamamd Aslam, Saqib Ali, Hawaldar Arshad, Shahid, Shakeel Ahmed, Abdul Malik, Muhamamd Ashraf, Shaukat Ali, Lans Naik Safeer Ahmed. All of them hailed from different regions of Punjab. Muhammad Yousaf, who lost a relative in the attack, said that most of the men were day-labourers who had gone over to Iran in search of work. Another man who lost his brother and a nephew told journalists that they belonged to the impoverished Rahim Yar Khan District of Punjab and worked at an optician's shop here.

BLA spokesman Meerak Baloch claimed responsibility for the killings. "These 13 people were either employee of the army or of other security institutions," he told AFP by telephone from an undisclosed location. The spokesman said the insurgents kidnapped 25 people, but later let seven passengers and five security personnel go. "An FC patrol party tried to follow us, so we killed two of them while another two were injured," he added. Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai and Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch condemned the incident and ordered the arrest of the killers. Balochistan, the most deprived province of the country, is a flashpoint for a separatist insurgency and sectarian violence since 2004. The insurgency, however, became deadlier following the killing of Jamhoori Watan Party leader Nawab Akbar Bugti in a military operation in 2006.

The Express Tribune - August 7th, 2013

DIG, SP, DSP among 38 Killed

Hospital sources feared that the death toll might rise, as many injured people were in a critical condition. Police officials said that 21 police officials were among the 38 people who were killed in the suicide blast. The blast occurred outside the main entrance of the mosque where preparations were being made for the funeral prayers of SHO City Mohibullah, who was shot dead by unidentified armed men on the same morning at the Airport Road. The sound of the explosion was heard several kilometres away from the provincial capital. Panic gripped the area. All of a sudden, thick black smoke blanketed the scene after the explosion and people were seen running here and there in search of safety. Official sources confirmed the number of casualties and said that the blast, which went off at around 2:55pm, killed 38 people. "The suicide blast at the funeral of a slain police officer killed 30 people, including at least 21 police officers," said IG Police Balochistan Mushtaq Sukhera. DIG Police Operations Fayyaz Sumbal, SP Ali Mehr and DSP Headquarters Shamsuddin were among the senior police officials killed in the bombing.

Later, one of the injured said: "I received multiple injuries on my body soon after the explosion and in the meantime I saw nothing but darkness. When I opened my eyes in the hospital, I was being treated." Another eyewitness said: "All my colleagues have gone. The DIG, SP DSP... they are all gone," Official and Edhi Foundation ambulances rushed to the spot and started shifting the victims of the explosion to the Civil Hospital and CMH for medical treatment. Soon after the incident, senior officials of the administration and senior police officials rushed to the spot and cordoned off the whole area as members of the bomb disposal squads inspected the site of the explosion to ascertain the type of explosive material used. According to the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS), eight kgs of explosive material was used in the blast and it was a suicide attack. The stunned people who came to attend the funeral of the slain police officer gathered after the incident to witness the tragic scene. Soon after the explosion, an emergency was declared in the provincial Civil Hospital. A large number of people rushed to the hospital to inquire about the victims. Moving scenes were witnessed in the hospitals.

On the same evening, the IG Police, Balochistan, in a news conference, said that the suicide blast at the funeral of a slain police officer killed 38 people, including at least 21 police officers. He added that nine other victims were yet to be identified. About the number of the injured, the IGP said: "I can confirm 40 people have been injured." It may be noted here that hours earlier, SHO City Police Station Muhibullah khan was shot dead and his four children and driver were injured during a firing incident in Alamo Chowk. SHO City Mohibullah was going to the market along with his children, when unidentified armed men opened fire at his police mobile and killed him instantly. Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari condemned the killing of the police personnel, including the DIG operations and others, in a suicide bombing at the funeral of their colleague. The president termed it an abhorrent act and said the people of Pakistan stood firm in their resolve against terrorism and would not yield to such acts of violence.

In a message to the families, he prayed to Almighty Allah to shower His blessings on those who lost their lives and grant courage to them to bear the loss. He also asked the provincial authorities to provide the best possible medical care to the injured. Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif condemned the killing of 38 people in the suicide bombing at the Police Lines, Quetta. In a message, the prime minister prayed to Almighty Allah to rest the departed souls in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude. He also prayed for an early recovery of the injured. PPP Patron-in-Chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari also condemned the suicide bombing at the Police Lines, Quetta.

In a statement, Bilawal expressed profound grief and shock over the incident and said the elements spilling the blood of innocent people by carrying out acts of terrorism were the open

enemies of democracy and the country. He said an anti-democratic and extremist mindset was behind such barbaric acts of terrorism, which need to be stopped with firmness and unity. Patron-in-Chief of Shia Ulema Board Quaid-i-Millat Jafariya Agha Syed Hamid Ali Shah Moosavi on Thursday condemned the killing of 38 people during the funeral prayers of SHO Mohibullah that was hit by a suicide bomber. In a statement, Allama Moosavi termed the incident a national tragedy and while sympathising with the bereaved families demanded that the government took the right steps to root out terrorism. Balochistan Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai and Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch have strongly condemned the blast at the Police Lines and prayed for the departed souls. In their separate messages, the CM directed to enhance security in Quetta and apprehend those behind the blasts. Others who condemned the incidents included MQM chief Altaf Hussain, PTI chief Imran Khan and JI Ameer Munawar Husan.

The News – August 09th, 2013

Protest Camp for Baloch Missing Persons Set Ablaze

The hunger strike camp set up outside Quetta Press Club by Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP) for recovery of missing persons was set on fire by unidentified people. VBMP, a local organisation formed by relatives of missing persons, is striving hard for the recovery of their beloved ones for over last three years in Quetta, Karachi and Islamabad. Unidentified people set the camp on fire and soon it was reduced to ashes. When Vice Chairman of VBMP Mama Abdul Qadir was contacted, he regretted that the right of peaceful protest from relatives of missing persons was also being snatched. "I don't know who have actually burnt the camp but we have been constantly receiving threats and warnings from government functionaries to dismantle the camp or face consequences," he added. It may be mentioned here that a son of Mama Abdul Qadir Baloch named Jalil Reki, who was leader of Baloch Republican Party, was abducted in 2009 allegedly by government functionaries from his Sariab Road residence and later his tortured and bullet-riddled body was found in Kech district in 2011. "I and my fellow protesters have received death threats but we will never end our peaceful protest for the recovery of our beloved ones who are being assaulted in torture cells," Qadir Baloch said, adding that chief justice of Supreme Court who is hearing a case in Quetta had taken notice of burning of strike camp. "We have hopes that CJ would do something for recovery of missing persons but so far his efforts are not yielding results," he said. He appealed chief justice and other humanitarian organisations to take notice of brutalities allegedly committed by government functionaries against innocent Balochs in the province.

Daily Times - August 16th, 2013

ELECTION WATCH**Political Stakeholders & Elections****Dejected Fakhru Bahi Resigns as CEC**

The controversy generated by advancing the schedule of the presidential election worsened on as Chief Election Commissioner retired Justice Fakhruddin G. Ebrahim resigned from his post after heading the prime electoral body for a little over a year. It is for the first time in the country's history that a CEC has quit the high-profile position. The resignation came three weeks before by-elections in 42 constituencies of the national and provincial assemblies. Sources privy to the development told Dawn that the main reason for the resignation by Justice Ebrahim enjoying the reputation of being a man of principles was encroachment by the Supreme Court in the exclusive domain of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and failure of his fellow members to effectively act to protect the commission's independence.

Fakhru Bhai was displeased by the court's decision to change the presidential poll schedule on a petition of a PML-N legislator without hearing other parties. Justice Ebrahim had decided to set aside the court's order and wrote a note hoping that it would be endorsed by other members of the commission on the day he scrutinised the nomination papers, but failed to muster support. That was the time he decided to resign soon after the presidential election. Adding that the CEC was not ready to work with members who he believed were responsible for losing independence of the commission. Justice Ebrahim, however, chose not to mention the reason in his resignation sent to the president. He stated that he had been appointed through a consultative process by the last parliament and his constitutional term would end in 2017. In his opinion, the newly elected members of the parliament should have the opportunity to forge new consensus and choose a new Chief Election Commissioner.

He observed that this would also give the next CEC sufficient time and opportunity to prepare and lead the Election Commission for the general elections in 2018. The Supreme Court's decision to advance the schedule for presidential election from Aug 6 to July 30 had triggered a volley of criticism against the judiciary as well as the Election Commission in and outside parliament. The opposition, surprised by what it called a 'hasty decision' and a weak stand taken by the ECP representative in the court, had also sought resignation of the CEC and members of the commission for losing independence of the ECP. Ironically, the ECP did not file a review petition under Article 188 of the constitution against the verdict. Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly Khursheed Ahmed Shah of the PPP welcomed the resignation by Justice Ebrahim and said other members of the ECP should also follow suit.

The Express Tribune – August 01st, 2013

Government Agrees To Probe 'Rigging' In Elections

The government agreed to constitute a parliamentary committee on the proposal of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to probe alleged rigging in May 11 general elections. The National Assembly (NA) also expressed concern over the situation in Egypt through a unanimous adopted resolution. Referring to a letter of PTI Chairman Imran Khan, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan told NA that a committee of the House should be constituted to investigate allegations of rigging and furnish proposals for electoral reforms. Nisar said the committee should be given a timeframe to complete its findings and proposals. "This committee

should be fully authorised to summon former caretaker prime minister and caretaker chief ministers, returning officers and officials of Election Commission of Pakistan to bring fore the truth," he said. NA Deputy Speaker Murtaza Javed Abbasi, who was chairing the proceedings, asked parliamentary heads to give the names of their nominees for the committee and announced to hold a meeting in the speaker's chamber to finalise its Terms of Reference (ToR).

Leader of the Opposition in NA Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah welcomed the government's decision to form a committee on the alleged election rigging. PTI Deputy Parliamentary Leader Shah Mahmood Querashi also welcomed the move. The deteriorating situation in Egypt also surfaced prominently in the House and it passed a resolution to express concern over use of force by Egyptian security forces against protesters opposing the removal of democratic government. The resolution, moved by Jamaat-e-Islami Parliamentary Leader Sahibzada Tariqullah with the support of treasury, expressed full support for the "brotherly people of Egypt" and called upon the government to convey to the Egyptian government MPs' deep concern over assault on unarmed civilians and loss of many innocent lives there. "The government of Egypt should be urged to show restraint and resolve the constitutional, legal and political issues through dialogue amongst all the parties," the resolution said. On a point of order, the interior minister also showed concerns over recent incidents of violence in Egypt. He said Egypt is a sovereign country but this is an era of democracy and violations of human rights and massacre of people cannot be allowed.

About the new National Security Policy, Nisar told the House that government wants to formulate a "doable policy" that could yield required results. The minister, however, showed dismay over calls for quick working on the security policy and said many countries had taken "many years and decades" to curb the menace of terrorism. "Unless we get acquainted with the magnitude of the problem, it could not be resolved," he said. For broader national consensus on the policy, Nisar added, a meeting of major parties would be held this month to evolve a consensus over the National Security Policy. "The government will also welcome inputs of all the parliamentarians on the security policy", he said. Nisar emphasised upon provincial governments to devise proactive security policies to deal with the current situation and assured the House that the federal government would continue to support provincial governments in handling law and order situation.

The minister said the federal government is sharing intelligence reports with provincial governments and it is their responsibility under the 18th Amendment to handle the security situation. He urged provincial governments to activate their intelligence institutions, including CID and Special Branch, to thwart terror attacks. Later, the chair deferred the constitution of the parliamentary committees of the House when PTI, JI and MQM objected to low representation of their parties in these committees.

Daily Times - August 16th, 2013

ECP Requests SC to Name a Judge as Acting CEC

After the acceptance of Chief Election Commissioner Fakhruddin G Ibrahim's resignation by President Asif Ali Zardari, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has requested the Supreme Court (SC) to nominate a judge as acting CEC. An ECP official told that the commission had received a letter from the Law Ministry that the president had accepted the resignation of Fakhruddin G Ibrahim. After receiving the letter, he added, the ECP had also written a letter to the SC, requesting it to nominate a judge as acting CEC. Senior lawyers say that since the office of CEC is vacant, therefore, the August 22 by-elections would not be valid until the appointment of a regular or acting CEC. In case of appointment of a regular CEC, the government has to

request for the constitution of a parliamentary committee. Meanwhile, SC Registrar Dr Faqir Hussain has confirmed to Daily Times that the SC received a request on Thursday from the ECP regarding nomination of acting CEC, which had been forwarded to Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, who is hearing cases at Quetta Branch Registry. The SC registrar also said that under the constitution, the CJP had the authority to nominate any SC's judge as acting CEC. It is learnt that ECP Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan was also ready to tender his resignation but he changed his decision on the request of commission's other members. A senior official of the ECP has already admitted that the ECP has continuously remained under serious stress from the Supreme Court in several matters in the last two years. Chaudhry Faisal Hussain, a lawyer, said that after the "undue interferences" by the superior judiciary, Chief Election Commissioner Fakhruddin G Ebrahim had tendered his resignation.

Daily Times - August 16, 2013

Justice Tassaduq Nominated As Acting CEC

Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani was nominated as the acting Chief Election Commissioner. Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry nominated Justice Jilani to act as the Chief Election Commissioner with immediate effect and till the appointment of a new Chief Election Commissioner. The appointment has been made in accordance with terms of Article 217 (2) of the Constitution. The nomination by the Chief Justice was instantly notified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). He will assume his responsibility anytime after being administered oath as acting Chief Election Commissioner early next week. Interestingly, Justice Jilani will be holding acting charge of two important constitutional offices at the end of the current month. He will be the acting Chief Justice and acting Chief Election Commissioner at the same time. Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry will proceed to Thimphu (Bhutan) to attend the second South Asia Chief Justices roundtable on environmental justice to be held on Aug 30 and 31. Justice Jilani hails from Multan and is a close relative of former Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani.

Under the principle of seniority for appointment of the Chief Justice laid down by the Supreme Court, Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani is to assume the office of Chief Justice after retirement of Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry in the second week of December. An interesting situation may develop if a new chief election commissioner was not appointed by that time. S.M. Zafar, a constitutional expert, observed that there would be no legal issue even if a regular Chief Election Commissioner was not appointed in the next four months. He said in such a situation, Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, in his capacity as Chief Justice, would nominate some other judge of the Supreme Court as acting Chief Election Commissioner. The office of the Chief Election Commissioner fell vacant when Justice (ret'd) Fakhruddin G. Ebrahim resigned on July 31 after the Supreme Court's verdict of amending the schedule for presidential elections.

Justice Ebrahim was of the view that it was nothing short of encroachment in the domain of the Election Commission. He had prepared a note in this regard, but could not convince his fellow members of the commission to endorse it for fear of contempt proceedings and decided not to work with members who he thought should have supported the move to protect the independence of the Election Commission. He was the first CEC to have been appointed for an extended term of five years, but resigned after heading the commission for a little over a year. The president accepted his resignation and the vacancy of the office were notified by the ministry of parliamentary affairs on Aug 13. On receiving a copy of the notification, the ECP had sent a reference to the Chief Justice for appointment of an acting chief election commissioner on

Aug 15. The government has yet to initiate the process for appointment of a new chief election commissioner. A 12-member parliamentary committee will finalise the matter.

Dawn - August 17th, 2013

Electoral Rigging: Parliamentary Body to Meet

The government may be serious about forming a special parliamentary committee to probe election rigging allegations but most political actors, however, don't expect anything substantive to come out of it. They believe that such a body would only serve as a "catharsis" for those crying foul. The National Assembly's speaker has invited representatives of all political parties to discuss how the committee will be formed and what its terms of reference will be during a meeting scheduled. Such parliamentary body would have no legal authority. None of its decisions or recommendations would be binding on the Election Commission of Pakistan. The committee is also likely to run into early snags since the assembly's sitting speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq himself has been accused of rigging by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI). The Election Commission of Pakistan, according to him, is the appropriate platform and the only constitutionally authorised body to deal with complaints pertaining to elections. The government proposed setting up a parliamentary committee to probe rigging claims in the May 11 elections after PTI chief Imran Khan wrote a letter to the government drawing its attention towards the issue. Members of the opposition, however, feel the committee is an exercise in futility and would only waste time. Most candidates and parties' cases on rigging complaints were already pending with courts and the ECP. What new would the committee come up with in this situation," said Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain in his party's consultative meeting in Lahore. Forming any such committee on rigging was, in fact, another form of rigging to conceal elections' rigging," said Hussain. He said the committee has no justification in the presence of election tribunals and an independent judiciary. Spokesperson for Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the chief of Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam-Fazl Jan Achakzai said such a committee would be useless as its decisions would not be legally binding on anyone. "If it was for recommendations on electoral reforms, many independent bodies and foreign elections' observers have already given many suggestions and recommendations," said Achakzai.

The Express Tribune - August 19th, 2013

Ensuring Security: ECP Calls Up Army Troops for Karachi By-Polls

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to deploy army troops at all polling stations in Karachi to ensure peaceful and transparent conduct of the August 22 by-elections. Army troops will be deployed in and outside the polling stations in three constituencies of Karachi - NA-254, PS-95 and PS-103, ECP officials told. The decision was taken at meeting of the electoral body chaired by the acting chief election commissioner, Justice Tassadduq Hussain Jilani. The commission, however, will announce a detailed plan regarding the deployment of troops at other polling stations particularly in the areas affected by the ongoing floods, added the officials. Earlier, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf chief Imran Khan called for army deployment during the by-polls to "ensure free and fair elections". The Pakistan Peoples Party-Parliamentarians and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl also demanded deployment of troops at sensitive polling stations. The by-elections for 16 National Assembly seats and 26 provincial assembly seats across the country will be held August 21. Most of these seats were vacated by the members who had won from more than one constituency in the May 11 general elections. Of

the 7,622 polling stations to be set up for the by-elections, 3,644 have been declared 'sensitive', with 1,657 falling in the category of 'highly sensitive', revealed the figures. A total of 180 candidates are vying for 15 Punjab Assembly seats, 82 for four Sindh Assembly seats, 32 for three Balochistan Assembly seats and 27 for four Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly seats.

In a related development the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Awami National Party (ANP) have decided not to contest the by-elections for two Sindh Assembly and one National Assembly seats from Karachi. The JI will boycott the elections across Sindh, while the ANP will support PPP candidates across the province. "Barring Karachi and Hyderabad, we'll contest the by-elections across the country," said JI Sindh chapter Chief Dr Merajul Huda Siddiqui. He added that the JI has challenged the May 11 general elections in Karachi and Hyderabad in the court seeking re-elections under the army's supervision in the two cities. "There is no question of a by-election when the electoral process was not even followed in the May 11 elections," he said. The ANP, on the other hand, decided to support PPP candidates in Sindh. Citing possible life threats to his party's candidates ANP's Sindh chapter Chief Senator Shahi Syed said, "Candidates were not allowed to campaign while some parties freely staged rallies in the run-up to the May 11 elections." He added that it was not wise to field candidates as they might be targeted by militants. The ECP has dispatched ballot papers to the 42 constituencies across the country, election commission officials said. More than 10 million ballot papers have been released for the by-elections.

The Express Tribune - August 19th, 2013

Political Parties

Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML - N)

PML-N's Lion Roars Again

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) grabbed the lion's share of seats in the by-elections held in 41 constituencies generally in a peaceful and transparent manner, but marked with some big upsets. Unluckily for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the party lost two of its vital seats of National Assembly that were vacated by none other than the mighty party chief Imran Khan. The spree of upsets did not spare the N-League either that lost three seats in the Punjab Assembly considered as the ruling party's home ground. Two of these seats were vacated by the PML-N's bigwigs - Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Sardar Zulfiqar Khosa. The overall, unofficial NA results suggest that PML-N won five seats, Pakistan People's Party-Parliamentarians won two seats, PTI three and Awami National Party, Muttahida Qaumi Movement and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) each won a seat. By-polls on Punjab Assembly seats were a PML-N show where it got 12 of total 15 seats. The PPP and the PTI were both leading on two seats each. In Sindh Assembly, the MQM got three seats while PPP won one seat. In the KPK, ANP and JUI-F got one seat each while two independent candidates won a seat each. The results for KPK Assembly are a blow to the PTI which could not win a single seat in the province that it rules by virtue of the general elections results and its alliance with the JI (for a coalition government). Similarly, on Balochistan Assembly's three seats, the PML-N was in the lead on two while an independent candidate was leading on one.

Taking exception to the verified reports of intimidating the women not to cast votes in two NA constituencies, the Peshawar High Court ordered re-polling at 18 polling stations of the said constituencies. The two constituencies are NA-5 Nowshera and NA-27 Lakki Marwat. Allegedly, the workers of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) stopped the women from casting votes in a bid

to restrict the vote bank of their rivals who were reportedly in winning positions. Sources said ECP officials see the involvement of JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman in the entire episode. Following the PHC decision, the ECP said it would conduct re-polling in the coming days. Luckily for the PTI, it managed to secure one of the most-hyped seats and the only one in the Capital where by-elections were held. In NA-48, PTI's 'economic brain' Asad Umar outclassed the PML-N's 'underdog' Chaudhry Aslam Gujjar by bagging over 48000 votes. Apart from individual instances in certain constituencies involving aerial firing, the by-polls were held in an apparently peaceful manner with the army troops deployed at 4,218 polling stations of which 1,532 were marked as highly sensitive and 2,686 sensitive.

Later, in a press briefing, the secretary announced the first official by-polls result coming from the Punjab Assembly's constituency PP-123 Sialkot where the PML-N's Khawaja Mansha Butt defeated the PTI's Daud Parvez by securing nearly 22,000 votes. The voters' turnout in this constituency was recorded at 18.33 percent. As many as 500 candidates were in the run for 15 national and 26 seats of provincial assemblies. According to unofficial results, PML-N was leading on 5 of the 16 National Assembly seats, PPP on two seats, PTI on three seats, ANP on one seat and PkMAP one seat. Results of some constituencies were awaited by the time of going to press. Polling for the 41 National and provincial assembly seats in the four provinces and Islamabad in the by-election concluded at 5:00pm. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) did not extend time for voting, saying the commission did not receive any appeal from any of the provinces for extending the time. Polling at the two polling stations of National Assembly constituency NA-262 Qila Abdullah began after a delay of three hours as two bombs were discovered outside polling stations. In Lahore, a female presiding officer gave birth to a baby after being shifted from her duty place to a medical facility.

According to police, the ex-counselor named Maqbool, who had also campaigned for the by-elections, was gunned down by unknown assailants in Shahdara area of Lahore. Separately, an attempt of terrorism in Balochistan on the day of by-election was foiled when security forces recovered a bomb near a polling station in Chaman town bordering Afghanistan. According to sources, security forces foiled a major terror bid by recovering a bomb near a polling station. They said the security forces searched a polling station set up in a high school in NA-262 constituency of Chaman and recovered explosive material planted along the school's wall. Voting in the area was delayed as bomb disposal squad (BDS) was called to defuse the bomb. The BDS reached the spot and defused the bomb. Acting Chief Election Commissioner Tassudduq Hussain Jilani took notice of reports that media teams were not being allowed to report the polling process in the by-polls at different polling stations. The CEC also visited different polling stations to examine the polling at different polling stations.

At least 40 workers of Pakistan Muslim League Functional (PML-F) were arrested on arms displaying charges in NA-235. Workers of PML-F candidate Khuda Bakhsh were arrested outside the polling station of Jam Nawaz Ali, NA 235 Sanghar, when they reached the polling station along with arms. PML-N candidate Sardar Muhammad Khwaja clinched NA-68 Sargodha seat after defeating PTI's Malik Nazir Ahmed. On NA-71 Mianwali-I, PML-N candidate Obaidullah Shadikhel won defeating PTI's Malik Waheed Khan. On NA-103 Hafizabad-II, PML-N candidate Shahid Hussain Bhatti defeated PTI's Shaukat Ali Bhatti. NA-129 Lahore seat was won by PML-N candidate Shazia Mubashar who defeated PTI's Muhammad Mansha Sindhu. PTI candidate Sardar Ahmed Ali Dareshak won the by-elections from PP-243. According to initial results, PML-N's Sardar Hisamuddin Khosa remained second in the elections.

Similarly in Faisalabad, by-elections were conducted in Punjab assembly constituency PP-51 and National Assembly constituency NA-83. PML-N candidate for NA-83 Mian Abdul Manan bagged the slot as per unofficial results while PML-N's Azad Ali Tabassum won PP-51 Chak Jhumra seat. PPP candidate Mushtaq Ali Cheema, PTI candidate Faiz Ullah Kamoka, Manzoor

Gori of MQM, Mian Nadeem Saleemi of APML and independent candidate Ashraf Mughal were also contesting the by-poll. In PP-51, PPP's Malik Muhammad Ali, PTI's Ajmal Cheema, Zafar Iqbal Zafar of MQM, Mian Sajjad Ahmad of APML and Ch Imtiaz Ahmad Lara an independent candidate were also in the run. ANP candidate Ahmed Khan Bahadur won PK-23 Mardan-1 while PTI candidate Syed Umar Farooq remained second. PML-N candidate Muhammad Khan Lehri won PB-29 Naseerabad-2 defeating independent candidate Muhammad Amin Imrani. PPP candidate Makhdoom Syed Ali Akbar Mehmood clinched victory at PP-292 Rahim Yar Khan while PML-N candidate Maulvi Muhammad Tariq Chohan remained second. PML-N candidate Rana Babar stood winner at PP-217 Khanewal-5 while PTI candidate Maqsood Alam remained second. PP-118 Mandi Bahauddin seat was won by PML-N candidate Akhtar Abbas while PTI's Liaqat Ali Ranjha remained second. PML-N candidate Khwaja Muhammad Mansha defeated PTI's Muhammad Dawood Khan on PPP-123 Sialkot-III seat. PML-N's Khwaja Salman Rafique defeated PTI candidate Waqar Ahmed on PP-142 Lahore-VI.

The Nation - August 23rd, 2013

Pakistan Tehreek - e - Insaf (PTI)

Imran urges introspection over D.I.Khan jailbreak

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan raised serious questions on over jailbreak in Dera Ismail Khan and called for introspection by all institutions of the state. He elucidated it was high time to determine why in the presence of an army division in and around D.I. Khan, elite force, police and special jail police, the attackers had managed to get hundreds of their accomplices freed. Over the past couple of months, Mr Khan has repeatedly demanded a meeting with the army chief and the prime minister before an all-parties conference proposed by the government for coping with terrorism. Mr Khan said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had initiated a high-level inquiry into the incident and its findings would be shared with the nation. He reiterated that this was a national issue which needed a corresponding response. Nobody from the ISPR was available for comments. Mr Khan said he had told US Secretary of State John Kerry during their recent meeting that since the US drones strikes had killed about 1,500 innocent people so far, whereas only 45 terrorists had been targeted. The strikes were directly affecting efforts of the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to curb militancy. He reiterated that the federal government and the military establishment had to come clean on 'hidden facts' before calling an APC. Last week, over 100 militants whom the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed to have sent freed 248 prisoners from the D.I. Khan jail. According to media reports the attack lasted three to four hours. Furthermore other issues were also highlighted by Mr. Khan. These were related to price hike, white papers and libel lawsuits.

Dawn - August 05th, 2013

PTI Issues 2,500-Page White Paper on Poll Rigging

Chairman Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan said his party was pressing for an investigation into the alleged irregularities and mismanagement in general elections with the aim to take forward the democratic process. While issuing a 2,500-page white paper about the irregularities in the May 11 general elections, Imran Khan, flanked by senior party leaders, said the PTI had accepted the election results and any probe into the conduct of elections would lend further credibility to elections in future. He demanded the Supreme Court to verify thumb

impressions of voters in four constituencies. Imran said 400 petitions were filed in election tribunals, out of which 64 were filed by the PTI candidates. He said the objective of issuing the white paper was to take forward the democratic process and bring it closer to the parliamentary democracy of the Westminster model. He said it was not about bringing a change in the government or to disturb the whole process.

The PTI chief said it was for the first time that people came out to vote in such a large numbers. "But if this time people lost trust in the electoral process, they would not come to vote next time," he said. He was of the view that if necessary changes were not made in the electoral system, next time candidates might be thinking how to commit rigging on a much larger scale. The PTI chief claimed if his party wanted, it could have paralysed the cities after the announcement of results of the May 11 elections. "But the PTI observed restraint as the country is confronted with problems of terrorism and economic crises," he added. Imran clarified that when he talked about the conduct of the judiciary in the elections, he was referring to the returning officers and not to the superior judiciary, which he holds in high esteem. The white paper issued by the PTI gives details of the alleged irregularities and mismanagement during the general elections. The PTI leader argued that major political parties had also made similar complaints about the elections.

Imran said the PTI in its white paper proposed immediate technical, legislative, administrative and procedural steps to make the electoral process more transparent. He said even if rigging was proved in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the PTI would quit the government in the province. Imran said the PTI would stand with the federal government to tackle the issue of terrorism. He said from the next month, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government would introduce legislation to reform health and education sectors and strengthen the system of accountability. He repeated his commitment to turn the Chief Minister's House in Peshawar and rest houses into public places and to use the proceeds for education and health projects. The white paper has provided evidence of interference by election staff, political parties and returning officers to manipulate the results by violating relevant laws and damaging the election material, including ballot papers in the four provinces.

The white paper has also provided proof of irregularities that took place in 18 constituencies of the National Assembly and 16 constituencies of provincial assemblies. It has reviewed different kinds of rigging that occurred in 11 constituencies of the National Assembly in the Punjab, three in Sindh, four in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Fata, 11 provincial assembly constituencies in the Punjab, two in Sindh and one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The white paper issued by the PTI has categorised the rigging into three categories: pre-election rigging, rigging during the election and post-election rigging. It has provided written, pictorial and video proofs. It has reviewed all the record of the Election Commission, orders of the election tribunals, the complaints received from all over the country and the reports carried by the media outlets in this respect. The document said the election tribunals had received a record number of complaints against controversial returning officers, belonging to the subordinate judiciary.

The News - August 22nd, 2013

Awami National Party (ANP)

ANP Woman Leader Shot Dead

Ms Najma Hanif, leader of the Awami National Party (ANP), was shot dead by some unidentified people in the Hayatabad area of Peshawar on August 16th, 2013 night. She hailed from Swabi. Her husband, Mohammad Hanif, was killed in a bomb blast in Peshawar about a year ago. Police

said the ANP leader had not informed the authorities about any threat to her life. Police said she was shot dead in her own house in Hayatabad. She was a candidate for reserved seats for women in the May elections from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Police said they had cordoned off the area and were searching for the murderers.

Dawn - August 17th, 2013

Muttahida Quomi Movement (MQM)

MQM Going For a New Beginning with PML-N

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader Dr Farooq Sattar said on Sunday that his party is going to support the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) at the federal level and aims to remain in good coordination with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Sindh. Sattar has said that his party will support the ruling PML-N on all its good policies. The MQM leader was talking to media at the Lahore airport during his visit to the city on Sunday. He confirmed that the MQM was going to have a new beginning of relations with the PML-N. The MQM leader suggested the ruling PML-N should hold consultations with all other political parties and take them into confidence to pull the country out of the crises it faces. Sattar also said that the PML-N should achieve consensus over the national agenda, as it was necessary to take the country forward. He said that in politics options did not end and one cannot close the doors to opponents, as negotiations between political parties are part of democracy. Talking about the heavy rains in Karachi and failure of the administration to control the situation in the city, the MQM leader said the only reason for such misadministration is the absence of the local government system in the province, saying it was the only system which could avert such crisis at the local level. He was of the view that only the local government system could provide basic needs to the people. Sattar further stated that local bodies system, as a nursery of democracy, should be introduced at local level with necessary powers.

Daily Times - August 05th, 2013

Other Political Parties

PkMAP to Support ANP in By-Elections

Announcing support to candidates of the Awami National Party in the upcoming by-elections, the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) asked its party workers to campaign and cast their votes in favour of ANP candidates across the province. On the directives of PkMAP chairman Mahmood Khan Achakzai, a delegation of the party led by its general secretary Arbab Mujeebur Rehman visited Bacha Khan Markaz. The delegation called on Sardar Hussain Babak, parliamentary leader of the ANP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, ANP's central additional secretary general Tajuddin Khan, provincial general secretary Arbab Tahir, Malik Ghulam Mustafa and Mian Mushtaq. They assured full support to the ANP in the by-elections and appealed to Pakhtun nation to strengthen nationalist forces and vote for the ANP candidates.

The News - August 18th, 2013

By-Poll Elections 2013

Final List of By-Election Candidates Issued

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Election Commission issued final list of candidates for five National Assembly and four provincial assembly seats where by-elections would be held on August 22. According to the final list, 61 candidates including two women are in the run for five National Assembly seats while 27 aspirants would contest for four provincial assembly constituencies. Former federal minister and central leader of Awami National Party Ghulam Ahmad Bilour has emerged as the joint candidate of Pakistan People's Party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F and ANP on NA-1, Peshawar where he would face eleven candidates including two key figures of ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Gul Bacha and Samad Mursaleen, wherein the former is contesting on party ticket while the latter will contest in independent capacity. The seat was vacated by PTI Chairman Imran Khan, who had obtained over 90,000 votes in the May 11 general elections. Six candidates are in the run for NA-5, Nowshera, which was vacated by Chief Minister Pervez Khattak, where a tough contest is expected between ANP and PTI candidates Daud Khattak and Imran Khattak. ANP candidate Daud Khattak had lost to Pervez Khattak in last general elections by huge margin and now he will face his nephew and son-in-law Imran Khattak, who has also served as tehsil nazim Nowshera in the past.

For NA-13, Swabi, 10 candidates are in the race; however, the real contest is expected between Maulana Ataul Haq Darwesh of the JUI-F and Aqibullah Khan of the PTI. The JUI-F candidate also enjoys the support of ANP and PPP on this constituency while the PTI candidate, brother of incumbent Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, enjoys the support of Qaumi Watan Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Awami Jamhoori Ittehad Pakistan. Amongst the 17 candidates for NA-25, Tank-cum-Dera Ismail Khan, former deputy speaker National Assembly and PPP candidate Faisal Karim Kundi, Asad Mehmood of JUI-F, Dawar Khan Kundi of PTI, Sardar Umar Farooq Miankhel and Ghulam Qadar Bhattani are prominent. The seat was won JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman in last general polls. Similarly, 16 candidates are contesting for NA-27, Lakki Marwat where a tough contest is expected amongst Maulana Attaur Rehman of the JUI-F, Colonel (r) Amirullah Marwat of the PTI and Maulana Hidayatullah Qureshi of the Muttahida Deeni Mahaz. According to the final list, there are eight candidates in the field for PK-23, Mardan, four candidates for PK-27, Mardan, 10 candidates are in the run for PK-42, Hangu and five candidates will contest for PK-70, Bannu in by-polls to be held on August 22.

The News - August 01st, 2013

ECP Calls for Army Deployment for By-Polls in Punjab

Despite the refusal of the Punjab government, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to deploy the army in the by-elections in the Punjab while the army has sought the polling scheme from the ECP for the by-polls. The military officials also demanded details of sensitive and most sensitive polling stations from the ECP. On the other hand, the ECP has assured to provide the polling scheme to military officials within a couple of days. The military officials will decide to deploy contingents of army Jawans in the by-elections after receiving the polling scheme. The army will be deployed at over 1,000 sensitive polling stations. The army on Tuesday assured the ECP of its full assistance in the holding of the by-election for 42 seats of the National Assembly and provincial legislatures. "To discuss the security related matters, ECP's Additional Secretary Syed Sher Afgan met the military officials at the General Headquarters, Rawalpindi, and got this assurance," said a senior ECP official.

The commission was asked to share the details of the most sensitive and sensitive polling stations so that a security strategy could be duly evolved thereon. Within the next few days, the polling scheme, indicating the exact number of polling stations, polling booths, polling staff and most importantly the most sensitive and sensitive polling stations, said the official. On its part, the Sindh Provincial Commissioner SM Tariq Qadri has already written to the ECP for deployment of troops, both inside and outside the polling stations, during the by-polls. In the letter written to the ECP, the provincial election commissioner has contended that in order to ensure smooth polling and stem chances of law and order, deployment of army personnel was crucial. These constituencies are NA-235 (Sanghar), NA-237 (Thatta) and NA-254 (Karachi): PS-12 (Shikarpur), PS-64 (Mirpurkhas), PS-95 (Karachi) and PS-103 (Karachi).

Meanwhile, the ECP has served a notice on Anjum Aqeel Khan, the PML-N's former legislator and aspirant of party ticket for NA-48 in the August 22 by-election, to appear before it on August 12 in connection with his petition for his inclusion in the final list of candidates. ECP sources said that after being denied the opportunity to run for the election following the withdrawal of his nomination papers on the last date, Anjum knocked at the doors of the Election Commission. The ECP has once again drawn the attention of political parties to the provisions of Article 13 of the Political Parties Order, 2002 which provides that every political party shall submit to the Election Commission, within 60 days from the close of each financial year, a consolidated statement of accounts of the party, duly audited by a chartered accountant. The last date for filing statement of accounts is August 29. The commission reminded the political parties that a certificate signed by the party leader must accompany the statement of accounts stating that no funds from any source prohibited under the Political Parties Order, 2002, were received by the party.

The electoral body emphasised that the statement must contain an accurate financial position of the party and said the prescribed printed forms were available free of cost at the ECP and the offices of provincial election commissioners, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. It contended that in terms of Article 14 of the Political Party Order, 2002, a party failing to submit its statement of accounts under Article 13 will not be eligible to obtain election symbol to contest elections for Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) and provincial assemblies. The statements, the commission noted, were required to be delivered to the secretary ECP at the Election Commission Secretariat, Constitution Avenue, G-5/2, Islamabad, through an office-bearer of the party, authorised by the party leader. Under rule 11 of the Political Parties Rules, 2002, the statements received through post, fax, courier service or any other mode will not be entertained.

The News - August 07th, 2013

Tough Fight Expected On Seven Seats in Sindh

It is yet another tough contest for Pakistan Peoples Party to get the most in the by-elections on seven general seats in Sindh scheduled this week for which the provincial election authorities have already made a request to depute troops to ensure fair and transparent elections. The Election Commission of Pakistan has set Aug 22 to conduct by-elections on 42 general seats comprising 26 provincial and 16 national assembly seats. Out of them, by-elections are being held on three national assembly (NA) and four provincial assembly (PS) seats in Sindh. Three seats - one NA and two PS - fall in Karachi, while the rest of two NA and as many PS seats are in Sanghar, Thatta, Shikarpur and Mirpurkhas districts. The provincial election commissioner said they had handed over all the material but ballot papers to the respective returning officers of the seven constituencies. The ballot papers would be handed over by magistrates and judicial

magistrates along with election commission officials to the respective returning officers before 4pm on August 19th, 2013, said election commissioner Mohammad Tariq Qadri. He said he had already requested to the competent authorities for deputation of armed forces in and outside the polling stations. For many political observers, the PPP has a tough contest ahead as the party hopes to win at least three out of four constituencies outside Karachi. But political fragmentation within the party and strong opposition - almost everywhere - shows it is going to be highly laborious job.

The party has a silver lining in Sanghar's NA-235 where its candidate Shazia Marri had previously offered a stunning contest in the May 11 general elections. Historically, the PML-F had won this seat comfortably against previous PPP contestants by large margins. However, the previous gap of some 35,000 votes reduced to 12,000 votes in the May 11 elections. What was more astonishing was the fact that Ms Marri contested against Pir Pagaro's younger brother, Pir Sadruddin Shah, unlike the past when the PML-F would field its little known candidates to fetch the victory. The seat fell vacant when Mr Rashdi opted to retain his Khairpur seat, NA-216. Ms Marri is again contesting against PML-F's Khuda Bakhsh Dars. Reports suggested the people of Khipro shut their town when Pir Pagaro announced Mr Dars as his nominee. Local population is unsatisfied with Mr Dars' performance as taluka nazim of Khipro in the past. Observers foresee a tough contest on this seat on Aug 22.

Similarly, PPP's decision to nominate an elderly apolitical woman to contest on NA-237 of Thatta district is largely unpopular in the constituency where the party had fluctuating fortunes in the past. PPP candidate Sadiq Memon had been conditionally allowed by a court to contest in general elections until his petition relating to his dual citizenship decided his fate. He won the election by a slim margin of some 2,700 votes against Riaz Hussain Sheerazi of then the independent Sheerazi group. The court did not allow his petition, thus his election was declared void and the seat was declared vacant. The PPP leadership has nominated Mr Memon's mother, Shamsunnisa Memon, whom the local party cadres call a person unknown and unheard of in politics and call her nomination tantamount to woo a strong Memon vote. Her opponent is again Riaz Sheerazi, who is now a PML-N candidate. With additional support from Jam Gohram, who had secured more than 20,000 votes on a PS seat previously as a PML-N candidate, the observers say the contest is going to be a cliff-hanger. Sindh Assembly seats The PPP has nominated Abid Hussain Bhayyo on Shikarpur's PS-12 against PML-N's Amir Hussain Jatoi.

The seat had been won by a slim margin by PPP's Babar Bhayyo, Abid's brother, but he had been disqualified for showing a fake degree to the election commission. Babar Jatoi reiterated with a similar claim against Abid Jatoi before the by-election and got him disqualified as well. As a result, Mr Jatoi fielded his son, Amir Hussain. Local observers said the PPP candidate also enjoyed support from the JUI-F and had slight edge on his PML-N rival. In Mirpurkhas, the PPP and the MQM are contesting against each other as they did historically on PS-64. The MQM had always won the seat with not-so-comfortable margin since 1988 elections. MQM's Zafar Ahmed Kamali, a medic and a former district naib nazim, is contesting against PPP's Saeed Qureshi, a local businessman and a new entrant to mainstream politics. The seat fell vacant after the death of an independent candidate ahead of May 11 elections. PPP's local cadres are not happy with the nomination of a new entrant and their distress was so evident that it forced President Asif Zardari's sister Faryal Talpur, an MNA, to come to Mirpurkhas to woo the distraught cadre.

On the three Karachi seats, the MQM has a visible edge as the party history suggests. MQM candidates on NA-254 have been winning by large margins in the past. Its candidate Dr Ayub Shaikh defeated his PPP rival Sohail Abrar with a whopping 128,000 votes in 2008 elections. Observers see a comfortable win for MQM candidate Mohammad Ali Rashid. The party has relied on its old guards again to defend its strongholds on PS-95 and PS-103. The former remained vacant when a candidate was murdered before the general elections. PS-103 fell

vacant after the murder of MQM's Sajid Qureshi who had won the seat. Mohammad Hussain, who returned to the provincial assembly five times on MQM ticket in the past since 1992, will contest on PS-95 after skipping 2008 elections. Rauf Siddiqui, a former provincial minister, will contest on PS-103. Mr Siddiqui lost to Irfanullah Marwat on PS-114 by a painstakingly narrow margin previously.

Dawn - August 19th, 2013

By-Polls: Marriage Of Convenience between Pro and Anti Taliban Forces

The electoral alliance between pro and anti Taliban political forces against Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf for the August 22 by-elections has made the contest quite interesting in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially in NA-1 Peshawar. PTI candidate Gul Badshah is contesting against Awami National Party stalwart Haji Ghulam Ahmad Bilour for National Assembly seat NA-1. Religious, liberal, secular and right wing parties like Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, Pakistan People's Party, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party have entered into seat adjustment to outclass the PTI candidate in Peshawar. Like Peshawar, ANP has entered into seat adjustment with JUI-F in Swabi, Mardan and other areas where by-polls would take place. Ideologically, JUI-F is close to the Taliban. On the contrary, ANP and PPP both consider themselves secular and liberal but they have joined hands with JUI-F to defeat PTI, which also has a soft corner for the Taliban.

Leaders of JUI-F, a conservative religious force, are running campaign for Ghulam Bilour, the candidate of a secular party. They are organising joint corner meetings and press conferences asking their workers to vote for ANP candidate. Politics has now become a family business. Political parties have divorced their ideologies and now they have only one agenda: How to grab power? In general elections, JUI-F was against ANP and PTI. The PPP, PML-N and other political parties had also adopted the same strategy. But realpolitik made foes of the past friends of the day. JUI-F provincial secretary information Abdul Jalil Jan said that PTI had stolen mandate of JUI-F and ANP in general elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and came into power through 'bogus mandate'. ANP president Asfandyar Wali had thanked Maulana Fazlur Rehman for his party's sincere efforts and campaign in favour of Ghulam Bilour in NA-1, according to Jalil Jan.

Common objective of seat adjustment between religious and liberal parties is to hand down defeat on Imran Khan. He said that ANP could not form government or form policy by winning by-polls that was why JUI-F was supporting its candidates in Peshawar and other constituencies while ANP was also reciprocating. In the general elections, Jalil Jan, said JUI-F was attacking ANP because of its policies. But now the party was no more in power therefore, he said, JUI-F made alliance with ANP and it would not offend the Taliban. After entering into seat adjustment, JUI-F leaders have organised corner meetings and launched door-to-door campaign for Ghulam Bilour at the union council level. ANP president Asfandyar Wali and JUI central vice president Maulana Gul Naseeb Khan are likely to address a joint public meeting at Nishter Hall, Peshawar on Monday. The JUI leaders addressed election rally of ANP candidate for NA-5 on Sunday while ANP leaders are running campaign for JUI candidate in Swabi.

PTI chairman Imran Khan, who vacated NA-1, had bagged record 90,500 votes against Ghulam Bilour, who got 24,488 votes in the general elections. PPP candidate Mohammad Zulfiqar Afghani had obtained 7,121 votes and JI candidate Shabir Ahmad Khan got 7,051 votes. This shocking defeat had disheartened elderly Bilour and initially he was reluctant to contest the by-elections. He never tasted such a stunning defeat in his political career and was able to win the same seat four times. Finally party leaders consoled him to contest the by-polls. ANP and JUI F have serious reservations about the votes polled for Imran Khan in NA-1 and alleged that results

had been engineered. ANP provincial secretary information Malik Mustafa is optimistic that Ghulam Bilour would strike back in the by-polls and regain his seat.

Imran Khan was a popular candidate, but getting over 90,000 votes in NA-1 is impossible," he said, adding that general estimate was that he (Imran) would not get more than 60,000 votes. He alleged that returning officers had polled bogus votes for Imran and they themselves stamped ballot papers. Malik Mustafa said that the PTI position was weak in the by-elections as compared to the general elections, as the party popularity graph had dropped in the province because of its stance on terrorism, drone strikes and upward trend in acts of terrorism. He said that PTI had made a commitment to eliminate corruption, deliver justice, restore peace and stop drone strikes in tribal areas. Not a single commitment has been fulfilled so far and situation has further deteriorated since the PTI has formed a coalition government in the KP province. It is a fact that the PTI image has eroded since it has formed government in the province. The party workers and well wishers are disappointed.

Another setback for PTI is that a controversial person Gul Badshah has been allotted a ticket from NA-1 and Imran's old guard Samad Mursaleen has been ignored. He has revolted against the party and is contesting election as independent candidate. Despite certain drawbacks and weaknesses of the PTI, the daunting task for ANP and its allies is how to bring voters to the polling stations on August 22 to cope with the big margin between the PTI and ANP's votes in general elections.

Dawn - August 19th, 2013

Electioneering In Full Swing for PK-23 By-Poll

Candidates of various political parties contesting by-election for the provincial assembly constituency PK-23, Mardan, have geared up their electioneering to get support of maximum number of voters. Former chief minister Ameer Haider Khan Hoti had won election from both NA-9 and PK-23 in May 11 general election, but vacated the provincial assembly seat. The main candidates in the run in by-elections for PK-23 include Awami National Party's Ahmad Khan Bahadar, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's Umar Farooq Kakakhel and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Sami) Ikramullah Shahid. However, tough contest is expected between the candidates of ANP and PTI. "We are taking the by-polls in PK-23 constituency as a challenge because our candidate had won this seat in May 11 general elections," said ANP local leader Mehr Ghani. ANP chief Asfandyar Wali Khan had also visited the residence of Ameer Haider Hoti a few days ago and addressed a party gathering there in connection with the election campaign of their candidate. PTI candidate Umar Farooq has also geared up his campaign and he is being supported by elected representatives of his party, including MNA Mujahid Khan, MPA Iftikhar Mashwani and other party leaders. However, it has been observed that the PTI workers are yet to show the enthusiasm they had exhibited on the occasion of May 11 general elections. Also, the party's district president and MNA Ali Mohammad Khan had not been seen so far in the election campaign. Sources in the PTI said that Chief Minister Pervez Khattak had tasked education minister Mohammad Atif Khan to woo the disgruntled leaders and workers of the party.

Dawn - August 19th, 2013

Three-Party Alliance Faces PTI Challenge in NA-5

The rising popularity and success of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf in May 11 general election has compelled the major opposition parties to field a joint candidate in by-elections slated for

August 22 for NA-5, Nowshera-1, vacated by Chief Minister Pervez Khattak. Daud Khan Khattak, runner-up of the general election, is a joint candidate of the alliance, including Awami National Party, Pakistan People's Party and Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F). The three-party alliance has been continuing an aggressive election campaign for ANP candidate Daud Khattak against PTI candidate Dr Imran Khattak, who is the nephew and son-in-law of Chief Minister Pervez Khattak. The JUI-F is also fully supporting the campaign and holding joint gatherings and corner meetings for the success of ANP. The local leaders and workers of all the three major parties are out to woo voters and defeat the PTI candidate. "No one can defeat us when we have the active support of jumaat (mosque) and hujra (guesthouse) for our candidate," claimed former provincial minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain while talking to Dawn in Nowshera. He said that unlike past, the ANP and JUI-F, a religious party, had joined hands and as such no other party would be able to defeat their candidate.

The tri-party alliance has prepared posters displaying the pictures of three main leaders, including Asfandyar Wali Khan of ANP, late Benazir Bhutto of PPP and Maulana Fazlur Rehman of JUI-F, to win the public support through their combined efforts. On the other side, instead of a ruling parties alliance comprising Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, Jamaat-i-Islami and Qaumi Watan Party making joint efforts, the PTI candidate was campaigning from own party platform and arranged a big public gathering in a show of strength. The results of the May 11 general election showed that PTI candidate Pervez Khattak had secured more votes than the total votes of candidates of the three-party alliance. Also the PTI being in power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has an edge over its rival alliance in coming by-polls. As such, a tough one-on-one contest is expected between Imran Khattak of PTI and Daud Khattak of ANP. The returning officer, Ms Nusrat Yasmeen, has issued show-cause notices to about 30 female and 17 male teachers for refusing to perform duty in by-election due to security reasons. Also, a capacity-building workshop for election staff would be held and teachers assigned election duties have been asked to attend it.

Dawn - August 19th, 2013

By-Elections to Test Trends Set On May 11

The by-polls scheduled are important for major political parties not only because 16 national and 26 provincial seats will be up for grabs across the country, but also because the results will confirm or weaken the voting patterns and trends produced by the May election. The by-polls are being organised less than three-and-a-half months after the general election whose credibility has been questioned by many parties, especially by Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). The PTI, which has already requested the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the Supreme Court to order 'forensic' verification of the ballots cast in the four national seats in Punjab, including one in Lahore, plans to release its white paper a day before polling for the by-elections to press with its rigging charges. The PTI, which had predicted a rout of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and its own rise as the single largest party to the National Assembly in the May election, says it has learnt its lessons and would not let anyone cheat it again.

The by-elections will show if the PTI, which has to deal with factional fighting within, can maintain the momentum it was able to create before the general election. Hence, the results of the three national seats - NA-1 in Peshawar, NA-48 in Islamabad and NA-71 in Mianwali - are being billed by analysts to be most important for the future of the party, and by that implication, for the course of Pakistani politics from here. All these three seats were won by the PTI: two, NA-1 and NA-71, by Imran Khan and one, NA-48, by Makhdoom Javed Hashmi. For the PML-N,

the by-polls are crucial because the success or failure of its campaign to win the seats it has vacated or reclaim a few more from the rival PTI to add to its tally would be considered a vote of trust or no-confidence by the people, at least in its stronghold of Punjab, in the performance of its two-and-a-half-month-old governments in Islamabad and Lahore.

Some analysts argue the PML-N will be able to maintain its winning streak in Punjab because its presence promises the voters relative safety from terrorism that has claimed hundreds of lives in the rest of the country. This is despite wide criticism of its decisions to increase indirect taxes and electricity prices, which has adversely affected the middle classes. Also, PML-N could win over voters with its calls which seek greater support in its formative months. The argument of fully empowering a government with popular votes, in comparison to the weak coalition government which was in power until May, could tip the balance in the PML-N's favour. The question confronting the Pakistan People's Party, which was routed in Punjab, and the Awami National Party (ANP), which lost Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the PTI, is: are they yet ready to make a comeback? And the dilemma facing Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is not much very different: is the JUI-F equal to the challenge it has thrown to the PTI in the province?

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

All eyes are on NA-1 (Peshawar) with the ANP's Haji Ghulam Ahmed Bilour, who lost it to Imran Khan by a margin of 66,000 votes, campaigning to reclaim it from the PTI. The PTI's Gul Badshah is not only facing the challenge thrown by the ANP but also by disgruntled activist Samad Mursaleen of his own party. Bilour's high hopes may appear to some to be unrealistic given the margin of his defeat in May, but politics changes fast in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The three-way competition for D.I. Khan seat (NA-25) had generated a lot of interest in the last election and it is expected to repeat history on Thursday as well. Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who defeated the PTI's Dawar Khan Kundi and the PPP's Faisal Kareem Kundi in May, has put up his son Asad Mahmood from here. The main rivals remain the same. While PPP is fighting for it to revive its fortunes in the area, the PTI is contesting to take revenge from the JUI-F leader for running down and challenging Imran Khan.

PUNJAB

In Punjab, the most closely-watched contest will take place in Mianwali between the PML-N's Obaidullah Shadikhel and the PTI's Malik Waheed Khan. Shadikhel, who lost to Imran Khan in the May election, is said to have gained ground over his rival who is fighting to retain the seat won by his party chief in the general election. Observers in Mianwali say the last-minute disqualification of Ayla Malik over a fake degree could prove to be a major setback for the PTI's campaign, which had to replace her with a lesser known candidate. Also, the factional fight in the city party ranks is believed to have weakened the PTI. In NA-64 (Sargodha), the voters are faced with the option of choosing between PML-N's Sardar Mohammad Shafqat Hayat Khan and its renegade leader, Javed Hasnain Shah, who had won the seat in 2008 but was forced to resign it because of a fake degree.

Shah is promising his voters to present the seat to his old party on a platter after winning it to woo them away from his PML-N rival. The factional fighting in the party had forced the PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif to contest this seat for his party in May. If that was an attempt to remove the rift the factionalism seems to have deepened due to the award of the ticket to Shafqat. The PTI's Malik Nazir Ahmed Sobhi, observers say, will also get a good chunk of votes, but maybe not large enough to trouble the two front-runners. It will be a two-way contest between PTI's Shokat Ali Bhatti, son of former member of the national assembly and a PML-Q leader, Mehdi Hasan Bhatti, and the PML's Mian Shahid Hussain Khan Bhatti for NA-103 in Hafizabad. The seat was claimed by Mehdi Hasan Bhatti's brother Liaquat Bhatti in May on a PML-Q ticket but the

result was cancelled because of charge of rigging. The decision of Mehdi Bhatti to join and field his son for the by-polls on a PTI ticket may pay off, according to the people who know the area's politics.

Dawn - August 20th, 2013

Floods, Security Threats: ECP Refuses To Postpone By-Polls

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to go ahead and hold by-elections in all 42 constituencies on August 22, despite flooding and security threats. The decision, which was made at a meeting of the ECP chaired by acting Chief Election Commissioner Tassadiq Hussain Jilani, came after the commission turned down requests for postponement of by-elections in some constituencies of Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. A source privy to the proceedings told that Jhal Magsi's deputy commissioner had called for postponing the by-election on the Balochistan Assembly seat, PB-32 (Jhal Magsi), due to the ongoing floods. However, the ECP didn't grant his request. The provincial election commissioner endorsed the ECP decision after the provincial chief secretary told the meetings that only four of the 60 polling stations set up in the constituency were inundated. According to officials from the Met Office and NDMA, chances of widespread rain in the affected areas of the constituencies were slim until August 22.

The ECP secretary told the media that "there were requests for postponement [of by-elections] in Jhal Magsi but we [ECP] have decided to go ahead with polls. If needed we would relocate the affected polling stations." Sources also revealed that the defence secretary had raised apprehensions over holding by-polls in NA-25 (DI Khan) citing security threats. However, the K-P chief secretary didn't support the request for postponement arguing that the ECP should not bow down to terrorist threats. The ECP extended powers of a magistrate first class to officers-in-charge of army, rangers and Frontier Corps units deployed at polling stations on August 22. This is the first time in parliamentary history that such powers have been given to officers of security forces on the day of polling. A total of 1,840 polling stations have been declared 'most sensitive' and the ECP has decided to deploy army troops both inside and outside such polling stations. Meanwhile, 2,686 polling stations have been declared 'sensitive.'

The Express Tribune - August 20th, 2013

No Cell Phone inside Polling Booths: ECP

Amid enhanced security measures, election authorities have directed provincial chapters to ensure that all election material is handed over to the presiding officers in time as campaigning for the August 22 by-polls concluded at midnight before by-polls. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has already identified sensitive as well as highly sensitive polling stations in all of the 42 constituencies. The ECP issued directives to all provincial election commissioners to convey the presiding officers that no voter should be allowed to take his/her cell phones inside the polling booth. Those carrying cell phones would have to submit it to the presiding officer and then take it back after they have cast their vote. The step has been taken to discourage the trend where some contestants purchase votes and ensure that these are cast in their favour. The voter is asked to take a picture of the ballot paper after making the vote stamp as evidence. An ECP spokesman told that all election material has reached the returning officers and they had been directed to hand it over to the presiding officers a day before the polling. These presiding officers have been given powers of a first-class magistrate for three days - from August 21 to August 23, so that they can perform their duties effectively. The officer in-charge of the army,

Rangers and FC in a constituency will also have similar powers but only on the polling day. The commission has also issued SOPs for use of these powers.

By Polls in DI Khan Postponed

Barely a day after the ECP decided to go ahead with by-polls in all constituencies; it decided to postpone the polls in Dera Ismail Khan's National Assembly constituency NA-25. The ECP issued a notification in which it stated that it has received a report from the district and session's judge, who is also the returning officer, regarding the law and order situation in the constituency. The notification said that after receiving this report it had decided to postpone the polls. However, highly placed sources said that elections in this constituency were postponed on the insistence of the defence secretary who had warned the ECP that security agencies had 'credible' reports that terrorists could carry out attacks on August 22 in the city. During a meeting at the ECP central secretariat, the defence secretary had expressed apprehensions over security situation in DI Khan. However, K-P chief secretary opposed the idea of postponement and said that the situation in many other districts was equally bad. The chief secretary proposed that in DI Khan and other sensitive areas, law enforcement should be augmented. However, the election commission was again conveyed that it will be dangerous to go with polls in DI Khan, and this prompted it to postpone by-polls.

The Express Tribune - August 21st, 2013

Biggest-Ever By-Polls for 41 Seats

The country's biggest-ever by-elections in 41 national and provincial assembly constituencies will be held on August 22nd, 2013 - an exercise seen by many as a test of popularity graph of key political parties. According to the Election Commission of Pakistan, 519 candidates will contest for 41 seats - 15 of National and 26 of provincial assemblies. Most of the seats have been vacated by the winners of more than one seat, while others have fallen vacant because of disqualification of candidates by superior courts. Elections in some constituencies were not held on May 11 due to death of candidates. At the request of the ECP, the army has already deployed its troops in and around 'highly sensitive' polling stations. The army personnel will perform duty outside those polling stations which have been declared 'sensitive'. In most of the constituencies, a neck-and-neck contest is expected between candidates of ruling PML-N and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). The PPP is believed to be at number three in the contest.

NA SEATS: The National Assembly constituencies where by-elections will be held include NA-1 (Peshawar), NA-5 (Nowshera), NA-13 (Swabi), NA-25 (D.I. Khan-cum-Tank), NA-27 (Lakki Marwat), NA-48 (Islamabad), NA-68 (Sargodha), NA-71 (Mianwali), NA-83 (Faisalabad), NA-129 (Lahore), NA-177 (Muzaffargarh), NA-235 (Sanghar), NA-254 (Karachi) and NA-262 (Killa Abdullah). NA-1 and NA-71 seats have been vacated by PTI chief Imran Khan who chose to retain NA-56 (Rawalpindi). Mr Khan had contested for four NA seats and lost only one in Lahore to incumbent National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. The NA-68 seat has been vacated by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who retained his home constituency (NA-120 Lahore). NA-129 has been left by Shahbaz Sharif who retained his Punjab Assembly seat to become chief minister. NA-5 and NA-13 seats have been vacated by Pervez Khatak and Asad Qaisar of the PTI who retained their provincial assembly seats and were made chief minister and speaker of the KP Assembly, respectively. JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has decided to quit NA-27 and retain NA-24. The Maulana had also won the NA-25 (D.I. Khan) seat where by-election has been postponed for a few weeks because of threat of terrorist attacks. NA-177 has been vacated by Jamshed Ahmad Dasti, NA-235 by Pir Sadruddin Shah Rashdi of the PML-F and NA-216 by Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai. They had won more than one

seat. NA-83 and NA-254 seats fell vacant after the death of contesting candidates. By-elections will also be held for 15 seats of the Punjab Assembly, four of the Sindh Assembly, three of the Balochistan Assembly and four of the KP Assembly.

PUNJAB ASSEMBLY: Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan has vacated his provincial assembly seat (PP-6) and chose to retain his National Assembly seat. The election in PP-51 could not be held due to death of Mohammad Amjad Rafique. Monis Elahi of the PML-Q gave up his PP-118 seat. Khawaja Mohammad Asif of the PML-N has decided to quit PP-123 and retain NA seat to become Minister for Water and Power. PP-161 and PP-247 have been vacated by Shahbaz Sharif and PP-243 by Zulfiqar Ali Khosa.

BALUCHISTAN ASSEMBLY: By-elections will be held in three constituencies - PB-29, PB-32 and PB-44.

KP ASSEMBLY: By-elections will be held in four constituencies - KP-23 vacated by former Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti, KP-27 by PTI chief Imran Khan, KP-42 by Fareed Khan and KP-70 by another former chief minister Akram Khan Durrani.

SINDH ASSEMBLY: By-elections will be held in PS-12, PS-95, PS-103 and PS-64.

Dawn - August 22nd, 2013

PML-N Up Against Imran's PTI in Key Constituencies

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan is back on board the by-election campaign, but the PML-N claims to have a comprehensive strategy planned out. Apart from a few PPP candidates who have their own vote-banks, the former ruling party is not much of a competition for others. The PML-N has its eyes set on 13 out of the 15 Punjab Assembly seats and five National Assembly seats out of total of six due to be polled in the by-elections across the province. The competition in Punjab is basically between the PML-N and PTI, with the former attempting to clean sweep the by-polls to psychologically pre-empt the latter before the upcoming local government elections.

Mianwali: Still A PTI Stronghold?

NA-71 (Mianwali-I) can be the toughest seat for the PML-N to win. Imran Khan vacated this seat, leaving the party scrambling for a suitable candidate. The PML-N has fielded Obaidullah Khan Shadi Khel who was defeated by Imran in the May 11 elections, while the PTI has pitched Malik Waheed Khan to contest this hot seat. Malik Waheed is the father-in-law of PTI's disqualified candidate from this constituency, Ayla Malik's daughter. However, her disqualification and her weak replacement may tilt the tide in favour of the PML-N and potentially fill the gap of around 60,000 votes between Shadi Khel and Khan.

Keeping It Local

NA-68 (Sargodha-V) is the only seat where the party's office-bearers within the district are contesting by-elections. This seat was vacated by Nawaz Sharif and now PML-N's Sardar Muhammad Shafqat Hayat Khan is the hot favourite against PTI's Malik Nazir Ahmed Sobhi. Sobhi was formerly PML-N's district vice president, which adds to the competition. An independent candidate Javed Hussain was also PML-N's local office-bearer. Both will give a tough time to Khan.

'Brothers in Arms'?

PP-243 (Dera Ghazi Khan) will be challenging for the PML-N. This seat is unique as two sons of PML-N Senator Sardar Zulfiqar Khan Khosa are contesting against each other. PML-N's Sardar

Hissamuddin Khan is up against his younger brother PPP's Sardar Saifuddin Khan Khosa. The PML-N is in an awkward position on this seat because of the family involvement and this constituency historically staying with the party and the Khosa clan. PTI's Ahmed Ali Direshak will most probably not put up any serious challenge. Similarly, two cousins are also up against each other in PP-150 (Lahore-XIV). PML-N's Mian Marghoob Ahmed will contest against PTI's Maher Wajid Azam who will divide the Arain tribe vote, and consequently divide the historical PML-N vote bank. Maghroob had previously won the MNA seat of the constituency. Correction: Earlier version of the story incorrectly stated Malik Waheed is the father-in-law of Ayla Malik. The error is regretted.

The Express Tribune - August 22nd, 2013

By-Election 2013: Smooth Voting Amid Bouts of Disorder

A bomb scare disrupted polling in NA-262 (Qila Abdullah) and the Election Commission staff moved the polling station to an alternative place to restart balloting. Unknown men left two drums near the Haji Bakht Street and Shah Sawar polling stations during the voting. After rumours of bomb spread, the voting process was disrupted and restarted after three hours. A contingent of Pakistan Army seized the drums and called its bomb disposal squad from Quetta. The bomb disposal squad checked the drums extensively and only found dust. Apart from the bomb scare, one man was killed while three others were injured in an exchange of fire during the voting process in NA-262. The armed clash was reported between members of a religious party and a political party at the Jungle Pir Alizai polling station. Many people protested against the incident and blocked the National Highway for some time. Separately, explosives were found from a polling station in Chaman.

Meanwhile, voting in NA-235 (Sanghar) was also marred by violence where a man said to be a relative of PML-F candidate Khuda Bux Dars was killed and four others were wounded. PML-F MPA Jam Madad Ali blamed PPP legislator Roshan Deen Junejo for the killing. An exchange of aerial firing between PPP and PML-F supporters preceded the incident, which took place at the Dalyar polling station No. 58. "Some PPP leaders opened fire but they were surrounded by PML-F supporters and as Junejo and his men tried to speed away, their vehicle hit these men," Ali claimed. PPP's youth wing leader Tanvir Arain denied the allegations and said PML-F workers were harassing his party's minority voters and not allowing them to cast their vote. "They blocked the road leading to the polling station and resorted to aerial firing." Other PPP leaders Senator Aajiz Dhamrah, MNA Roshan Junejo and MPA Sardar Shah also reached the site to 'support their party members'. PPP candidate Shazia Marri, who also came to the polling station later, said, "The opponents are facing defeat, therefore, they have resorted to coercive tactics." Polling was suspended around 1:15 pm for more than an hour. No case was registered until the filing of this report.

Meanwhile, army troops arrested PPP MPA Bahadur Dahiri for brandishing weapons in the Malook Mahar polling station. He was later handed over to the police. At least 40 PML-F workers were arrested for displaying weapons outside the Talah Shah polling station. A case has been lodged against them in Nauabad police station for violating Section 144 of the Pakistan Penal Code. The PML-F MPA Jam Madad Ali organised a protest against the arrest outside the police station. He claimed that the police are not arresting the PPP leaders and workers who are openly carrying weapons. "The law should be one for all." Although the Pakistan Army, Rangers and the police took control of all the three by-poll constituencies in Karachi, five people were injured during a scuffle among workers of two political parties in Korangi. No other major incident took place in the otherwise violence-prone metropolis. The brawl took place at the NA-

254's polling station No. 40 in Korangi's Vita Chowrangi area. Police said members of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) clashed with each other over unknown reasons.

PTI worker Javed Ali, accompanied by three others - Zeeshan Niazi, Sultan Shah and Major (retd) Amir - was going towards the polling stations when gunmen stopped them in a black Toyota Corolla and started a fight. He insinuated that they were MQM supporters. On the contrary, MQM members denied the claims and said PTI men were trying to cast bogus votes. PTI resorted to violence when they were stopped, and two of MQM's members were injured. SHO Abbas Kolachi said that members of both the parties threw stones at each other, but fortunately, no one used firearms. There were reports of polls-related scuffles and altercations in Faisalabad, too, in the two constituencies NA-83 and PP-51. Voting, although, was rather peaceful as 40 polling stations were declared 'sensitive'. In NA-83's polling station No.125, a scuffle broke out between supporters of PML-N and PTI. Polling agents who supported either party also joined in. The men shouted abuses at each other, and slapping and manhandling ensued.

The Express Tribune - August 23rd, 2013

38pc Turnout Registered In By-Polls: ECP

The Election Commission of Pakistan announced official results on August 23rd, 2013, for 13 National and 26 provincial assembly seats, recording a turnout of 40 and 36 per cent respectively. In an unexpected result, Ghulam Ahmad Bilour of the Awami National Party (ANP) won the NA-1 (Peshawar) seat by securing 34,386 votes. His closest rival, Gul Badshah of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), bagged 28,911 votes. The turnout in the constituency was 22.96pc. The seat was vacated by PTI chief Imran Khan. In NA-13 (Swabi), Aqibullah of the PTI emerged as victorious by securing 43,333 votes. Attaul Haq of JUI-F was the runner up with 32,300 votes. The turnout was 22.12pc. The PTI managed to retain the NA-48 (Islamabad) seat vacated by Makhdoom Javed Hashmi. The party's candidate, Asad Umar, won the seat by securing 48,073 votes against 41,186 by PML-N's Ashraf Gujjar. PPP's Faisal Sakhi Butt could get only 3,943 votes.

In NA-68 (Sargodha), Sardar Shafqat Hayat Khan of the PML-N won with 67,888 votes, defeating independent candidate Javaid Hussain Shah who bagged 42,472 votes. PTI's Nazir Ahmad got 40,169 votes. The PTI lost another important seat in Mianwali (NA-71) left by Imran Khan. It was snatched by PML-N's Obaidullah Shah who bagged 95,210 votes, defeating PTI's Malik Waheed Khan (76,684 votes). PPP's Shaukat Khan could manage only 405 votes. In NA-83 (Faisalabad), PML-N's Mian Abdul Mannan (47,107 votes) defeated PTI's Faizullah Kamoke (36,866 votes). PML-N's Mian Shahid Bhatti won the NA-103 (Hafizabad) seat by obtaining 78,113 votes. PTI's Shaukat Ali Bhatti got 67,072 and the PPP candidate only 479 votes. In NA-129 (Lahore), PML-N's Shazia Mubashir won comfortably with 44,894 votes, defeating PTI's Mohammad Mansha Sindhu (26,071). The PPP candidate got 3,800 votes.

Another interesting case of losing seat by the victor's group was seen in NA-177 (Muzafarghar) which was won by PPP's Ghulam Noor Rabbani Khar, father of former foreign minister Hina Rabbani Khar. He bagged 69,903 votes, defeating Javed Dasti (60,805 votes), an independent candidate. He is brother of Jamshed Dasti who had vacated the seat. In NA-235 (Sanghar), PPP's Shazia Marri (66,166 votes) easily defeated PML-F's Khuda Bux (55,719 votes). Shamsun Nisa, another PPP candidate, won the NA-237 (Thatta) seat, defeating Riaz Shirazi of the PML-N. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) regained its traditional seat, NA-254 (Karachi), with a huge margin. Its candidate Mohammad Ali Rashid got 53,045 votes, defeating PTI's Mohammad

Naeem (5,855 votes). The PML-N candidate got only 670 votes. In NA-262 (Qila Abdullah), PkMAP's Addul Qadir Khan (37,584 votes) defeated JUI-F's Qari Sher Ali (19,548 votes).

PUNJAB ASSEMBLY: The PML-N won 11 of the 15 provincial assembly seats. The PPP and the PTI won two seats each. The seats won by the PML-N candidates are: Chaudhry Sarfraz Afzal (PP-6), Asad Ali Tabassum (PP-51), Chaudhry Akhtar Abbas Bosal (PP-118), Khawaja Mohammad Mansha (PP-123), Khawaja Salman Rafiq (PP-142), Mian Marghoob Ahmad (PP-150), Chaudhry Gulzar Ahmad (PP-161), Mohammad Zubair Khan (PP-210), Rana Babar Hussain (PP-217), Hammad Nawaz Khan (PP-254) and Rais Mohammad Mehboob (PP-292). PPP's Mian Khurram Jehangir Wattoo won the PP-193 seat and Makhdoom Syed Ali Akbar Mehmood PP-292. The seats won by the PTI candidates are: Ahmad Ali Khan Darishak (PP-243) and Sardar Ali Raza Khan Darishak (PP-254).

SINDH ASSEMBLY: The MQM won three seats and the PPP one. Winners of the MQM included Dr Zafar Ahmad Kamali (PS-64), Mohammad Hussain Khan (PS-95) and Abdul Rauf Siddiqui (PS-103). Abid Hussain Bhaio of PPP won the PS-12 seat.

BALUCHISTAN ASSEMBLY: Haji Mohammad Khan Lehri and Prince Ahmad Ali of the PML-N won two seats (PB-29 and PB-44). The PB-32 seat was clinched by Nawabzada Tariq Magsi, an independent candidate.

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA ASSEMBLY: ANP's Ahmad Khan Bahadur won the PK-22 seat and JUI-F's Azam Khan Durrani PK-70. The PK-27 and PK-42 seats went to two independent candidates - Jamshed Khan and Shah Faisal Khan - respectively.

Dawn - August 24th, 2013

Low Turnout Seen Across KP in By-Polls

Turnout in the August 22 by-elections remained low as voters didn't show the enthusiasm they had exhibited in the May 11 general elections. It was observed that voters opted to stay away from the polling stations in most of the constituencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The turnout in NA-1 Peshawar where Ghulam Ahmad Bilour of the Awami National Party (ANP) defeated Gul Badshah of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) by a margin of 5,475 votes also remained low. PTI chief Imran Khan had won the seat in the general elections by polling 90,500 votes. The turnout remained 22.90 percent compared to 46 percent recorded in the general elections. The election result showed low turnout in NA-13 Swabi where PTI's Aqibullah Khan, who is brother of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, routed Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) candidate Maulana Attaul Haq Darvaish. Aqibullah secured 43,333 votes while Maulana Darvaish got 32,300 votes. The turnout was 22.12 percent compared to 40.96, which was recorded in the general election. The voter turnout in the by-polls remained low despite the fact the ANP and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) also supported the candidate of the JUI-F. The results of NA-5 Nowshera and NA-27 Lakki Marwat have been withheld. A low turnout was witnessed in PK-23 Mardan where only 23,546 out of the total registered 112,346 votes were polled.

Unofficial results show that 17,546 out of 66,056 registered male voters cast their votes while only 6,000 out of 46,290 registered female voters opted to go to the polling stations. The turnout was recorded at around 25 percent. The turnout remained low at the polling stations set up for women voters. In villages, including Qudrat Killay, Hassanabad, Mohammad Umar Koroona, Station Koroona, Wahid Shah Koroona, Zafar Koroona, Jalal Killay, Chato Killay, Khazana Dhari Keley, Haspatal Koroona, Khanpur Koroona and Jabba, women didn't cast ballots. The turnout at PK-27 Mardan, however, was satisfactory compared to other constituencies. The seat fell vacant

after the killing of Imran Khan Mohmand in a suicide blast at Shergarh town in Mardan. His brother Jamshed Khan has now won it by getting 36,699 votes. His rival Fazle Rabbani of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) bagged 10,177 votes and the candidate of JUI-F got just 3,500 votes. Around 50,000 votes were polled in this constituency. The turnout at PK-70 Bannu vacated by former chief minister and JUI-F leader Akram Khan Durrani remained around 33 percent. JUI-F's Azam Durrani won the seat by securing 24,291. PTI's Malik Adnan polled 19,504 votes. Some 44,188 out of 128,360 registered votes were polled. The turnout at PK-42 Hangu was also low compared to the May 11 general election.

The News - August 24th, 2013

Disenfranchisement of Women: Repolling Likely In NA-5, NA-27 Next Weekend

Re-polls at polling stations in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa constituencies where women were barred from voting in by-elections are likely to be held by next weekend. The results of the nine polling stations each of NA-5 Nowshera-I and NA-27 Lakki Marwat were withheld following reports that women were not allowed to vote by local elders. ECP officials said they will submit the record of the concerned polling stations to the Peshawar High Court. PHC Chief Justice Dost Muhammad Khan had taken notice of reports of women being barred from voting in the two constituencies. The officials said that while re-polls would be held next weekend if the court ordered it to do so, no re-polls would be held if the record proved there was no anomaly in the voting process in NA-5 and NA-27. According to ECP officials, there is no law in the country which stipulates any particular number of female votes is required to validate the results. They said, in such an event, the election authorities had compiled the results of the two constituencies already. Interestingly, the ECP last year proposed a law stipulating that if the number of votes cast by women in any constituency was less than 10% of the total number of votes cast, the results would be annulled and a re-poll would be held. The proposed law was rejected by the previous Parliament, however.

The Express Tribune - August 25th, 2013

Lakki Marwat By-Elections: JUI-F Urges Re-Polling In 90 Stations

Maulana Fazlur Rehman's party is all set to file a petition in the election commission demanding re-polls in 90 polling stations for NA-27 Lakki Marwat. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had withheld results from the constituency in the August 22 by-elections after incidents of women being barred by elders and community leaders in certain areas of Lakki Marwat were reported. The Peshawar High Court chief justice had also taken suo motu notice of the incident directing the electoral body to hold re-polls. Women were barred from voting not only at 23 polling stations but at around 80 to 90 stations. The NA-27 seat was originally won by the JUI-F chief, during the May 11 general elections, who also won two other national assembly seats from Tank and Dera Ismail Khan. He later decided to keep his hometown seat of D I Khan. After media reports and poll results, the ECP determined that women voters' turnout remained very low at nine polling stations where local community elders in discussion with the party candidates had decided that women would not cast their votes in the by-elections.

However, Fazl's spokesperson Achakzai in a statement said that women voters have been barred from voting in around 90 polling stations where after an agreement with local elders, a very small number of proxy votes were cast. The ECP has proposed a legislation suggesting conducting re-polls at polling stations where women voters' turnout remains less than 10%. But no legislative work has so far been carried out in this regard. Therefore, the ECP has ordered re-

polls at only those nine polling stations which were identified by the PHC. According to unofficial results, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate was in a decisive lead over his rival candidate Maulana Attaur Rehman, Fazlur Rehman's brother, from JUI-F. He said that JUI-F will also raise the issue with PHC. JUI-F would certainly fail to retain the seat it won in the May 11 general elections if the re-polls, scheduled for next weekend, are held on nine polling stations for women and not in the 90 polling stations as demanded by the JUI-F chief. The PTI victory came as a surprise after the second strongest contender from the area, the Saifullah family, decided not to participate in the by-elections.

The Express Tribune - August 26th, 2013

By-Polls: Level Playing Field Led To ANP's Victory

ANP's Zahid says anti-Taliban parties were prevented from campaigning in the general elections. The by-poll results have strengthened the claims of left-wing parties that they were not given a level playing field in the May 11 general elections for running their election campaigns, as they have won many seats in the by-elections. During the general elections, left-wing parties encountered many terrorist attacks that killed many of their supporters. Some of the election candidates were also killed in the attacks, forcing the parties to limit their election campaign. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) dominated the general elections, taking advantage of the absence of the leftist parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Awami National Party (ANP). As a result, the PPP, ANP and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) lost important seats during the May 11 polls.

However, in the by-elections, which were held in a relatively peaceful atmosphere, the leftist parties made a come back by winning five National Assembly and six provincial assemblies' seats. Before the general elections, the Taliban had warned the voters to stay away from the rallies of the PPP, ANP and MQM and also warned to attack party members, said the leaders of these political parties. The ANP, which was ousted by the PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the general elections, managed to win back the NA-1 in the by-polls, which was previously won by PTI Chairman Imran Khan. ANP senior leader Senator Zahid Khan, while commenting on the NA-1 victory said, "In the general elections, liberal and anti-Taliban parties were sidelined. We were prevented from holding rallies. We were unable to run the election campaign as the names of our supporters and candidates were placed on the hit-list of the terrorists who launched many attacks on the liberal parties, killing 71 ANP supporters." In the by-elections, the PPP won three NA and three provincial assemblies' seats, the MQM won one NA and two provincial assembly seats from Karachi and the ANP won one NA and one provincial assembly seat.

Pakistan Today - August 27th, 2013

Local Government Elections

Devolving Power: LB Polls In Sept Seen Near Impossible

Enshrined in the constitution as the lowest rung of government and fast becoming a thorny issue, local bodies (LB) elections seem distant still with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) saying that their hands are 'tied' and that meeting a Supreme Court deadline of holding the countrywide polls by September 15 is becoming increasingly impossible. Last month, the Supreme Court had directed provincial governments to complete new LB legislation and delimitation of constituencies by mid-August and directed the election commission to hold elections across the country by mid-September. However, according to a senior ECP official

familiar with developments, “the government has neither announced holding of LB elections nor has it done the required legislation for the purpose.” Given the seriousness of the issue, the official revealed that holding of LB polls came under discussion during a recent meeting of the ECP, chaired by Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan, on progress of several ECP projects. Talking about the meeting, the official added that the secretary was given a detailed briefing on LB polls and was informed that the commission’s hands were tied and it was not possible to hold elections without any step from the government. A comprehensive and uniform Local Government Ordinance (LGO) was enacted in 2001 by former military ruler Pervez Musharraf. However after running a uniform local government system across the country for eight years, the ordinance expired in 2009. Thereafter, the responsibility of legislating on and holding local government elections became a provincial responsibility. The ECP once again became the centre of LB polls when the enactment of the 18th Constitutional Amendment once again shifted the responsibility of holding the election to the ECP.

The Express Tribune – August 06th, 2013

In Punjab, LB Polls Will Be On Non-Party Basis

If the Punjab Assembly passes the new local government bill, the upcoming local bodies (LB) elections will be held in the province on a non-party basis. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved the Punjab Local Government (PLG) Bill 2013. The premier was briefed about the bill by Punjab Law and Local Government Minister Rana Sanaullah at a high-level meeting of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. According to party officials, the prime minister’s recommendations were incorporated into the bill. The bill will be tabled in the Punjab Assembly on August 19 where it’s expected to be passed on August 22. Sanaullah told that the premier studied the bill along with the recommendations of a special committee of the Punjab Assembly, civil society and media persons.

Major Features of the PLG 2013 Bill

Sharing details of the bill, Sanaullah said under the proposed legislation cities with a population larger than 500,000 people will be governed by municipal corporations, which will be further divided into city councils. The chairmen of these councils will elect the mayor and his deputy for their respective cities. Lahore, meanwhile, will have a metropolitan corporation which will work the same way as the municipal corporations.

- Towns with a population ranging between 30,000 and 500,000 people will be governed by a municipal committee. These committees will be subdivided into wards, each of which will elect a representative. The representatives of each of the wards in a town will elect the chairman and vice chairman of their respective municipal committee.
- Rural areas, with a population less than 30,000, will have village councils which will directly elect their chairmen. The chairmen of all the village councils in a certain district will then form district councils, whose authority will be limited to rural areas.
- Both urban and village councils will have six directly-elected members and five reserved seats - two for women and one each for ‘peasants’, non-Muslims and the youth - in addition to a chairman and vice chairman. If a council chairman is later elected as a mayor or deputy mayor, the vice chairman will take over in his stead and the empty seat in the council will be filled by the candidate who finished seventh in the election for general seats.
- Under the bill, LB elections will be held on a non-party basis. According to Sanaullah, the decision was taken after he informed Premier Nawaz that during general discussion over

the bill in the Punjab Assembly, 67% of the house supported holding LB elections on a non-party basis. He added that senior PML-N leaders and bureaucrats present in the meeting also suggested holding the LB polls on a non-party basis.

Sanaullah said the premier also approved the inclusion of reserved seats for technocrats in the metropolitan and municipal corporations, district councils and municipal committees. He said, following discussion, it was decided that journalists, lawyers, educationists, health experts and retired bureaucrats will come under the technocrat category. In Lahore's metropolitan corporation, the PLG 2013 bill envisages 50 reserved seats, of which 25 will be for women, 10 each for labourers and non-Muslims, and five for technocrats. In all other corporations and councils, reserved seats for technocrats and others will be fixed in view of the population of the respective areas. Sanaullah said the meeting participants have also suggested raising the minimum age of participation in local government elections from 21 years - currently stipulated in the PLG 2013 bill - to 25 years.

The Express Tribune - August 18th, 2013

LB Polls Minimum Age Limit of Candidates Fixed At 18 Years in Punjab

The Punjab government has decided to fix 18 years the minimum age limit for candidates running for the local bodies elections in the province. The special committee of the Punjab Assembly on Local Government approved the draft of the Local Government Bill-2013. However, it turned down three major demands of the opposition, including holding mayor and deputy mayor/district chairman and vice-chairmen elections directly, restoring the tier of towns/tehsils and holding elections on party basis and making elected mayor/chairman responsible for the law and order situation. The committee comprising 12 members, including four from the opposition, held various meetings during Ramazan to discuss the bill. The opposition members had proposed amendments to the bill, including holding the election on party basis, adopting a uniform system throughout the province after abolishing the ward system in Lahore and other major districts, restoring the tier of towns/tehsils, electing mayor/chairmen and deputy mayor/vice-chairmen at the metropolitan and district levels directly instead of through indirect election, strengthening the position of mayor/chairmen by empowering them with executive responsibilities instead of giving these powers to deputy commissioners.

The treasury members accommodated some of the suggestions of the opposition, including adopting a uniform system of union councils throughout the province. Interestingly, bureaucrats from the Law and Local Government departments were in favour of adopting the union council system instead of ward system in Lahore and other major districts. The law and local government secretaries supported the opposition viewpoint that it would be easier for them to conduct election on the basis of union councils as otherwise they had to redesign the entire infrastructure of ward system. Moreover, they claimed that if they adopted the ward system having one councillor in each ward, they would have to go through the process of delimitation, which would increase the size of district assembly by three times. The size of district assembly would reach 500 after the delimitation, which would be hard to manage by a mayor. The suggestion from the bureaucrats was supported by the committee members as they were of the view that it would help them in accommodating maximum workers at the UC level. However, the treasury members did not show any flexibility on the issue of restoring towns/tehsils, making mayor/chairmen as focal persons in the districts instead of DCs. The provincial government decided to ignore the issue of elections on party or non-party basis.

Law Minister Rana Sanaullah said the government had put the ball in the court of political parties whether they wanted to contest local bodies' elections on direct or indirect basis. If the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf wants to hold the election on party basis, it could award tickets to its candidates while the other parties could stay away from the process. Likewise, the treasury has also accommodated the proposal of opposition for holding the chairman/vice-chairman election of UC directly instead of indirectly. Nevertheless, it did not budge on their demand for holding mayor/chairmen elections directly on party basis. Speaking to the media outside the Punjab Assembly, Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah praised the participation and interest shown by the opposition. He said the Lahore High Court Bar did not have the authority to file a reference against the judges. He said only the federal government had the authority to change a governor of any province.

The News - August 16th, 2013

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Human Rights Related Issues

SC Rejects Investigation Report on Missing Person

Rejecting Rawalpindi police's investigation report about the recovery of a missing person, the Supreme Court (SC) directed the city's SP (Investigation) to interrogate accused officials of intelligence agencies in the matter related to the forced disappearance of Zaheer Muzaffar. A two-member bench of the court, headed by Justice Ijaz Ahmad Chaudhry, also gave "last opportunity" to SP Haroon Joya and warned him that the case would be handed over to another investigation officer if no progress was made within 15 days. Zaheer Muzaffar has been missing from Rawalpindi since February 2011. During the hearing, Punjab Additional Advocate General Faisal Malik told the bench that father of the missing person had accused intelligence agencies of abducting his son but no evidence had been found in this regard. He informed the court that record pertaining to phone calls of Zaheer had been collected, adding that Zaheer had made his last reported contact with his relatives. Malik further told the court that it has been proved that the last phone call Zaheer received from an unknown number was from the Intelligence Bureau (IB). He told the court that Zaheer was working with the head of Askari Bank at his home.

However, Malik added, the day Zaheer was allegedly abducted; the owner of the house was in Karachi. The additional advocate general further told the court that two guards, who were serving with the owner of the house, were also interrogated. SP Haroon told the court that owner of the house had also confirmed that he was in Karachi at the time of incident. Justice Gulzar Ahmed inquired the SP as to whether Zaheer was involved in any unlawful activity. The SP told the court that police have no proofs of Zaheer having links with any jihadi group. Justice Ijaz Ahmed Chaudhry remarked that investigation was not being carried out in a proper manner. SP Haroon told the court that the joint investigation team was of the view that Zaheer had crossed the border. At this, Justice Ijaz Ahmed Chaudhry said that how it was possible that Zaheer was abducted from Rawalpindi and then he immediately crossed the border. The father of Zaheer told the court that personnel of secret agencies had visited his house and got Form B and a copy of National Identity Card (NIC) of Zaheer. Amna Masood Janjua told the court that the area where Zaheer was working with the head of Askari Bank was under surveillance. Therefore, she said, there was possibility that Zaheer had been abducted by intelligence agencies.

Later, the court directed police to probe the case on sound footings after interrogating secret agencies. The hearing of the case was adjourned for two weeks. Meanwhile, in another case of a disappeared person, the court was informed that the missing person, Usama Waheed, had been detained in an internment centre in Lakki Marwat. The bench directed the authorities concerned to arrange a meeting of the detained person with his family and also submit details of charges levelled on him. The court adjourned the hearing of the case until August 22.

Daily Times - August 16th, 2013

HRW Outlines 10 Steps to Improve HR Situation

The new government should urgently address rights abuses, the Human Rights Watch said in a letter written to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The abuses include attacks on religious minorities, disappearances in Balochistan, and impunity for abusive militant groups, the

watchdog said. "Pakistan has made impressive gains in very challenging circumstances since democracy was restored in 2008," said Ali Dayan Hasan, Pakistan director at Human Rights Watch, according to a press release. "But unless the government calls a halt to serious human rights abuses, these gains may slip away." The watchdog outlines "10 steps to improve human rights". Since 2012, well over 650 Shias have been killed in targeted attacks across the country, the majority from the Hazara community in Balochistan, HRW recalled. The government should apprehend and prosecute those responsible for attacks on the Shia and other groups, it said. "Militant attacks on the Shia have occurred with increasing ferocity while the security forces have looked on helplessly," Mr Hasan said. "Whether the failure to hold and deter attackers is a function of incompetence or complicity by elements of the security forces, the government has a responsibility to reverse this state of affairs."

According to the HRW, it has recorded repeated enforced disappearances and killings of suspected Baloch militants by the military, intelligence agencies, and the Frontier Corps. "Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif should take all necessary measures to end enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detentions in Balochistan," Mr Hasan said. "But for that to happen the government should fully investigate and prosecute as appropriate anyone who orders or commits abuses." Prime Minister Sharif should redouble efforts to protect religious minorities and impose a moratorium on use of the blasphemy law, the Human Rights Watch said. The government should also enact legislation against domestic violence and measures to improve investigation and prosecution of "honour" killings and acid attacks, which target women, the statement said. "There are many challenges to making Pakistan a rights-respecting democracy and there are no quick fixes," Mr Hasan said. "But for the development of Pakistan, it is essential for the government to take concrete steps to protect fundamental civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights as part of an active human rights agenda."

Dawn - August 24th, 2013

Lawyers Reject Present Contempt of Court Law

Lawyers, human rights activists and journalists passed a resolution against the current contempt law and declared it in conflict with right to freedom of expression. They passed the resolution at a seminar titled 'Freedom of expression and contempt of court law' held by the Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA). The speakers of the seminar included PPP Senator Aitzaz Ahsan, Pakistan Bar Council Vice Chairman Qalb-e-Hassan, former presidents of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Ali Ahmad Kurd and Yasin Azad, SCBA Secretary Javed Iqbal Raja, LHCBA President Abid Saqi, Awami National Party's Ahsan Wyne, ex-judge and former federal minister Dr Khalid Ranjha, journalist Matiullah Jan, ex-parliamentarian and columnist Ayaz Amir. The participants also endorsed the resolution of the Balochistan Bar Association regarding the appointment of judges in the superior courts. Addressing the seminar, Abid Saqi said that the judiciary should protect its dignity through its decisions instead of the contempt of court law. He said that this law should not be misused and added that this law should be restricted to the implementation of court verdicts. He called this law a violation of the fundamental right of freedom of expression. He said that the LHCBA would enforce 'contempt of bar law' and a five-member committee would hear the complaints against judges with regard to their objectionable behaviour with lawyers in courts. He also said that under the bar's law, the courtrooms of the judges would be locked if the committee gave its findings against a judge.

Aitzaz Ahsan said that the contempt of court law was not acceptable, as it had imposed restriction on thoughts. He said that superior courts should show tolerance in exercising this law and added that this tolerance should not be shown to only certain faces.

He said that court decisions were always criticised all over the world and the right of expression should not be curtailed in the name of contempt. He said the lawyers' movement was for the judiciary and not a single individual. He said that it was a wrong perception that the drive was only for the restoration of the chief justice of Pakistan. Yasin Azad said that the lawyers were vigilant and would not allow anyone to usurp the independence of the judiciary. He further said that the Supreme Judicial Council should only send a superior court judge home and it should not be dependent on one man's choice. Ali Ahmed Kurd said that the judiciary was restored due to the lawyers, media, labourers and people's two years long struggle and no one could take it away. He said the lawyers would guard their freedom at any cost. He advised Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan to stick to his stance regarding the judiciary for its controversial role in the general election. He said that Imran Khan should stand by his remarks or change his counsel.

Qalb-e-Hassan said that the independence of the bar association was as necessary as that of the judiciary. He further said that the superior judiciary should select the right direction as it was in the national interest. Ehsan Wyne said that lawyers always fought for the dignity of the judiciary and they would keep up their tradition. Matiullah Jan stressed for self-accountability. He said that those who were committed with their ideology and expression should not surrender and fight to uphold their point of view. Ayaz Amir said that the right of expression was guaranteed by the constitution.

Daily Times - August 25th, 2013

Child Rights

Malala awarded 2013 Children's Peace Prize

Teenage activist Malala Yousafzai, shot in the head by a Taliban militant last October after campaigning for girls' right to education, has won the prestigious International Children's Peace Prize, KidsRights announced. The Pakistani 16-year-old will receive the award from 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner and women's rights campaigner Tawakkol Karman at a glittering ceremony in The Hague on September 6, the Amsterdam-based organisation said. Malala "risked her life in the fight for access to education for girls all over the world," KidsRights said in a statement. "By awarding the 2013 International Children's Peace Prize... KidsRights shines the spotlight on a brave and talented child who has demonstrated special dedication to children's rights," it added. The passionate advocate for girls education was shot in the head by a Taliban gunman while on a school bus near her home in Swat Valley last year. She was given life-saving treatment in Britain where she now lives, but the attack galvanised her campaign for greater educational opportunities for girls. Malala's brave fight back from her injuries and her speech at the United Nations in July has made her a leading contender for this year's Nobel Peace Prize. But the response to her in Pakistan has been mixed, with many hailing her as a national heroine while others have criticised her for promoting a "Western" agenda. The International Children's Peace Prize, an initiative of the Dutch based KidsRights Foundation, was launched in 2005 by former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, when he chaired the Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Rome. It carries a cash value of 100,000 euros (\$133,000) that is invested in projects relating to the winner's cause. Last year's winner was 13-year-old Cris "Kesz" Valdez for his work with Filipino street children while he himself was destitute.

Daily Times - August 28th, 2013

Minority Rights

Christians, Hindus Observe Minorities' Day

The two major minorities living in the city of Lahore, Christians and Hindus celebrated the Minorities' Day offering special prayers in churches and mandirs for the betterment of the country and held rallies, seminars and cake-cutting ceremonies. During their speeches on this occasion, the minority leaders urged the federal and provincial governments to make efforts to provide security and equal rights of citizenship to them, saying they are not only true Pakistanis but also "patriotic children of this soil where they have been living for hundreds of years". In their speeches, the minority leaders also demanded the government to work for removing all such articles in the constitution, especially Article 295-B and 295-C, which are creating a sense of bias towards the minorities. The Christian community in the ceremony also disclosed that Zafarwala in district Narowal, the village of the first Christian converts in east Punjab, has been flooded. Community Development Initiative (CDI), an NGO working for the Christian community, announced a relief package for the 1,300 affected families of Zafarwala.

According to details, Christian community held special services in churches in connection with the Minorities' Day in Pakistan and offered prayers for the development of the country and their community. Later, the Christian community organisations also held some ceremonies to highlight community issues. All Pakistan Minorities Alliance-Founder Group held a special ceremony at Saint Paul Church located at Walton presided over by the organisation's head and former member Punjab Assembly Pervez Rafique, while John Victor, Dr Martin, Chaudhary Rasheed Joiya, Waseem Yousuf Varyam, Javed Bhatti, Advocate Tariq Javed, Khalid Shahzad, Intekhab Alam and Adil Salman also spoke to the gathering. Pervez Rafique urged the government to amend the law to end discrimination against minorities and to provide equal rights and security to them. He demanded the government to repeal all the "biased" articles in the constitution, especially articles 295-B and 295-C. To celebrate the day, Hindu community representative organisation Hindu Sudhar Sabha (HSS) also organised a cake-cutting ceremony at Garhi Shahu and Bhajjans (religious songs) were sung.

HSS President Amernath Randhawa and other representatives, including Ameet Kumar and Ram, also addressed the devotees and emphasised on the government to show the writ of state in areas where minorities were being forced to convert to other religions and girls from minority groups were being kidnapped and later converted through forced marriages. He also urged the government to give better educational and economical environments to Hindus. Another cake-cutting ceremony of Christian community was held at the residence of Pakistan People's Party Minority Wing leader Napoleon Qayyum in which locals participated in large numbers. A special prayer for the betterment and the success of the country was also offered. In the ceremony, Napoleon Qayyum said that Zaffarwala, the village of Chaudhry Datt, who was the first man to convert in East Punjab in 1973, has been flooded. The community also offered prayer for the residents of the flooded area.

CDI President Asif Aqeel informed on the occasion that they had collected the data of the flood victims of Narowal and would provide bags of 20 kg flour, 20 kg rice, two kg oil, two kg sugar, two kg tea and pulses to each family in the relief package and they would start distribution work from Tuesday in Zafarwala. Many members of the Christian minority also gathered in front of the Lahore Press Club and held a peace rally. Meanwhile, victims of the Joseph Christian Colony that was burnt four months ago also gathered in a protest camp in front of the Lahore Press Club and chanted slogans for minority rights. Human Liberation Commission Pakistan Chairman Aslam Pervaiz Sahotra, Senior Vice Chairman Razaq Yashwah, Director Pastor Anwar Javed and

Anees Pervaiz Khan in a joint statement on the eve of national minorities day said, "Christians in Pakistan are insecure as blasphemy law 295-B and C are being utilised as a weapon against them." The commission leaders also demanded United Nations to set up an independent commission to act against elements that are active against communal peace and harmony in Pakistan.

Daily Times - August 12th, 2013

Rights of Minorities: 'Ahmadis Not Allowed To Do Business in Muslim Areas'

A man was forced to abandon his woodworking business and flee Gujranwala with his family after his erstwhile friends and neighbours discovered that he was an Ahmadi. Imran Ahmed, 35, started out as a daily wager at a woodwork shop in Gujranwala. He saved up money for three years, and then invested Rs. 100,000 in machinery and setting up his own workshop. As his business grew, he hired two carpenters to work for him. "Things were going really well, but nobody knew I was an Ahmadi," he said. Ahmed said that his was the only Ahmadi family in Rana Colony in Gujranwala and he kept this a secret as he feared being victimised. He got along well with his neighbours and one day, when he was injured in a motorcycle accident, they came to ask after him. Inside his house, they saw pictures of Ahmadi personalities. "Their mood totally changed and they left without even having tea," he said. Things changed dramatically for Ahmed. He said some other workshop owners who were his business rivals began a hate campaign against him. One by one, his 'friends' began socially boycotting him. Shopkeepers would refuse to sell him groceries, and his employees resigned, saying it was prohibited to work with him. "Boys on the street started passing comments about me and things got worse day by day," he said.

Then one day during Ramazan, Ahmed said, three neighbouring shopkeepers and two clerics barged into his workshop and began beating him. They told him to leave at once if he wanted to protect his life and his family, he said. He asked to be allowed to remove his machinery from the shop, but they refused, he said. He rushed home, just a few hundred yards away, gathered his wife and three young children, and left Gujranwala. He now lives with relatives in another city and works as a daily wager at a furniture shop. Ahmed said that he had not filed a complaint with the police, but he intended to do so soon. He would also ask the police to recover his machinery and household items. He said that he would nominate Maulvi Abdul Rehman, Abid Ali and Mubashar in his application to the police. He said that Ali and Mubashar had been close friends up until they had found out that he was an Ahmadi. When contacted, Abdul Rehman told The Express Tribune that he had no regrets about what had happened to Imran Ahmed. He said Ahmadis were apostates who deserved death. They don't have a right to do business in Muslim areas, he said. Asked why Ahmed had not been allowed to take his belongings with him, he said: "It is enough that he spent five years here and fed his family using money from Muslims. We are ready to deal with him if he returns. It is better for him to forget the belongings he left in his shop and his house."

Munawar Ali Shahid, a human rights activist, said that this was just the latest manifestation of an anti-Ahmadi campaign being run by various hardline groups across the province, particularly in Lahore, where "baseless" cases had been registered against several Ahmadis in recent months. He said that the state had utterly failed to protect the lives and properties of minorities, particularly Ahmadis. He said he too had been threatened for seeking to protect the rights of Ahmadi citizens.

The Express Tribune - August 23rd, 2013

GENDER WATCH

Violence against Women

Man Kills Daughter for 'Honour'

A man killed his 20-year-old daughter on the suspicion of illicit relations in the Green Town area. Mukhtar Ahmed attacked his daughter Nadia Bibi with a weapon at his house. The family told the police the father got infuriated and attacked the daughter soon after they exchanged harsh words over affair. The investigators said Nadia had developed affair with a man and wanted to marry him but his father forced her to abandon the relations. The attack gave Nadia multiple wounds and was rushed to hospital, where she was pronounced as brought dead. Her father managed to escape from the crime scene. A murder case has been registered against the killer on the complaint of Shahbaz, brother of the deceased. The police removed the body to the morgue for autopsy and are investigating.

Murder: A worker killed his friend during their scuffle which erupted over some unknown issue in the Wahdat Colony police limits. The police said Amir Khalil and Muhammad Umar were at workplace in Muhammad Pura area when they exchanged harsh words over some issue. Umar got infuriated and repeatedly stabbed Amir Khalil, who was rushed to hospital but died in the way. The killer managed to escape and the police are investigating.

Suicide: A 27-year-old man ended his life by swallowing poisonous pills in the Chuhang police area on Thursday. The family told the police that Muhammad Ramazan committed suicide over some domestic problems which he had been confronting since a long time. The police have removed the body to the morgue for autopsy.

Found Dead: A 50-year-old man was recovered dead from the BRB Canal in the Batapur area on Thursday. Police said that the body of the unidentified man was lying along the canal as the investigators reached there. Some passersby spotted the body floating in the canal and informed the police. The body was removed to the morgue for autopsy.

20 Arrest In Pindi: Following the instructions of City Police Officer Israr Abbasi, Rawalpindi police launched a special crackdown against criminals here on Thursday and recovered drugs, weapons and bottle of liquor from their possession. According to police spokesman, Pirwadhi police arrested Wali and recovered 115 gram charas from his possession while Waris Khan police held Waheed and recovered 110 gram charas from his possession. New Town police nabbed Bilal and recovered 260 gram charas from his possession. Rata Amral police arrested Shams and recovered 6 bottle of liquor from his possession. Pirwadhi police recovered 3 bottle of liquor from Majeed. Sadiqabad police arrested Saleem and recovered 8 bottle of liquor from his possession. Morgah police held Amjad and recovered 30 bore pistols along 2 rounds from his possession. Rawat police recovered a 30 bore pistol from Waqas. Naseerabad police arrested Yaqoob and Khan Muhammad and recovered a stolen vehicle bearing registration no RIP-781/FX from their possession. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and started investigation.

The Nation - August 16th, 2013

Woman among Three Shot Dead for Honour

Two men and a woman were shot dead for 'honour'. A police official said Zeenat Khan and her father-in-law Wali Mohammad were shot dead by the woman's brother Javed Khan with the help of his uncle when the deceased were sleeping in their home late at night. Sources said Zeenat Khan had married Amjad Khan in a local court about two years ago and lived in Umer Abad. The bodies were taken to the district hospital for post-mortem. Amjad Khan filed an FIR against Javed Khan and his uncle at the Akora Khattak police station for murder of his wife and father. Meanwhile, police found body of an Afghan man in Dagi Khel, Nowshera Kalan. Police took the body to the district hospital for autopsy. Police said the unidentified Afghan was accused of forcibly taking Shabeena Naz, daughter of Abdul Rasheed, to Afghanistan. They said it appeared that brothers of Ms Naz had killed the man as they were missing from their home.

Dawn - August 18th, 2013

Women Empowerment

Grass-Roots Governance: 'Non-Muslims, Women, Peasants Should Have Greater Say'

The draft legislation on the new local government systems in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa reveals serious gaps and lacunas which need to be revisited, revised and improved in the larger interests of public welfare. This was the crux of a national consultation on Local Governments' Legislation and Citizens Concern under the Aawaz Utha Local Government Campaign. Representatives of civil society organisations and human rights activists voiced concern over some sections of the draft laws, particularly on issues of representation of women, non-Muslims, citizens' participation and autonomy of the local governments. The participants uniformly demanded women to have a minimum of 33 per cent proportion of representation at all tiers, peasants to have 10 per cent and non-Muslims 5 per cent proportion of representation at all tiers. Furthermore, they asked that all members, at all tiers, are elected through party and constituency-based, direct elections, that Union Council consist of a minimum of 20 members, including chair and vice-chair and that there is no rural-urban divide. The participating organisations included Aurat Foundation, South Asia Partnership Pakistan, Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO), Sungi Development Foundation and Sustainable Development Policy Institute.

The Express Tribune - August 03rd, 2013

Mou Signed: NHSRC, NGO to Work on Women's Health Indicators

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (NHSRC) and the Women's Empowerment Group through advocacy campaign Hayat-Lifeline on Monday to improve women's health indicators. Women's Empowerment Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Omar Aftab said that the population programme wing of the NHSRC will form a strategic alliance with the Hayat-Lifeline to look into various aspects of reproductive health and family planning issues including reproductive health and rights (RHR) to achieve millennium development goals (MDGs) in these areas.

The Express Tribune - August 06th, 2013

Report Shows Decrease Of 12 Percent in Cases

Annual report on the cases of violence against women (VAW) registered during the year 2012 shows a decrease of 12% in number as compared to last year. There were around 7,516 cases of violence reported in 2012 as compared to 8,539 in 2011. Abduction and kidnapping were the most frequently reported type of VAW with 1,607 cases of kidnapping and abduction registered by media from all over Pakistan. 1,745 murder cases and 989 cases of domestic violence were reported. There was also a high prevalence of rape and gang rape with 822 reported cases. 575 suicides and 432 cases of "honour killing" were also reported. The miscellaneous category (which includes attempted suicide, torture, injury, attempt to murder, attempted rape, threat to life, harassment, attempt to kidnap, illegal custody, trafficking of women, 'vanni', forced marriage, child marriage, incest, attempt at 'karo kari', 'watta satta') had a total of 1134 reported cases.

Although the total number of reported cases of violence against women has decreased by 12 per cent, a deeper analysis shows that several forms of violence have in fact increased. One form, which shows a significant increase in reported cases, is burning, with a 144 per cent increase, followed by acid throwing at 89 per cent, domestic violence at 62 per cent, and murder at 11 per cent. Among those that have decreased as compared to last year are sexual assault (47 per cent decrease), 'honour' killing (39 per cent decrease), suicide (24 per cent decrease), abduction/kidnapping (23 per cent decrease) and those in the miscellaneous category (37 per cent decrease). The findings made part of the Aurat Foundation (AF)'s Annual Report on Violence against Women, which provides detailed analysis of the issues related to VAW in Pakistan. Report says that the statistics this year are the lowest observed in the past 5 years however this may be due to a decrease in registration as well as reporting of such cases as the media was often overloaded with stories of terrorism and political instability.

Out of the total 7,515 number of cases, 4,766 were reported from Punjab. This high number may be due to the fact that women in Punjab are more able to reach law enforcement and media as compared to women in KP or Balochistan. Overall, nearly 63 per cent cases were reported from Punjab. Sindh had the second highest number with 1628 cases, which constitutes 22 per cent of the total cases. 674 cases were reported from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Islamabad was noted for 281 cases of VAW, which is a very high number considering its population. Balochistan had a total of 167 reported cases. Most of the districts noted for highest number of reported cases of violence against women were from Punjab. Karachi, 313, Rawalpindi (754 cases), Lahore (599), Okara (294), Faisalabad (229), Chakwal (203), Gujranwala (193), Sheikhpura (176), Multan (129), Quetta (122), Peshawar (157), Sukkur (171), Khairpur (179), Attock (63), Bannu (64) were the top 15 districts with most reported cases of Violence against women. The data also reveals that different types of VAW crime were reported from different regions. From Punjab and Islamabad, abduction was the most frequently reported crime whereas from Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, murder was among the most frequent VAW crime.

While sharing the statistics, writer and analyst of the report Dr Rakhshinda Perveen said 50 per cent of women who suffer violence eventually die. She also pointed that lack of terms for 'marital rape' and cases of 'incest' in national and local languages indicates that our society is insensitive towards these violence and crime. Child Psychiatrist Dr Ambreen Ahmad spoke about the 'psychological effects of violence on women'. Among various forms of VAW, she said social abuse needs special focus as this kind of abuse is usually not considered as violence or deemed traditional or cultural. She said depression and anxiety are the most common side effects of VAW. Deputy Director, Gender Crime Cell Mahreen Maqsood said that strength of GCC is far less than the allocated posts. She stressed the need to further strengthen the capacity of Gender Crime Cell as per its mandate. MNA from PML-N Arifa Khalid said even women

parliamentarians experience psychological violence within the national and provincial assemblies. She said that media plays vital role in breaking the stereotypes towards women but unfortunately films and dramas further reinforce the same discriminatory role.

National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz said data collected through media reports does not depict the real magnitude of the problem. Commenting on the role of media in the context of violence against women, she pointed out that most of the time, media highlights only some forms and cases of violence but ignores most dangerous forms of violence. About NCSW's strategy to combat violence against women, she said that the commission is in the process of developing indicators for the National Baseline Survey on violence against women, which will be conducted in collaboration with National Bureau of Statistics. "The survey will provide firm ground for area based interventions with regard to VAW cases." In addition, she said the commission plans to work on the follow up of selected cases on VAW along with the Gender Crime Cell so that the dynamics and hurdles can be pointed out and raised before the relevant departments. "We need pay especial attention to the institutionalisation all public departments dealing specifically with VAW which also includes NCSW," she said. Rabeea Hadi, in-charge of the programme, moderated the session and conducted the question- answer session.

The News – August 30th, 2013

Women Empowerment

AIOU, Iranian Varsities to Launch Programmes for Women Education

Former National Assembly speaker Dr Fehmida Mirza stressed the need for creating sustained training opportunities for women parliamentarians to ensure they play a vital role in promoting a strong democratic culture in Pakistan. She was speaking at "National Networking Summit on Women's Leadership", arranged by the Search for Common Ground (SFCG) Pakistan and PAIMAN Alumni Trust as part of SFCG Pakistan's "Women's Initiatives for Learning and Leadership (WILL)" campaign under the project "Strengthening Women Parliamentarians for Effective Government". Dr Mirza in her speech quoted Quaid-e-Azam, who said, "I have always maintained that no nation can ever be worthy of its existence that cannot take its women along with the men. No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men." She said, "Enhanced professional skills of women politicians will help improve our society's perceptions on the leadership skills of women and will also inspire young women to step forward and strengthen the democratic culture and structures for creating a peaceful Pakistan."

Referring to the cases in certain constituencies where women were barred from voting in the recently held by-elections, she said such instances indicated the challenges that women continue to face in Pakistan in their efforts for inclusion in the national political struggle for democracy. "The need for women's participation, recognition of their efforts, and their acceptance as effective leaders has never been greater than now," she said. She also urged the National Women's Parliamentary Caucus to play a significant role in establishing strong and synergetic links between women parliamentarians in the National Assembly and those in the provincial assemblies. "This will help women parliamentarians achieve our common goals and objectives as a multi-partisan political force for bringing about much-needed legislative reforms and dynamism in Pakistan," said Dr Mirza.

During the summit, Health Sciences and Regulation Minister Saira Afzal Tarar and former National Assembly deputy speaker Faisal Kairm Kundi co-chaired a roundtable session entitled,

“Advancing Women’s Political Leadership in Pakistan”. The session included a large number of male and female politicians belonging to major political parties from across Pakistan, as well as key members of civil society, academia, development sector and media. The discussion addressed issues pertaining to women’s political leadership such as discrepancies in the manifestos of political parties on the role of women and how civil society and media could help support women politicians bolster their leadership role in national politics. A participatory session entitled “Leading by Learning: Women Leaders Experiences from the Field” was another feature of the summit where WILL ambassadors and beneficiaries of capacity-building trainings talked about their experiences, lessons learned and accomplishments from the field. SFCG also screened a documentary featuring success stories of women politicians who had participated in the WILL programme from four provinces as well as FATA region.

Daily Times – August 29th, 2013

SECTARIAN CRISES & CONFLICT WATCH

Conflict & Sectarian Crisis Incidents

Security Briefs for the Month of August

| Date | Incidents | Killed | | | | Injured |
|----------------------------|---|--------|-----|---|-------|---------|
| | | C | SFs | T | Total | |
| Friday, August 02, 2013 | At least four Policemen, identified as Zulfiqar, Afza and Ghulam Shabbir and Sarwar, were shot dead by unidentified militants near a bridge located at Bagh-e-Korangi area in Shah Faisal Town of Karachi. | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Monday, August 05, 2013 | At least three passengers, including a 10 year old child, were killed and several others were wounded when a bomb exploded in the Karachi-bound Shalimar Express that was coming from Lahore District in Punjab near Toba Tek Singh District. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | NS |
| Tuesday, August 06, 2013 | Three persons including two children were killed and another one injured in an explosion at Goth Pervaiz Domki near Jahan Bukhshpur area of Kashmore District. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| | At least 14 persons, including three security personnel, were killed in an attack by BLA militants on five passenger buses in Machh area of Bolan District in Balochistan | 11 | 3 | 0 | 14 | 0 |
| | At least three persons, including a Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP-Diamer), Muhammad Hilal, and two Army officers, identified as Colonel Ghulam Mustafa and Captain Ashfaq Aziz, were killed as unidentified militants attacked their convoy at Rohni in the Chilas area of Gilgit Baltistan. | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Wednesday, August 07, 2013 | At least 11 persons were killed and 26 others were injured when a bomb went off outside a packed football ground in the Lyari area of Karachi in Sindh. | 11 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 26 |

| Date | Incidents | Killed | | | | Injured |
|---------------------------|--|--------|-----|---|-------|---------|
| | | C | SFs | T | Total | |
| | A woman and two children were killed and 21 others sustained injuries when explosives planted in a shopping centre exploded in Mastung town (Mastung District) of Balochistan. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 21 |
| Thursday, August 08, 2013 | Thirty eight persons, including 21 Police officials, were killed and 40 others were injured in a suicide blast at a funeral in the Police Lines of Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. | 17 | 21 | 1 | 39 | 40 |
| Saturday, August 10, 2013 | 10 persons were killed and many others were injured during the Eidul Fitr prayers on Eastern bypass area of Quetta in Balochistan. | 10 | 0 | 0 | 10 | NS |
| Sunday, August 11, 2013 | SFs shot dead six militants in the Machh area of Bolan District in Balochistan. | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Monday, August 12, 2013 | SFs killed at least four unidentified militants and arrested 10 others during an operation in the Pir Ghaib area of Bolan District in Balochistan. | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| Thursday, August 15, 2013 | A DSP, Qasim Ghauri, and an ASI of Police, Aslam, were killed while the SHO Haider Zaidi and two other constables were injured during a six-hour-long operation to arrest a gang of extortionists in the Gulshan Town of Karachi District, the provincial capital of Sindh. The operation was carried out against gangster Zamin Shah Chandio. In retaliation the Police killed Zamin Chandio, along with his three accomplices Ilahi Bux Chachar, Ardillo and Sunbul Ahmed. | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| Friday, August 16, 2013 | SFs killed at least eight armed militants during a search operation in mountains of Mach and Kolpur areas of Bolan District in Balochistan. | 0 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Tuesday, August 20, 2013 | Three dead bodies bearing bullet wounds were recovered from Malir Town in Karachi District of Sindh. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Thursday, August 22, 2013 | A pro-al Qaeda 'commander' of TTP, identified as Ghulam Jan, his uncle, Juma Khan, and three of his close aides Mir Gul, Asmatullah and Kharote were killed in roadside | 1 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

| Date | Incidents | Killed | | | | Injured |
|----------------------------|---|--------|-----|----|-------|---------|
| | | C | SFs | T | Total | |
| | bomb explosion targeting his vehicle in Birmal tehsil in South Waziristan Agency of FATA. | | | | | |
| Friday, August 23, 2013 | A clash between ASWJ and members of Shias community killed at 11 people in Kotla Jam area of Bhakkar District in Punjab. | 5 | 0 | 6 | 11 | 0 |
| Friday, August 23, 2013 | Three dead bodies identified as that of Abdul Razzak (28), Mohammad Aslam (25), and Irfan Ali, (28), were found stuffed in gunny bags from Hub River Road within the limits of Mochko Police Station in Baldia Town of Karachi District in Sindh. | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Wednesday, August 28, 2013 | Four people, including a political activist Farhan Sheikh, who was the target of the attack, were shot dead on Fariya Street in Kharadar area of Saddar Town in Karachi District, the provincial capital of Sindh. | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| Saturday, August 31, 2013 | At least 10 militants, including two 'commanders' were killed in Dokob area of Mand in Kech District of Balochistan. | 0 | 0 | 10 | 10 | 0 |
| | A US drone killed at least four militants in a missile strike targeting a compound in Heso Khel village of North Waziristan Agency in FATA. | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 |

Compiled from different dailies

Analyses, Reports & News

Terror in Gilgit-Baltistan: Nanga Parbat Investigators Shot Dead in Chilas

Taliban militants shot dead three security officials investigating the recent massacre of foreign mountaineers in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. The new Jandul Hafsa faction of the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack. The same group had claimed credit for the killing of 10 foreign trekkers and their Pakistani guide in a base camp of Nanga Parbat, the 9th tallest peak of the world, on June 23. Militants ambushed a vehicle in Chilas district, killing Superintendent Police Hilal Ahmed, Colonel Ghulam Mustafa and Captain Ashfaq Aziz. Col Mustafa was said to be responsible for internal security in Chilas, the town that shares border with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Kohistan district. A security official confirmed that the slain officials were investigating the June 23 killing of foreign climbers. Investigators said SP Hilal was driving the vehicle when it was ambushed. He died on the spot while Col Mustafa and Captain Aziz died from their wounds later at the state-run hospital in Chilas. Chief Minister

Mehdi Shah paid tribute to the slain officials and assured that the killers would be brought to justice. Bodies of the slain officials were airlifted to Islamabad.

The Express Tribune, August 07th, 2013

Violence Round-Up: Over Three Days, Death Toll in Karachi Rises To 22

As Eidul Fitr came to an end on Sunday, police reported that at least 22 people, including three policemen and two political workers, were killed in separate acts of violence in Karachi over the three days. When asked about the spree of killings, Karachi Police Chief Ghulam Qadir Thebo said that the overall security arrangements were to stop terrorism activities and give Karachi'ites a chance to celebrate eid in peace. "But these killings which took place over the three days were mostly of a personal nature and not sectarian or of terrorist nature," he said. "Some police officials were also targeted, mainly because of their active role in catching criminals and militants." A police constable, Sher Haider, 35, was gunned down and the son of police inspector ASI Shabbir, Irfan, was wounded by armed men in Baldia Town. Police officials said that the victims, who were residents of the same area, were having tea at a nearby shop when two armed men targeted them.

Similarly, Razzak, 30, was shot dead by armed men at a teashop near his home in Qasba Morr, Orangi Town. Police officials said that the deceased hailed from Bajaur Agency and suspected he was killed over personal enmity. Sana, 17, was gunned down near the Garden Traffic Signal while she was travelling in a rickshaw. Police officials said that deceased lived in Ranchore Lane. The motive behind the incident has yet to be ascertained. An unidentified young man was found dead near Ibrahim Ali Bhai School in Orangi Town. According to initial investigation, the victim was tortured after being kidnapped. Another young man was shot dead by unidentified armed men near Truck Stand in Mauripur. Ameer Ali, 28, was gunned down by at least two armed men riding a motorcycle when he was having lunch at a hotel within the remits of the Soldier Bazaar police station. Following the incident, victim's relatives and neighbours staged a protest against the incident and demanded the arrest of the culprits. Uzma, 15, daughter of Shaukat Ali Baloch, was shot dead inside her house in Chanesar Goth. According to police officials, the initial investigation suggested that the victim was shot by mistake.

First Two Days of Eid: Two local leaders of the Awami National Party, Imran and Saeed, were gunned down near Bilal Masjid in Orangi Town. A poultry shop owner, Mansoor Ahmed, 38, was gunned down by armed men near Ziauddin Hospital Chowrangi. Ismail Hussain, 32 was killed and another, Mehmood, 28, was wounded inside a barber shop in Machli Market in Orangi Town. Police officials said that victims were at a barber shop when a man, Shan, opened fire. A case has been registered against the accused. A man was killed and three others were injured by armed men near Juna Masjid in Lyari. Police officials said that the deceased and injured persons belonged to the Kutchi community. Two friends were shot dead in Malir City area. Saturday saw no respite from the violence that started on the first day of Eid. A retired police's sub-inspector, 60-year-old Councilor Khan, son of Paidar Khan was killed and his son, Umair, 13, was injured on Saturday. The deceased had retired from the police department about three months ago.

A police constable, Nizam, 45, was shot dead in Rizvi police precincts. The bodies of a man, his wife and a son were found from within the Kharadar police remits. Victims, residents of Lyari's Baghdadi area, were identified as Mehmood Baloch, 40, Noor Jahan, 35 and their son Isran. SHO Azam Khan said that deceased Mehmood was the father-in-law of Lyari's notorious gangster, Jabbar Jhengu and initial investigation suggested that they were killed by Jhengu over a monetary dispute. A young man was found dead from Safoora Goth while a teenager Gul Rehman was allegedly killed by his neighbours, Ali Mohammad and Aziz, in Hassan Noman

Colony in Sohrab Goth. Qasim, 22, who hailed from Bajaur Agency, was shot dead by armed men near Askari Park.

The Express Tribune - August 12th, 2013

Gunman Demanding Shariah Keeps Capital on Toes for Hours

The drama involving an armed lunatic and the apparently untrained police - staged in the high-security Red Zone of Islamabad - ended after almost six hours with the arrest of the man, who had been demanding implementation of an Islamic system in Pakistan. The man, along with his wife and two children had reportedly driven into the Red Zone, breaching all barriers leading to the area. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Zamurd Khan's role was pivotal in the capture of the gunman, who tried to disarm him and got injured in the attempt. The armed man, who had fired at least five random shots at the Constitution Avenue, Islamabad, was finally arrested by security forces on the directives of Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar, who had ordered the police to take him in alive. The police also took into custody the armed man's children and wife.

The episode began with the man, identified as Sikandar, waded into the Red Zone in a car at around 5pm on Thursday and opened fire, putting a question mark on the capability of police and other law enforcement agencies to control the situation. Hit by surprise following the panic created by the 'dangerous' man dressed in black, police and Rangers cordoned off the area and barred enter for everyone. The police also rushed towards him and tried to convince him to lay down the arms. Sikandar, in no mood of negotiating with 'junior cops', asked for police high-ups to come in for talks. When they did, he made a demand that stunned all those around - establishment of Shariah in Pakistan. Many senior police officials, including SSP (Operations) Dr Rizwan, and renowned politician Nabeel Gabool were also present at the scene to control the situation and persuade the man to surrender peacefully, but he refused to give up. Dr Rizwan said that the man was carrying two automatic weapons - a Kalashnikov rifle and an SMG. "I want safe passage and Islamic rule in the country," the man demanded. "As our country is an Islamic republic, we want Shariah imposed in Pakistan," he said in a telephonic call to a private news channel. "I am against vulgarity and immorality. My associates have taken up positions in the whole of Pakistan," he said. After more than six hours of the drama, politician Zamurd Khan stepped in for negotiations. He approached the family, shook hands with the children, and suddenly tried to grab Sikandar. The man freed himself and opened fire on the politician, who managed to take the children away from the line of fire. The police then finally acted swiftly and got hold of the armed man, who was also injured in the attempt. "Police said they were trying to tackle the situation with utmost care, as the gunman was apparently using the woman and two children as shields. But we succeeded in arresting him alive," said Dr Rizawan while talking to the media at the climax. "The woman named Kanwal, who claims that the armed man was her husband, said she had no idea what he was up to." There were reports that Sikandar's first wife lives in the UAE and has a son, who is in the custody of the Emirates police on murder charges.

Daily Times - August 16th, 2013

Seeming No End: No Let-Up in Violent Incidents in July

There was no let-up in incidents of violence across the country during the month of July. Casualties remained high with 572 deaths and 642 injuries, revealed the Centre for Research and Security Studies in its monthly report. New trends regarding military operations and drone attacks were also observed. The report further stated that sporadic cases of people's resistance to violence and terrorism were also reported from some areas, though a large number of Peace

Lashkar members in tribal areas lost their lives to presumed target killings. The report also mentioned the Dera Ismail Khan jailbreak, blaming 'inside informants' for the 'disgraceful retreats by state forces' stating that it raised serious questions over the preparedness of Pakistan's security forces. The highest numbers of deaths were reported from Karachi, followed by Kurram Agency. Unusual violent incidents took place in Punjab also, which has so far been largely peaceful. Civilians, militants, government officials (soldiers, frontier constabulary, levies, and police), politicians (activists and supporters) and members of pro-government peace lashkars became the main victims in acts of violence across the country in the previous month. Target killings accounted for most number of deaths. Over 70% of the victims belonged to Sindh, followed by Balochistan 16%, K-P 9% and FATA 4%. With the exception of one incident of target killing in Sukkur, all victims were from Karachi in Sindh.

The Express Tribune - August 19th, 2013

ECONOMIC WATCH

Facts & Figures

BISP Management Pockets Rs. 975m: Audit Report

A sum of Rs. 974.585 million has been misappropriated by the management of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) on the pretext of distribution among the deserving, an audit report available revealed. The programme management had obtained this amount from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a loan to support the poor families under Foreign Aided Project (FAP) of the BISP, the report said. However, the BISP drew the same amount of Rs. 974.585 million for the same purpose from the government of Pakistan, the report issued by the office of the Auditor General Pakistan stated. The BISP beneficiaries got their instalment paid once, but the amount was drawn twice – once from ADB and once from the government kitty. BISP, on January 12, 2012, paid Rs4.143 billion to various commercial banks on estimation basis for onward distribution to 1,381,208 beneficiaries. Audit observed that Rs2.05 billion was paid to 683,235 beneficiaries whose Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) were without an updated thumb impression and those who did not possess a CNIC. During the verification of record on March 7, 2013 reconciliation statement from the Accountant General Pakistan Revenue (AGPR) was not provided. When the BISP management did provide the account reconciliations report, the figures did not match up.

Figuring Out the Figures

The audit report said that on March 8, 2013 the BISP management provided reconciliation statement of the AGPR for June 2012 and the draft appropriation account for the financial year 2011-12. The reconciliation statement reflected expenditure of Rs48.4 billion whereas the appropriation accounts showed Rs46.38 billion. To top it off the expenditure statement provided by BISP in compliance of directives from the audit authority reflected government expenditure of Rs48.67 billion for the FY 2011-12. The figures of expenditure reported in the three statements, AGPR reconciliation, appropriation accounts and government expenditures for FY 2011-12, do not reconcile with each other, the audit report said. Audit holds that expenditure incurred under ADB loan was not reconciled with the AGPR and details of BISP expenditure. Audit recommends that a detailed reconciliation of all sources of funds be carried out with the AGPR and provided to audit for review.

The Express Tribune - August 05th, 2013.

IMF Agrees To Give Pakistan \$6.6bn Loan

The International Monetary Fund has agreed that Pakistan can seek a loan package worth \$6.6 billion, two top Finance Ministry officials, a boost for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as he seeks to fix the moribund economy. The Fund had settled on an initial package of \$5.3 billion after an IMF delegation held weeks of talks in Pakistan in July. Pakistan had requested \$7.2 billion. "The IMF has raised its offer following further consultations in the US and now agreed to \$6.6 billion. The official announcement will come very soon," said a top Finance Ministry official, requesting anonymity because he was not yet authorised to speak on the record. The IMF's executive board will formally approve the package for Pakistan sometime in early September, as long as Pakistan has made some fiscal reforms, the IMF said on its website. The government has already slashed costly subsidies on electricity and sent out notices to 10,000 delinquent taxpayers last

month as part of the conditions set by the IMF. Pakistan has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios in the world and the IMF wants it to do more to tackle rampant tax evasion by the wealthy elite.

Daily Times - August 13th, 2013

Pakistan Now Officially Wants \$7.3 Billion from IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has given a positive signal to Pakistan for forwarding to its Board Islamabad's request for jacking up the size of its loan up from \$5.3 billion to \$7.3 billion. The IMF Board is scheduled to meet in Washington, DC, on September 4. Earlier, the IMF staff had agreed to provide \$5.3 billion or 348 percent quota to Pakistan early this month but Pakistan's Finance Minister has formally requested to the Fund management to consider jacking up this amount up to 500 percent quota equivalent to \$7.3 billion. But the test for the incumbent regime is that how it will be able to implement all prior actions before September 4, 2013 including raising of power tariff for industrial, commercial as well as domestic consumers, obtaining approval of Council of Common Interests (CCI) on posting revenue surplus by the provinces, raising discount rates and some other fiscal measures on account of FBR. The government, after Eid Ul Fitr will open up after August 14 so in the remaining 20 days the government will have to deliver on all key promises. When contacted renowned economist Dr Ashfaq H Khan, who is currently serving as Dean Nust Business School (NBS), said that Pakistan should not seek jacking up loan amount beyond \$5.3 billion as the IMF loan would pave the way for resumption of programme loan from WB, ADB and IDB. "The increasing funding from the IMF will put the country into debt trap," he added.

When contacted renowned economist Dr Meekal Ahmed said that it is not the IMF's fault that we have chosen this moment to turn to them. We have brought this crisis upon ourselves. The "experts" you speak of obviously excel in conspiracy theories. "Of course, we should have turned to the Fund earlier (as so many of us had advocated) because then there would have been a smaller hole to plug" he added. To another query regarding Pakistan's request for jacking up size of loan from 348 percent quota to 500 percent equivalent to \$7.3 billion, he said that he thought this government was not going to rely on loans. So why do they want higher access? Access is determined by (i) BOP (Balance of Payment) need; (ii) strength of the programme and (iii) capacity to repay the Fund. But this is not etched in stone. There is some flexibility and we have always asked for more, he maintained. "I am surprised that access was not discussed and settled during the recently-concluded discussions in Islamabad" he added. He was not sure whether we would get higher access and front-loading. It will be up to Fund Management to decide keeping in view how other countries were treated in similar precarious circumstances. The Fund has to appear to be treating all countries in an "even-handed" way and they have already been criticised for giving Pakistan favourable treatment (I am sure you remember reading that the Greeks said they wanted "Pakistani treatment").

Assuming all prior actions, he said, have been completed — something that we cannot take for granted — and the programme is viewed as being good enough to warrant Fund support, and assuming our Office of the Executive Director in the Fund does a good job lobbying with senior management and other Executive Directors, we may get something extra. But I would not like to speculate on the amount, he concluded. If the Fund's Executive Board agreed to Pakistan's request for jacking up the size of loan package up to 500 percent quota or \$7.3 billion then the net addition in loan burden would be standing at \$2.6 billion. The multilateral and bilateral donors, especially EU envoys, had recently conveyed to Pakistani authorities that era of free lunch was over and now Islamabad would have to deliver on key condition of the IMF and ensure respect of human rights to keep its programme on track otherwise they would not

support Islamabad's case in IMF's executive board. Many economists also smelt a rat on account of unwanted delay in approving Pakistan's loan request for providing \$5.3 billion by the IMF on certain apprehension that there might be crisis on exchange rate keeping in view dwindling foreign currency reserves. Pakistan and the IMF staff had agreed on bailout package in early July this year and it was also decided that the Fund's executive board would consider Pakistan's \$5.3 billion package on September 4, 2013 at Washington D.C.

The News - August 21st, 2013

More Work Needed: Hong Kong Status for Gwadar

THE prime minister's remarks about a Hong Kong-like status for Gwadar seem to have been uttered in haste. The two are poles apart in terms of historical experience and present status. Hong Kong had been a colonial possession for more than a century and a half. It was returned to the Chinese administration in 1997 with certain reservations, the most important pertaining to the 'one country, two systems' principle. The latter means, among other things, that Hong Kong has its own currency — HK dollar — instead of China's yuan. Gwadar is altogether a different story. It was purchased by Pakistan from Oman in 1958 by a civilian government — a reminder that a civilian government added new territories to Pakistan instead of losing any — and has since then been part of mainstream Pakistan. It never enjoyed a special status; Pakistan's sovereignty was never in dispute; and it has had the rupee as its currency all along. Disturbing this status quo without a well-thought-out scheme and ignoring its political implications will create problems for Pakistan and offend Baloch sensitivities.

Gwadar is in a mess. Large parts of Balochistan are insurgency-infested, and the transfer of the harbour's management from a Singaporean to a Chinese entity hasn't served to make Gwadar a going concern. The port does need a turnaround, but coming up with schemes and 'visions' without doing proper homework merely betrays a proclivity for hare-brained schemes. The big question is: in what way will Gwadar's Hong Kong status help Pakistan? Supposing that the new scheme is worked out and foreign investors come in a big way, where will the manpower come from? Given the prevailing mood in Balochistan, will there be a Baloch workforce? If not, will not the induction of non-Baloch threaten the province's demographic character and lead to more tensions? Beijing will maintain Hong Kong's current status for another 32 years. The very thought of entertaining a similar 'one country, two systems' idea for Gwadar is impractical. The ideal course would have been to seek a Baloch consensus on Gwadar's status, with the initiative coming from the newly elected provincial government and assembly. We do not doubt Nawaz Sharif's sincerity to the Gwadar cause, but it should be accompanied by an equal commitment to tackling the insecurity in and isolation of Balochistan. We say study the issue seriously, see why Hong Kong has remained an economic powerhouse even after its return to China, and how Gwadar can be salvaged in Pakistani conditions.

Dawn - August 24th, 2013

Rescue Scheme: Govt to Borrow \$12 Billion to Retire Previous Debts

In a bid to avoid a potential financial default, Pakistan will seek \$12 billion in loans from international financial institutions to retire its previous debts and to try its luck with international and domestic bond markets to finance its mega projects. Speaking at a news conference on Monday, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said the fresh loans would be secured over the next three years. The loans would protect the government against international debt obligations for three years, he added. However, he claimed that the fresh loans would not

increase the overall debt stock. According to the finance ministry, the debt-to-GDP ratio is already nearing 63.5%, far above the legally permissible limit of 60% of GDP. In the past five years, the country obtained loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank. Finance Minister Dar said Pakistan met all prior actions for a \$6.6 billion IMF bailout programme while the last action has been met by half and the rest would be implemented by the State Bank of Pakistan very soon. The IMF Executive Board will meet on Sept 4 to approve the loan, he added. "In the first year, the IMF will give \$2.2 billion to Pakistan while Islamabad is scheduled to pay back over \$3 billion," he added. Showing concerns over the low level of foreign exchange reserves, Dar said the government could not survive on the same reserves as after arranging funds for three years, it would need to find ways to increase the reserves. Without disclosing the amount, Dar said Pakistan would launch exchangeable bonds in the international market to build reserves. He said the government was also planning launching 'infrastructure sovereign bonds' to raise money for mega development projects. The government has already announced to enlist treasury bonds at the stock market. The minister vowed that the government would observe financial restraint. In the first month of the new financial year, the government almost remained within the budgetary targets, Dar added.

PPP Government Budget Deficit: Announcing the budget deficit for the fiscal year 2012-13, Dar said the deficit remained at Rs1.835 trillion or 8% of GDP. Against the total income of Rs2.982 trillion, all federal and provincial governments spent Rs4.816 trillion, showing a gap of Rs1.835 trillion. On the eve of budget, the Pakistan Peoples Party government announced a budget deficit of Rs1.1 trillion or 4.7% of GDP. After taking over the finance ministry, Dar had claimed that the PPP government's last year budget deficit would surge to Rs2.014 trillion or 8.8% of GDP. Dar said less development expenditures by federal and provincial governments and Rs54 billion savings by the four provinces resulted in 8% deficit against revised estimates of 8.8%. He said the federal development spending remained at Rs344 billion against allocation of Rs360 billion while the combined development spending by four provinces remained at just Rs371 billion. The finance minister said the federal budget deficit remained at 8.2% of GDP or Rs1,890 against the annual target of 5% of GDP.

The Express Tribune - August 27th, 2013

DEVELOPMENT WATCH

Health Projects

Health Reports/ Controls

Immunisation Campaign: Anti-Polio Drive Hit by Delays in 44 Districts

The second round of National Immunisation Days (NIDs), targeting 1.5 million children, which was scheduled to begin on August 19 has been deferred for a week in 44 districts and towns owing to the by-elections, floods and torrential rains across the country. A report compiled by the Polio Operation Room - a copy of which is available with The Express Tribune - reveals that the anti-polio drive which is to be held across 17 districts of Punjab, two districts of Islamabad, eight of Sindh, nine of K-P, six of Balochistan and one district of Gilgit-Baltistan has been postponed for a week and is scheduled to begin on August 26. The campaign was deferred due to by-elections in 29 districts. The drive was postponed in 13 districts owing to security concerns while floods and torrential rains became the reason for delay in two districts. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Frontier Region Peshawar could not start the campaign due to security threats. The ban on vaccination continues in the North and South Waziristan agencies where more than 260,000 children aged less than 5 years remain unimmunised since June 2012 for supplementary immunization activities (SIAs). The tribal agency indicates a huge immunity gap underscoring the risk of an impending outbreak in the region, according to the report.

In FR Peshawar the vaccination teams could not go to the area where an estimated 12,719 children are the target, because of insecurity. It is important to highlight that last three consecutive rounds in May, June and July were also missed in FR Peshawar for similar reasons. The campaign targeting 3,151 children in Jani Khel, Hindi Khel and Sain Tanga area of Bannu has been postponed till further notice due to the volatile law and order situation. These areas may remain inaccessible for this round. Though the campaign is delayed for a week in Tank due to security concerns, it has been postponed in the Arwaza, Dabado and Manai areas of Kurram Agency for a day. The polio drive in these areas aims to immunise 1,895 children. Meanwhile, in Diamer the anti-polio drive is postponed till further notice due to security concerns. Two union councils have delayed the drive due to heavy rains in Lower Dir. The report further states that seven districts in Punjab - Bahawalnagar, Jhang, Kasur, Mianwali, Sargodha, Sheikhupura and Toba Tek Singh - where 330,421 children are the target, are reported to be inaccessible due to the floods. The anti-polio drive which was due to begin on August 19 in Islamabad, Killa Abdullah in Balochistan, DI Khan, Hangu, Lakki Marwat, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Swabi and Tank in the K-P was postponed due to by-elections there. Around 15 districts including DG Khan, Faisalabad, Hafizabad, Khanewal, Lahore, Lodhran, MB Din, Mianwali, Muzaffargarh, Okara, Rajanpur, Rawalpindi, Rahim Yar Khan, Sargodha and Sialkot in the Punjab province also faced delays because of the by-elections. Meanwhile, the anti-polio drive in districts of Gujranwala and Narowal, targeting 1.0 million children, was deferred due to floods. The National Coordinator for the prime minister's Polio Cell Dr Altaf Bosan said that it is the season when the virus is contracted and therefore the cell has issued directives to all the provinces to complete the drive within two weeks.

The Express Tribune - August 21st, 2013

Pakistan's Maternal Mortality Rate Highest in South Asia

Half a million women die each year from pregnancy-related complications, the highest in South Asia, due to the lack of adequate and required facilities in hospitals and awareness among the masses. Youth activist, Mubashir Abbasi, said violation of human rights had always been the fate of a majority of Pakistanis and the death of a woman in childbirth was a tragedy, "an unnecessary and wasteful event that carries with it a huge burden of grief and pain". Speaking at a conference organised by the Global Youth Assembly (GYA) in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, Abbasi said that youths were the only hope for Pakistan; therefore, they should educate themselves and be ready to work for their country, because they were the nation builders of tomorrow. He further said that the condition of human rights was very bad in Pakistan and the government should play its role on an emergency basis for its betterment. A large number of youths from the capital attended the conference. Abbasi said that pregnancy was not a disease and pregnancy-related morbidity and mortality were preventable.

Daily Times - August 24th, 2013

700,000 Women Visited Health Facilities with Complications

In year 2012, nearly 700,000 women in Pakistan went to health facilities for treatment of complications resulting from spontaneous abortions or induced abortions using unsafe methods or with the assistance of an unskilled provider. The alarming statistics were revealed in a study titled 'Post-Abortion Care in Pakistan: A National Study,' launched by Population Council on Friday. The report outlined ongoing gaps in the quality of post-abortion care following unsafe abortion procedures, societal stigmas and inequities in the healthcare system, the burden of post-abortion complications and the significant role of private and public sectors in ensuring access to care. As an update to a study completed in 2002, this report provides recommendations for promoting safer post-abortion care, expanding access to high-quality and affordable family planning services and contraception, and building capacity among healthcare providers to help achieve these goals. The study mentions that while safe procedures for post-abortion care were found to be more widely used in 2012 than they were in 2002, health facilities still rely on unnecessarily invasive procedures such as dilation and curettage (D&C). Additionally, many facilities do not have adequate equipment and supplies to provide quality care for complications and a majority are not equipped to provide around-the-clock services to manage severe complications.

Lastly, the private sector plays an important role in the provision of care, as more than 60 per cent of all cases were treated by private sector providers. It says that in Pakistan, 25 per cent of women would like to avoid or delay pregnancy, but are not using contraception, and therefore are at risk for unintended pregnancy. As a result, many women resort to induced abortion to end unintended pregnancies. The current law in Pakistan permits abortion to save a woman's life and to provide "necessary treatment." Due to these legal restrictions and the lack of clarity among women and healthcare providers in interpreting the law, the research points out women may be forced to seek abortion by untrained providers. The resulting morbidity and mortality places a heavy burden on women, their families, communities and the national health system. The study was funded by the Research and Advocacy Fund (RAF), UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and was conducted by the Population Council in collaboration with the Guttmacher Institute and the National Committee for Maternal and Neonatal Health.

The Population Council and the Guttmacher Institute collected data through two quantitative surveys and several qualitative methods, including surveys of 266 health facilities and 102 healthcare professionals; in-depth interviews of 44 women who had an induced abortion in the past six months; and ten focus groups involving women with at least three children to gain an understanding of community norms regarding abortion and post-abortion care. The report authors recommend improving the quality of post-abortion care and expanding the use of safer, World Health Organization recommended treatment methods, such as manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) and medication abortion. It urges to ensure that health facilities in the public and private sectors are equipped with the technologies they need to provide the full range of post-abortion care and establish a national consensus on provider training and capacity-building and promote continued advocacy. The study also calls for ensuring facilities that provide post-abortion care are prepared to offer a full range of contraceptive services onsite, or in their immediate vicinity, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and developing post-abortion care protocols that are in accordance with the latest scientific developments and are distributed widely to service providers.

The report was launched during a meeting attended by representatives from the government, donor organizations, health professionals, academics, NGOs and civil societies. Minister of State, National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Saira Afzal Tarar was the chief guest and keynote speaker on the occasion. Speakers from the Population Council and the Guttmacher Institute were joined by a panel of experts from leading national institutions and professional organisations. Saira Afzal Tarar spoke to the urgent need for policies and planning at the highest levels to tackle the issues raised in the report. She also stressed to focus on actual implementation of the plans and policies. "It gives us great cause for concern that nearly 700,000 women in Pakistan needed treatment annually for complications of induced or spontaneous abortion," said Tarar. "Many facilities do not have adequate equipment if complications occur. Lack of well-trained staff, stigma and financial constraints also pose inherent barriers to good service delivery. Coordinated efforts of Health and Population Welfare Departments must augment other actors together as a community to address these issues that threaten the lives of women in Pakistan each and every day." She suggested that a pool of nurses, LHVs and other midlevel providers be trained and specialized in the provision of Post Abortion Care.

Country Director, Population Council Dr. Zeba A. Sathar and report co-authors Dr. Gul Rashida, Dr. Zakir Shah and Iram Kamran presented the study findings, with Dr. Susheela Singh, Vice-President, Guttmacher Institute and report co-author, who participated via videoconference. Following the presentation, the report was discussed by a panel of experts, which included Professor, Gynaecology and Obstetrics, Rawalpindi Medical College, Dr. Rizwana Choudhry, Senior Program Advisor, Packard Foundation Dr. Yasmeen Sabeeh Qazi, and Gynaecologist and Obstetrician, Peshawar, Dr. Lubna Hassan and Gynecologist and Obstetrician Dr. Ghazal Mehmood, President, National Committee for Maternal and Neonatal Health (NCMNH) Dr. Sadiqua N. Jafarey, and President Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Pakistan (SOGP) Dr. Tasneem Ashraf.

The News - August 24th, 2013

Development Projects & Initiatives

Development Priorities List Presented To International Donors

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government presented its development priorities list to the international donor agencies at a one-day conference on Strategic Development Partnership

Framework (SDPF) in Islamabad. According to an official handout, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary presided while additional chief secretaries, administrative secretaries of different departments of the province and representatives of a large number of international donor agencies including the World Bank (WB), US Agency for International Development (USAID), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), GIZ and others participated. The Pakistan-based representatives of the international donor agencies were briefed in detail about the development and growth programme and strategy for the next five years, chalked out in accordance with the manifestoes of the coalition parties of the government in KP. The scheme has been prepared how to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development targets.

The participants were informed that in the past, different development programmes including Post-Crisis Need Assessment (PCNA), Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDS) and Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) were prepared but unfortunately neither growing poverty was controlled nor any visible progress witnessed in the province. Therefore, the new government soon after taking over revisited its priorities and decided to fully avail the province natural resource endowment and if investment is made, the province can develop rapidly. Such development will contribute to accelerated growth and creation of employment opportunities in the province. One of the way out, in this regard is to provide cheap electricity to investors for installing industries in the province. The donors were asked to align priorities with the reform agenda of the government and better coordinate activities with the government and amongst themselves so that the government was effectively supported in achieving its specified goals for the welfare of the people of the province. The donor community appreciated the initiatives of the government, expressed satisfaction at the efforts and assured support and cooperation to the government to give a practical shape to the strategy.

The News - August 16th, 2013

ENERGY CRISIS

Government's Role in Oil and Gas & Energy Crisis

Planning Ahead: Nawaz for Fast-Tracking Power Generation

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has emphasised having a 25 to 30-year plan to not only cover its current power shortfall but to also generate 50,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity to meet its future needs. He was speaking to reporters during his visit to Pakistan Power Park, Gadani, and Quaid-e-Azam Mausoleum in Karachi. Nawaz said that while the government had resolved the issue of circular debt, it could rise again if difficult decisions are not taken. The prime minister instructed to extend the eight projects of Pakistan Power Park to 10, in order to generate 6,600MW of electricity. The first project will be installed by the government itself. Nawaz said that Chinese investors wanted to set up four projects in the park, which will also be set up in Thar. Talking about the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project, Nawaz said the project will produce 950MW of electricity, but added that it was regrettable that due to poor policies in the past, its cost had escalated from Rs45 billion to Rs250 billion. The prime minister also announced to build a six-lane motorway from Karachi to Lahore.

Speaking about Kashgar-Gawadar Trade Corridor between Pakistan and China, the premier said that small industrial zones will be set up all along the route and it will be facilitated with highway and railway system that will attract investment from China, as the cost of production in Pakistan was still low. He said that construction work on Diamer Bhasha Dam, Dasu Dam and Bunji Dam will soon be started and will add to the power production of the country. Speaking about the law and order situation in Karachi, Nawaz said that law and order is the responsibility of the provincial government. He also appreciated the efforts of Fakhruddin G Ebrahim for holding clean elections in the country and wished that he would continue his work as the chief election commissioner. He also refuted rumours of governor rule in Sindh and asked for joint efforts of all the political parties for the development of the country. The prime minister's delegation included Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ebad, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, and Minister of State for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali, Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah and others. They were welcomed by Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch at Gadani.

The Express Tribune - August 02nd, 2013

Loadshedding to Go By 2017

The Council of Common Interests (CCI) that met here under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif approved the National Power Policy 2013-18 proposing a power tariff increase to end the subsidy, particularly which the bulk, commercial and industrial consumers are enjoying. The CCI meeting also envisaged to end the power loadshedding by 2017 and set up utility courts to take the power and gas thieves to task. The tariff would increase at the maximum for bulk, commercial and industrial consumers depending upon the utility of number of units to eliminate the subsidy they were enjoying before, Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Asif said at a crowded press briefing after the meeting. However, the CCI failed to resolve the issue of at-source deduction of electricity arrears of the four federating units from the divisible pool cash disbursements through the federal adjuster. This very important issue would be resolved in a month's time with the consultation of the provincial governments and then a consensus decision on this issue would again be tabled in the CCI meeting, the minister said.

However, sources said, the power tariff would be increased from Rs3 to 7 per unit for different categories of consumers. The minister explained that the government was going to raise the power tariff for commercial and industrial consumers from today (Thursday) and for domestic consumers from October 1, 2013 with zero slab benefit. The domestic consumers who consume electricity of 200 units will not be subjected to any raise in power tariff. However, the consumers who utilise more than 200 units will have to experience the raise in power tariff accordingly. The minister tried to justify the raise in power tariff saying that in the last 13-14 months, the PPP regime didn't increase the tariff which is why this government was forced to pass the raise in power tariff to all the categories of consumers except those resident consumers who use electricity up to 200 units in a month.

Khawaja Asif said the government had erased the circular debt of Rs480 billion and if the tariff restructuring was not carried out, then the circular debt in the current financial year was feared to go up in the range of Rs500-700 billion. He said the average true cost of electricity generation was at Rs15.6 per unit whereas Nepra had determined tariff at Rs14.87, but the notified tariff was just over Rs8 per unit. The minister said in the last 45 days, the government had generated 16,170MW electricity at the maximum on last Tuesday and vowed to produce 15,000MW on an average on daily basis. The minister said the more electricity was generated, the more power deficit got increased. However, he said, the government has carved out a plan to change the electricity generation mix. Asif said Pakistan was the only country in the world which was producing electricity with costly furnace oil and diesel and vowed to change the energy mix in four to five years time to make the electricity affordable.

The minister said that in the CCI meeting it was observed that in Balochistan the required electricity cannot be supplied as the transmission system there cannot sustain the load. "The system of Balochistan can sustain 50 percent load of the electricity of its share. We are considering the import of more electricity from Iran for Balochistan with the strategy to avoid the impact of the US sanctions on Iran," he said, adding: "In the ECC meeting, we have found that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa most of the electricity infrastructure has been destroyed. The militants have destroyed the Sheikh Mohammadi Grid. The federal government has offered to the KP government its assistance in building hydropower projects." Dr Mussadik Malik, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Power, said the government would end the gap of 5,000MW by 2017 for which \$7-8 billion investment was needed for which investors would be provided a reliable infrastructure. "We are going to build the energy corridors wherein energy cities with infrastructure would be constructed to allure the investors to invest in the energy sector."

The minister said the CCI also cleared the draft of the ordinance pertaining to the gas and electricity theft and recovery of bills that would soon be enforced. He said in the CCI meeting, it was also decided to initiate a consultation process with the provinces to close down the markets and wedding halls before evening and ensure that the business activities in the markets should be done in day time. "This will help save 1,200MW electricity." Likewise, the government is going to distribute energy saver bulbs among the masses. In first phase, the shipment of three million energy savers have arrived and the remaining three million would arrive soon. The utility of energy savers would also help save 700-800MW electricity and with the said two steps, the government would be able to save electricity of over 2,000MWs, which is the dire need of time.

The minister also said that in Bannu, masses had burnt Wapda's installations and destroyed offices as the two feeders there had been disconnected as both had 92 and 93 percent losses respectively. The Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (Pesco) cannot provide electricity to the masses of the areas in the jurisdiction of the said two feeders as electricity consumers do not pay their bills. The minister said he had asked the KP chief minister to arrange a Jirga of the

elders of the said areas to resolve the issue of payment of electricity bills. The minister said enough was enough and no more premiums on electricity theft would be allowed.

Mentioning the Nandipur power project, Asif said its price had further increased to Rs58.4 billion from the revised Rs57.3 billion and said that the Planning Commission had found nothing abnormal in the revised cost of the Nandipur power project. The report furnished by General Shahid, a former member of the Planning Commission, has been sent to Transparency International Pakistan and if it feels it can have validation from an independent party. "We are open and want to be transparent," the minister said. He said the cost had been increased mainly because of Interest during Construction (IDC) and massive increase in the value of dollar and there are some variable estimates. He said the PPP government had spent Rs32 billion and completed 65 percent project. The revised PC-1 of the project with Rs57 billion was prepared in January 2013 in the PPP regime that has been found by this government as absolutely correct.

The News - August 01st, 2013

Energy Secretariat on the Cards

The Punjab Government has decided to set up a small energy secretariat for ensuring investment in energy projects, provision of facilities to the investors and rapid implementation on the projects. This was decided at a meeting of Punjab Energy Committee held under the Chairmanship of Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif. The energy secretariat will work in Civil Secretariat and Chief Minister's Office mutually. The government has also decided to immediately constitute Provincial Energy Commission in Punjab which will formulate rules and regulations and policy framework on the energy projects. Provincial Ministers Sher Ali Khan, Farrukh Javed, Mujtba Shuja Ur Rehman, Member Punjab Assembly Ayesha Ghaus, Chief Secretary, concerned secretaries and other officials attended the meeting. With the establishment of small secretariat and constitution of Provincial Energy Commission, the matters relating to energy sector would be disposed smoothly through one window facility being provided to investors. During the meeting, the Chief Minister was given a detailed briefing with regard to roadmap of energy sector. The CM told the meeting that the Punjab government with the help of experts has prepared the future roadmap for energy sector within two months, which would be implemented speedily. The CM said that the progress of Punjab government towards right direction for solving energy crisis would yield positive and encouraging. He said that the country and the nation would be rid of energy crisis by generating energy through biomass, biogas, solar, coal, hydle and bagasse. He further directed that energy committee should also prepare financial model with comprehensive recommendations regarding all phases from launching of the project to its completion. The CM also directed to constitute technical sub-committee, solar, coal and hydle sub-committee, biomass, biogass and bagasse sub-committee and finance sub-committee for Provincial Energy Commission.

The Nation - August 04th, 2013

Vision 2025 to Focus on Integrated Energy Model

The Minister for Planning and Development Prof. Ahsan Iqbal has said that an integrated energy model will be the first pillar of Vision 2025. He stated this while addressing a workshop on 'Vision 2025' being formulated by the Nawaz government. Unlike the past when sub-sectors of water, electricity and gas were separate at the planning stage, the vision for these areas would be formulated on an integrated basis, he said. The next pillar is stabilisation of the economy on a sustainable basis and the plan will focus on tapping indigenous resources while moving away

from reliance on exogenous resources like foreign aid and remittances. "The future of the country is in TIE - tax, investment and exports," he added. He associated future economic development with private sector-led growth, saying public investment alone could not boost growth due to increasing needs of investment in mega projects. This will be the third guiding theme. The government will also encourage commodity-based production sectors to shift to value addition for making big fortunes instead of solely depending on exports of raw products. In the plan, the fourth pillar will be the promotion of commodity-based sectors. The government will introduce separate policies for industrial and agriculture sectors. The focus will be on identifying clusters and facilitating export products.

Modernisation of infrastructure will be the fifth pillar aimed at getting maximum benefits from the country's geographical position. Iqbal said the China trade corridor initiative would be part of this approach. Reforming the institutions and introducing e-governance will be another theme under which reforms will be introduced in the public sector. The last pillar of the Vision 2025 will be building the social sector. Iqbal said so far the emphasis has been "on building hard wares by compromising the soft side of development". The government would make policies to promote education, increase health facilities, reduce poverty and harness the potential of youth for making a progressive Pakistan, he added. "My fear is that the planning commission does not have professional capacity to deliver such plans and visions," said Pervez Tahir. He said there was also a question mark on the commission itself to what extent it has the authority to do work after the 18th amendment in the constitution. Tahir said long-term visions and plans are okay but the country is facing immediate threats of terrorism and the energy crisis. Dr Ashfaq H Khan, eminent economist and principal of economic department in NUST, said the implementation is the real issue to realise the benefits of the proposed vision. Otherwise, it would become a document only. He said that the ministries and the concerned division should be taken on board while making the Vision 2025 as the implementation would be materialised by them. He also said provinces also need to be taken on board as they have become the real players in country's economy after the 18th amendment and several subjects have been devolved to the provinces.

Under the environment of decentralisation, the implementation of the 2025 vision will be an uphill task. The capacity of planning commission has eroded manifold over the years and with huge decay of manpower in the planning commission it seems a mission impossible to work out the vision and its implementation in letter and spirit. He said Pakistan has already had the documents of Vision 2030 and Framework for Economic Growth, but the implementation is the challenge. Ahsan Iqbal responded by admitting the fact that the capacity of the planning commission is questionable and to improve its efficiency he said his ministry has issued the advertisements seeking for the selection of the eight members in a transparent manner under merit-based mechanism. He hoped they would be equipped with innovative ideas to put the country back on road to prosperity. Eminent businessman of the country Razaq Dawood said the government should not increase its reliance on foreign direct investment. Rather, it should look at other way around by allowing corporations to invest abroad and. "This would help put the economy on sound footing."

The News - August 20th, 2013

Power Tariff Up By 15 Percent

The Ministry of Water and Power has notified the schedule of electricity tariff for distribution companies and the Karachi Electric Supply Company (KESC), following the government's decision to increase the power rates and reduce subsidy gradually. The tariff for residential

consumers of Karachi has been increased by an average of 15 percent. According to the revised schedule for KESC notified, the per unit (kWh) electricity charges for residential consumers would be Rs2 per unit for consumption up to 50 units, which earlier was Rs1.87; Rs5.79 per unit for consumption exceeding 50 units, ie, 1-100 units from Rs4.54 earlier; Rs8.11 per unit for consumption of 101-300 units, up from Rs6.86 earlier; Rs12.33 per unit for 301-700 units from Rs11.08 earlier and Rs15.07 per unit for above 700 units, which was Rs13.82. These tariffs are applicable for sanctioned load less than 5kW.

The News - August 20th, 2013

Electricity Tariff Cut By 30 Paisa per Unit

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) approved a reduction of 30 paisa per unit in tariff for all distribution companies of Wapda under monthly fuel adjustment. A public hearing of Nepra decided to pass on the relief to consumers in the billing month of September. It noted with concern that improved power supplies had resulted in abnormally higher transmission losses. Nepra was informed that overall transmission losses of the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) was about one per cent higher than that of June mainly because of transfer of more electricity from north to south. It was stated that the NTDC had to transfer about one billion more electricity units from north to south, resulting in higher system losses. The regulator expressed concern over higher transmission losses and directed the NTDC to submit a comparative statement to justify its claims. The NTDC had sought about 29 paisa per unit reduction in fuel charges from its reference tariff of Rs7.06 per unit in view of better contribution by hydropower plants because of improved water availability and irrigation requirements of the provinces. The hydropower generation contributed more than 40pc of the total energy mix during July as compared with 32.5pc in May and 41pc in June. As a result, dependence on furnace oil-based thermal power generation remained limited to about 33pc in July as compared to 35pc in May 2013 and 30pc in June. Nepra was informed that the cost of hydropower generation stood at about 8 paisa per unit, coal-based at Rs3.6, diesel-based at Rs20.45, furnace oil-based at Rs15.88, gas-based at Rs5 and nuclear power at Rs1.33 per unit.

Dawn - August 21st, 2013

ECNEC Approves 16 Projects worth Rs 132 Billion

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) was held under the chairmanship of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar at the Prime Minister's Office on Wednesday, which approved 16 projects amounting to Rs 132.060 billion. Of the total 16 projects, 12 projects are related to the energy sector amounting to Rs 96.484 billion, including construction of 31.17 megawatts (MW) Koto Hydropower Project at estimated cost of Rs 7.508 billion. An amount of Rs 41.391 billion was approved for three projects located in Sindh, two projects amounting Rs 9.814 billion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, one project amounting Rs 11.822 billion in South Punjab, one project amounting Rs 8.731 billion in Balochistan, one project amounting Rs 22.582 billion in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, seven projects amounting Rs 43.600 billion in Punjab and one project of Rs 2.632 billion in Islamabad. In order to streamline the procedure of approval of projects by ECNEC, the finance minister directed the Planning and Development Department to present projects approved by Central Development Working Party within seven days.

The ECNEC directed the Planning and Development Department to come up with an integrated plan for need of transmission lines for evacuation of electricity planned to be generated by

6,600 MW Thermal Plants at Gadani, 1,200 MW from Jamshoro, 2,017 MW Karachi Coastal Power Plants and other upcoming projects. The meeting was informed that 90 percent work on Dera Ghazi Khan-Loralai transmission line has been completed while 70 percent work on Dadu-Khuzdar transmission has also been completed. As far as grid station at Dera Ghazi Khan is concerned it would be completed by April 14. Deferring the discussion on Kachhi Canal Project Phase I, ECNEC constituted a committee headed by Planning Commission deputy chairman with Planning and Development federal secretary, Balochistan chief secretary, WAPDA chairman, Finance Ministry adviser and Punjab irrigation secretary as its members. The chairman has been authorised to co-opt any member. This committee will look into causes of delay in the Kachhi Canal Project and suggest a way forward in its report, to the next meeting of the ECNEC, so that it can be completed expeditiously. It was also decided that the next meeting of the ECNEC would be held before the end of next week. It was also decided that fully funded projects by provinces should be fast tracked and submitted to ECNEC on priority basis.

The projects approved by the ECNEC include third 500 KV AES – Jamshoro – Moro-Rahimyar Khan and 500 KV Moro-Dadu T/Lines, Rehabilitation of Thermal Power Station, Jamshoro, Transmission Scheme for Dispersal of Power from Neelum-Jhelum, Karot, and Azad Pattan Hydro Power Projects, 132 KV New Substations, Conversion of 66KV Substations to 132 KV, Associated Transmission Lines and Augmentation Sub-projects, MEPCO, 132 KV New Substations, Conversion of 66 KV Sub-stations to 132 KV, Associated Transmission Lines Sub-Project (FESCO), Construction of 132 KV Double Circuit Transmission Lines (QESCO), Construction of 132 KV New Substations of Associated Transmission Lines, Extension and Augmentation Sub-Project (IESCO), Construction of 132 KV New Sub-stations Conversion of 66 KV to 132 KV Sub-stations and Associated Transmission Lines, PESCO, Construction of 132 KV New Sub-stations and Associated Transmission Lines (HESCO), Construction of 132 New Sub-stations and Associated Transmission Lines (LESCO), Interconnection of C3 and C4 Nuclear Power Plants, Construction of Koto Hydropower Project, Land Records Management and Information System Project, Rehabilitating Lower Chenab Canal System Part-B Project, Pakpattan Canal and Suleimanki Barrage Improvement Project and Punjab Economic Opportunities Programme.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Industries and Production Murtaza Jatoi, Minister for Science and Technology Zahid Hamid, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Pervez Rashid, Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunications Anusha Rehman Ahmed Khan, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Resources Jam Kamal Khan, Minister of State for Railways Abdul Hakeem Baloch, representatives of Planning and Development of government of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, Balochistan MPA Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal, representative of government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, finance minister government of Punjab, Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and senior officials of federal and provincial governments.

Daily Times – August 29th, 2013

REGIONAL WATCH

Pakistan & United States

Kerry's Visit: Pakistan, US to Revive Strategic Dialogue

Pakistan and the United States agreed to resume their stalled 'strategic dialogue' but failed to narrow down their differences over the controversial CIA-led drone programme. The decision to restart high-level talks, covering issues from security to economy, was taken after visiting US Secretary of State John Kerry held a series of meetings with the top Pakistani civil and military leadership. Kerry met Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and held formal talks with his Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz. He separately met army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Inter Services Intelligence Director General Lt Gen Zaheerul Islam and President Asif Ali Zardari as well. Speaking to reporters alongside Aziz, Secretary Kerry described his talks as 'positive and constructive' and announced the two countries would resume strategic dialogue. "I'm pleased to announce that today, very quickly, we were able to agree to a resumption of the strategic dialogue in order to foster a deeper, broader and more comprehensive partnership between our countries," Kerry told reporters here at the Prime Minister's Office. "The Pakistan-US relationship is not defined by the threats we face and is not just about counter-terrorism," he said, adding that the US was concerned with Pakistan's economic revival.

Kerry Confirms Timeline for Drones

Hopes were raised when Secretary Kerry, in an interview with PTV, suggested that US drone strikes in Pakistan could end 'very soon'. The unusually outspoken remarks were welcomed in Islamabad but immediately downplayed by American aides. "I think the [drone] programme will end as we have eliminated most of the threat and continue to eliminate it," replied Kerry when asked whether the controversial campaign could end. Pressed on whether a timeline was envisaged, he responded: "Well, I do. And I think the (US) president has a very real timeline and we hope it's going to be very, very soon." It is the first time such a senior member of the US administration has indicated there could be a definitive end to the programme, which the CIA has in the past called an effective counter-terrorism weapon. But US officials immediately sought to downplay Kerry's remarks. US State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said that the number of drone strikes had declined owing to the drawdown of American troops from Afghanistan and because of progress in curtailing the al Qaeda threat.

"Today the secretary referenced the changes that we expect to take place in that programme over the course of time, but there is no exact timeline to provide," she said in a statement. Kerry's television remarks also strayed from what he told the news conference with Sartaj Aziz earlier, when he tackled complaints about drones by pointing the finger at al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri, who is believed by certain quarters to be based in Pakistan. "An al Qaeda leader like al Zawahiri is violating the sovereignty of this country. And when they attack people in mosques and blow up people in villages and market places they are violating the sovereignty of [Pakistan]," he said, after Aziz repeated the government's stated position that drone strikes violate the country's 'territorial integrity and sovereignty.' 'It is also no secret that along this journey in the last few years we've experienced a few differences," Kerry said.

"Pakistan cannot realise its full economic potential until it overcomes extremists," Kerry told the news conference. "The choice for Pakistanis is clear: will the forces of violent extremism be allowed to grow more dominant, eventually overpowering the moderate majority?" Pakistani

authorities briefed Kerry on the new proposed counter-terrorism strategy the government is currently formulating. Replying to a question, Aziz ruled out the possibility of launching any fresh offensive in North Waziristan Agency against the militants. "Our first preference is to hold talks, if that does not work then we can consider other options," he added. During his talks with Kerry, Nawaz emphasized Pakistan's desire to get access to the American markets to boost economy and assistance in overcoming the energy crisis. Kerry reiterated the US government's stance on Diamer-Bhasha Dam and said his country will facilitate its construction. He also invited Nawaz to visit Washington for a meeting with President Barack Obama.

'Zardari Deserves Credit for Transition'

During his meeting with President Zardari, Kerry congratulated him on seeing the country through its first democratic transition. "I think President Zardari deserves credit... It is an enormous step forward. It is historic. In the 66 year history of Pakistan that has never happened. So change comes over time," he said. He also telephoned the newly-elected president Mamnoon Hussain and congratulated him on his victory.

Meeting with Imran Khan

The visiting diplomat also met Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan. During the meeting, Imran insisted that stopping the drone strikes would motivate militants to give up their fight. He explained that the programme was counterproductive since it both cost civilian lives and fuelled terrorism. Remarking on the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, Imran asserted that it needed to be carried out in an orderly fashion or else Pakistan will have to face the brunt of the situation left behind, like in the case of Soviet withdrawal.

The Express Tribune - August 02nd, 2013

IP Project in Jeopardy: US Threatens Curbs If Pakistan Pursues Iran Deal: PM

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said the United States has warned that the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project could invoke sanctions on the country in the future. Some 48 hours earlier, Foreign Office spokesperson Aizaz Chaudhry had disclosed that the government had presented US Secretary of State John Kerry a 'non-paper' over the IP pipeline, conveying Pakistan's standpoint that the project was being undertaken to address the country's acute energy requirements. In the past too Washington has voiced serious concerns about the pipeline project. Earlier this year, then US State Department spokesperson Victoria Nuland said that Pakistan risked sparking US sanctions if it pursues its plans to build the \$7.5 billion gas pipeline. Speaking to a delegation of the Pakistan Journalists Forum at Sharif Villa, the residence of his son Hussain Nawaz Sharif, on Sunday, the prime minister said that he had clearly conveyed Pakistan's demand to end the CIA-led drone campaign during his meeting with Secretary Kerry.

The US secretary of state held out the hope that the controversial drone campaign could end 'very soon'. His comments, made during an interview with PTV, were subsequently downplayed by US officials. Talking to reporters, Prime Minister Nawaz said he would draft a comprehensive policy on Kashmir and other issues after consulting all political parties. He called for ending the arms race in the region and urged India to join Pakistan in reducing the two country's defence budgets. "Regional peace will remain under threat until there is a balance in armament... We want peace and for that both countries [India and Pakistan] must put a cap on their defence spending," he said. "No one, apart from common people, has suffered from the wars between us." Replying to a question on Afghanistan, the premier said the country will adopt a policy of 'non-interference'. Pakistan will not support a particular group in Afghanistan at the expense of

others, he maintained, adding that Pakistan supports the Doha process because it is expected to serve regional and international interests.

In response to another question, Premier Nawaz said a commission was investigating allegations against former president Pervez Musharraf and that he would refrain from commenting on the matter till it compiled its report. He added that he did not believe in the politics of revenge. Talking about the country's energy crisis, he said it was sad that a nuclear power was beset by chronic electricity shortage. Generating power would not have been such a difficult matter, he said, had previous governments fulfilled their responsibilities and devised plans to meet the shortage. "Had they done some work on this end, the situation would have been much different," he contended, adding that since his government had to start from 'scratch', it would take some time to solve the crisis. "The electricity deficit will be dealt within three to four years," Prime Minister Nawaz reiterated. He announced that the government was working on a dam that would both end the country's power woes and benefit the agriculture sector. The premier said work on the Thar coal project was also being carried out and would help overcome the power crisis. Prime Minister Nawaz said Pakistan was confronted by several challenges at the moment, such as terrorism, sectarianism, power shortage, economic woes and depleted resources. He said that these challenges would be solved with mutual cooperation. He stressed that Pakistan will have to adopt the rule of law, end the scourge of terrorism and extremism, and create a new political culture in order to be a civilised nation.

The Express Tribune - August 05th, 2013

Pakistan & India

Pak-India Talks Attacked In the Tracks

India said a group of Pakistani army soldiers and militants killed five of its soldiers in an ambush along the Line of Control in Kashmir, an accusation that threatens to derail renewed efforts to resume peace talks. Pakistan rejected the allegation, saying there had been no exchange of fire along the heavily militarised LoC. It said it was committed to a decade-old ceasefire and wanted to restart talks. Strongly rejecting the allegations carried by some sections of the Indian media of the alleged attack across the LoC in Poonch sector in which five Indian soldiers were claimed to have been killed, Foreign Office spokesman in a statement said these are baseless and unfounded allegations. "Our military authorities have confirmed that there had been no exchange of fire that could have resulted in such an incident," said the spokesman. He said "Pakistan remains committed to the ceasefire agreement of 2003 which is an important confidence-building measure and should be respected in letter and spirit." The spokesman said Pakistan also urges the need for abiding by and strengthening existing military mechanisms to ensure that such ill-founded reports that have the potential of vitiating the atmosphere, are avoided. He said Pakistan is committed to a constructive, sustained and result-oriented process of engagement with India and looks forward to an early resumption of the dialogue process. The spokesman said it is important that both sides make serious efforts in maintaining the positive atmosphere and avoid negative propaganda.

However, the so-called attack puts the Indian government under pressure from opposition parties to respond aggressively as it heads into a tough election next year. India summoned Pakistan's deputy envoy to New Delhi and lodged a protest over the LoC killings, an Indian government source said. "The ambush was carried out by approximately 20 heavily armed terrorists along with soldiers of Pak army," the Indian Defence Ministry said in a statement. Troops were on heightened alert along the 740-km Line of Control, according to an Indian army colonel in Srinagar. The soldiers belonged to 21 Bihar Regiment and were deployed

on the Sarla forward post in Chakan-da-Bagh sector of Poonch. Indian army sources said the latest attack took place in the early hours of Tuesday about 450 metres inside LoC, where six soldiers were on patrol. One soldier was wounded. "I assure the house that our army is fully ready to take all necessary steps to uphold the sanctity of the LoC," Defence Ministry AK Antony told parliament. According to him, "Five soldiers were martyred and one was injured when a patrol party of the Army comprising one non-commissioned officer and five other ranks were ambushed on our side of the Line of Control in Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir early Tuesday morning." "In the ensuing firing, five Indian soldiers were killed and one was injured. The ambush was carried out by approximately 20 heavily-armed terrorists along with persons dressed in Pakistan Army uniforms," said Antony. He noted that the number of infiltration attempts have doubled this year in comparison to the corresponding period January 01-August 05, 2012.

The killings caused uproar in parliament and a senior leader of the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Yashwant Sinha, said the Indian army should give a 'befitting reply' to Pakistan. He called on the government to abandon planned talks with Islamabad. Meanwhile, Congress President Sonia Gandhi said India would not be cowed down by the 'deceitful' killing of five of its soldiers along the LoC and asked the government to take 'appropriate' measures. Expressing deep grief and shock over the incident, she said that the entire Congress party as indeed the entire country stands by the families of the slain soldiers. There seems to be a major goof-up between the Indian army and defence ministry over the LoC incident. Defence Minister A K Anthony told Parliament: "The ambush was carried out by approximately 20 heavily armed terrorists along with persons dressed in Pakistan Army uniforms." At the same time a press release from Indian Army PRO in Jammu said: "The ambush was carried out by approximately 20 heavily armed terrorists along with soldiers of Pak Army." The government has come under heavy criticism after Antony's statement with leader of Opposition questioning by saying that the statement provides 'an escape route to Pakistan'.

According to Indian media, the army does not know how the change in wording had taken place. After the goof up, Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia, Director General Military Operations also met Defence Minister Antony in Parliament. Meanwhile, the Indian army said the killing of five of its soldiers was an act of revenge by Pakistan against the killing of 19 infiltrators during in recent weeks. Islamabad has also been pushing for a meeting between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif - who made better ties with India a theme in his election campaign in May - and his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in September, Indian officials said. According to a private TV channel, two Pakistani soldiers were injured in unprovoked firing by Indian army across LoC on late Tuesday night.

Dawn - August 07th, 2013

Border Volatility: Amidst Escalating Tensions, Pakistan Weighs Its Options

As India continues to seethe with anger over the August 6 ambush on the Line of Control (LoC), Pakistan has started examining several options, including scaling down its diplomatic staff in New Delhi and shifting troops from its border with Afghanistan to the eastern frontier. This coincides with a message by Indian army chief General Bikram Singh to his troops to be "aggressive when it comes to dealing with the Pakistani forces" and comes five days after protesters tried to storm Pakistan's diplomatic mission in New Delhi. Coincidentally, India's main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also demanded that Islamabad pull out its high commissioner in New Delhi. The two nations - which have fought three wars since their inception in 1947 - have been embroiled in a verbal duel since the August 6 cross-Line of

Control raid that India blamed on Pakistan Army troops. However, the official added that the final decision would be taken by the Cabinet Committee on Defence, the country's highest forum on national security issues. Military officials, meanwhile, reacted strongly to 'unprovoked firing' by Indian troops on Pakistani check posts in the Sialkot sector. "Pakistan Army will give a befitting response in case of further ceasefire violations," a senior military official told. He added that the army could ask the government to withdraw some troops from the border along Afghanistan and redeploy them to the eastern frontiers. "The military brass has finalised this recommendation in internal meetings. And it would be presented in the DCC meeting," the military official said. He requested anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

A spokesperson for the Prime Minister House confirmed that Nawaz Sharif will be convening the DCC meeting to discuss the latest internal and external security threats. Though no actual date has been fixed, the meeting is likely to be held within a week, the spokesperson said. "The meeting will discuss the country's internal and external security situation, particularly tension on eastern borders and regional security scenario," said the spokesperson when asked about the agenda of the meeting. It will be the first meeting of the DCC since the PML-N government took charge after the May 11 elections. A senior official said the prime minister has already received a foreign ministry recommendation that it scale down diplomatic staff in India following Wednesday's abortive attempt by mobsters to storm Pakistan's High Commission. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart are scheduled to meet on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York next month. However, calls for postponing the meeting are growing shriller in New Delhi. Indian opposition leader Rajnath Singh said on Sunday that his country's patience was running out and demanded that not only India stop all dialogue with Pakistan but also send back Pakistan's envoy in New Delhi, and recall Indian high commissioner from Islamabad.

Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid evaded a direct reply to a question on whether the New York rendezvous would materialise. The Pakistan government should own up the responsibility for the attacks on Indian soldiers and the firing on LoC in violation of the 2003 ceasefire. He ruled out India's directly approaching Pakistani army chief to ease tensions. "The responsibility must rest with the (their) government. Our meeting point is the civilian elected government of Pakistan, not the Pakistan Army or any other agency," he told India's CNN-IBN television in an interview. Referring to Nawaz's statement where he tried to deescalate the situation, Khurshid said there was no indication of acceptance of responsibility for the attack. "One element is that the regret about what has happened, which has certainly been mentioned. But, there is no indication of acceptance of responsibility," he added. Earlier this week, a bevy of strategic experts, including former military chiefs and top bureaucrats, asked the Indian government to stop talks with Pakistan till the country demonstrated some meaningful steps on combating terrorism. In an unusual step, these experts, who are purportedly not affiliated to any political organisation, issued a press release which said: "The government would be well advised not to rush into a dialogue with Pakistan on the assumption that the new prime minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, is ostensibly committed to improving ties with India."

The Express Tribune - August 12th, 2013

India, Pakistan Trade Gunfire across LoC

Indian and Pakistani troops traded fire across their frontier in Kashmir, as six civilians, including two young girls, were injured in Pakistan and three villagers on the Indian side in Thursday's tit-for-tat shelling across the so-called Line of Control (LoC), police and military

officials said. Shelling and firing has flared along the disputed region's de-facto border since August 6, when five Indian soldiers were ambushed and killed in a remote Himalayan district. India blamed the Pakistan Army for the attack. Islamabad has denied any involvement. Indian President Pranab Mukherjee sounded a stern note in an Independence Day speech on Wednesday night, warning Pakistan, "Our commitment to peace is unflinching but even our patience has limits." Infiltration and cross-border ambushes had become rare in recent years and, although artillery fire frequently rattles the LoC, the intense shelling of recent days has strained a ceasefire that had largely held for nearly a decade. "There was no exchange of sweets at Aman Setu (Peace Bridge)," said Indian Army officer Brigadier RK Singh, referring to a custom that soldiers from the two sides have observed on India's Independence Day since a road between the Indian town of Srinagar and Pakistan's Muzaffarabad was reopened in 2005. The renewed bitterness has cast doubt over preparations for what both sides see as a potentially breakthrough meeting between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh, in New York in September.

Daily Times - August 16, 2013

India tells army to retaliate to LoC firing

The Indian army will take "all possible steps" to counter any ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the border between the countries, the Indian defence minister said, warning not to take New Delhi's restraint for granted. Skirmishes have erupted across the heavily militarised Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border in Kashmir, since five Indian soldiers were killed earlier this month in an ambush which India has blamed on the Pakistan Army. "Our restraint should not be taken for granted nor the capacity of our armed forces to protect the sanctity of the LoC," Indian Defence Minister AK Antony told parliament's Upper House. "Now our army will take all possible steps - sometimes strong action - to effectively retaliate against every violation along the LoC," he added. Islamabad has denied involvement of its soldiers in the ambush, one of the deadliest in years targeting Indian troops in the disputed Muslim-majority region. Kashmir has been the trigger of two of the three wars between the nations. The renewed tensions have jeopardised plans for what the two governments hoped might be a breakthrough encounter between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of a UN meeting in New York next month. Antony alleged that Pakistani soldiers were behind as many as 82 ceasefire violations on the border this year and warned of consequences on the country's long-term relations with Islamabad. "Naturally this incident will have consequences on our behaviour at the LoC and on our relationship with Pakistan," he said.

Daily Times - August 20th, 2013

Pakistan & Afghanistan

Pakistan Urges Afghan Neighbours' Role

While urging "contiguous" neighbours of Afghanistan to work together to ensure a stable and united Afghanistan, a top Pakistani official took note of India's outreach to the war-torn country to accomplish that objective. "India's assistance to Afghanistan in the past to help build their infrastructure and some training remains important and I hope they will continue to do that," Sartaj Aziz, the Adviser on Foreign Affairs to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, said in an interview with Voice of America (VOA). Responding to a question, Sartaj Aziz felt there was no need for Pakistan and India to also have a dialogue as such on Afghanistan to address each

other's concerns. "Not a dialogue in that sense. Pakistan is of course the immediate neighbour. India is not a contiguous neighbour and India's role has been mainly to help development of Afghanistan and to that extent they will continue to do so. But I think all the other contiguous neighbours of Afghanistan, Central Asian countries, particularly including Iran who are next door neighbours, they all have to adopt the same policy that Pakistan has adopted - that we all work together to ensure a stable and united Afghanistan and no interference and Afghan-owned process be supported. So I think that is what is required and I presume India believes in that. But India's assistance to Afghanistan in the past to help build their infrastructure and some training remains important and I hope they will continue to do that." In comments, VOA said such statements are rare for senior Pakistani leaders, and many in both governments remain skeptical that Islamabad is open to increased Indian engagement with Kabul. But Aziz said his country has a vested interest in seeing a successful Afghanistan, and countries in the region should work together to support that goal. He said the United States agreed with Pakistan during Secretary of State John Kerry's visit that the two countries should bolster their bilateral ties away from the Afghan war lens.

"Both sides agreed that so far in the last few years Pakistan's relations with America were dominated by the Afghan issues and now that the US is leaving Afghanistan in 2014, we emphasised and they agreed that we must develop our relationship in an independent manner and not through the Afghan lens or even the Indian prism because basically the relationship is important enough to stand on its own," Aziz said. According to the transcript of the interview released by the VOA, Aziz also reached out to Afghanistan and India to push efforts towards improving ties with both neighbours. He also confirmed the Pakistani and Indian Prime Ministers are scheduled to meet in September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York. Dilating on the importance of Pakistan-US relations in the bilateral context, Aziz said during Kerry's visit, "I think we both agreed that the transactional nature of the ties can become strategic if we build strong economic links and the future relationship will build on more trade, more investment, technology, education, energy cooperation and things of that kind. Continuing, Aziz said in one sense the two sides agreed to try to double the trade from \$5.1 billion to more than \$10 or \$11 billion in the next five years to give strength to this relationship." He told the broadcast service the Nawaz Sharif government considers trade access to US market more important than the American aid. "We will certainly judge this relationship on the basis of market access that we get, the way they facilitate American investors to invest here and much more importantly, transfer of technology and, of course, defense cooperation where we are wholly dependent on American equipment and technology."

On joint Pakistani-US efforts towards Afghan reconciliation, Aziz noted that the two capitals are "working more in coordination to see that the Afghan reconciliation process moves forward and I think we have both agreed that it should be an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process and we should not try to orchestrate it from outside." He called upon all Afghan sides have to show flexibility. "Obviously, the Taliban have been saying that this government, this Constitution is imposed by foreign powers and is not indigenous. But I think many of them realise that once they are part of the negotiating process, then they will be able to make changes if they require. So in that sense there are some groups which want to talk and take part, others of course do not believe in that. So I think if both sides show some flexibility because, after all, Afghans have been living together for centuries, different ethnic groups and people from different parts of the country, and they must live together because [their] future lies in a united, democratic and hopefully, a stable Afghanistan. But Pakistan has clearly told them that we are not going to interfere in [their] internal affairs and we have no favorites so we hope that [they] will find ways and means of sorting out these problems and achieving a settlement for the future dispensation within Afghanistan. We can only facilitate when [they] ask us to do so otherwise it is [their] own process." In respect of President Hamid Karzai's expected visit to Pakistan, Aziz

advocated close ties between the two neighbors. "The purpose of that is not just to discuss reconciliation but improve relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan because these foreign powers come and go. The British came in the last century and then the Russians came and the Americans have come and gone, we are always together and we have to have [a] good relationship among the people of the two countries. So I tried to explain to the Afghan leaders that the hostile statements which come from Afghanistan have a very bad impact on the people of Pakistan because they think they have sacrificed so much in the last 30-35 years, and look what we are getting in return.

So I think that message helped and I said that if there are any problems or differences, let us discuss them in diplomatic or other channels rather airing them in the media. So, [President Karzai's] visit I hope will help us to further discuss the importance of improving relations between the two countries and that requires the commitment of the people on both sides to help each other because Afghanistan has suffered a lot in the last 35 years." In regard with overtures the new government has made on improving Pakistan-India relations, Aziz said since the inception of the new government in the last seven-eight weeks a lot of progress has been made because the two Prime ministers [Nawaz Sharif and Manmohan Singh] talked to each other immediately and then India sent its representative for back channel diplomacy immediately after Nawaz Sharif was elected and the new government nominated very quickly Pakistan's back channel representative, Sheharyar Khan, and he went to India and met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the 5th of July." "The two Prime Ministers are scheduled to meet in New York in September. So, initial steps have been taken to resume the dialogue. Now the outcome is difficult to judge partly because the Indians are preparing for the elections next year. So, a major stance or efforts to reach compromises may not be possible but a number of things are possible. So, we are hoping that these contacts and the groups that we are convening will make progress on their respective agenda.

Dawn - August 07th, 2013

Pakistan's Prosperity Linked with Afghanistan, Says Prime Minister

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Afghan President Hamid Karzai held a 2nd round of one-on-one exclusive talks, with the prime minister saying prosperity of Pakistan was linked with peace in Afghanistan. The prime minister hosted a luncheon for the visiting Afghan president and his delegation. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Adviser on Foreign Affairs Tariq Fatemi and Army Chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani also attended the meeting. The meeting discussed regional security situation besides other issues, including ways to curb terrorism and further improving Pak-Afghan relations to bring stability and peace to the region. Earlier, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Hamid Karzai held a one-on-one meeting in Islamabad in the morning and exchanged views on bilateral issues besides discussing regional situation with particular focus on post-NATO withdrawal situation in Afghanistan. During the meeting, Nawaz said both countries faced common challenges and the two needed to be on the same page. He said Pakistan would continue to support the Afghan reconciliation process. The two leaders also discussed border situation and possible cooperation in war against terrorism. The Afghan president requested the Pakistani government to assist in the ongoing reconciliation process in Afghanistan to bring peace and stability in the country. It is pertinent to mention that the Afghan president extended his visit for a day on the request of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Karzai later left for Afghanistan after concluding his two-day visit. PM's Special Representative on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz bade him farewell at the Nur Khan Airbase. -

Pakistan Today - August 27th, 2013

Afghan Reconciliation: Karzai to Seek Help for Taliban Talks

In a bid to kick-start reconciliation with the Taliban, Afghan President Hamid Karzai will urge Pakistan to broker talks between the Taliban and the High Peace Council, as well as exhort Islamabad to release Taliban inmates. During his last state visit to Pakistan and first meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the Afghan leader would focus on the need for Pakistan's support to convince the Taliban to talk to Afghan officials directly if it really wants an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned peace process, said Zardast Shams, the Afghan Embassy spokesperson in Islamabad. "Location is not important but dialogue process between the Afghan Peace Council and the Taliban is much more important," Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Umer Daudzai told The Express Tribune. "We say that if you can facilitate a contact between the Taliban and the United States, you can also facilitate a contact between the Afghan government and the Taliban. What we are demanding is a Pakistan-facilitated process that brings the Taliban to negotiating table with the Afghan High Peace Council." Afghan officials have announced the agenda set forth for his visit, but how contentious issues, such as the release of the insurgent leaders, will be dealt with is still unclear. Kabul wants certain Taliban leaders in Pakistan's jail, including their former chief strategist Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar to be freed to make them available for negotiations.

Karzai also intends on discussing the participation of Pakistani religious scholars in a large gathering of Islamic scholars from the Muslim world to be held soon in Kabul, added Ambassador Daudzai, who was optimistic about the potential outcomes of the visit. "While progress has been made in other areas, nothing concrete has been achieved toward establishing peace and security in Afghanistan. But now with a new government in Pakistan that has a clear majority and has vowed to improve ties with India, we can take steps to help bring peace and stability to Afghanistan." Officials from both the countries seem sanguine, as Foreign Office spokesperson Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhary, talking to Afghanistan's TOLONews, termed Karzai's trip a "historical event". It would surely help strengthen relations between the two countries, he said. "Pakistan will honestly cooperate whether it is regarding the release of Taliban prisoners or holding a meeting of the clerics in Kabul," Chaudhary said. "Pakistan is committed to working sincerely to accelerate the stalled peace process." Meanwhile, Ahmad Zia Masoud, leader of the National Front Party (NFP), doubts the efficacy of the talks. "Pakistan follows its own strategic motives and the Taliban, as an ideological group, will never obey a president whose ideology is totally different than theirs," he told Pajhwok Afghan News.

The Express Tribune - August 26th, 2013
