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GOVERNANCE WATCH**Government Working****Ashraf to Nisar: It's Time We Discuss Who Will Be PM**

Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf wrote to Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, asking him to forward three nominations of his choice to evolve consensus over the appointment of caretaker prime minister. The letter has set off the consultation process between the prime minister and opposition leader under the 18th constitutional amendment. In case of failure in achieving consensus, the matter would be handed over to a parliamentary committee comprising equal number of lawmakers from both sides of the political divide. However, if the committee too fails to evolve consensus, the matter would be sent to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) which would nominate the caretaker PM. The National Assembly will be achieving the milestone of completing its tenure by the middle of next month. It will be a historic achievement signifying the maturity and sagacity of the political parties in the country. This singular achievement will go a long way in strengthening democracy and establishing supremacy of the will of the people of Pakistan," said Ashraf in his letter.

All political parties, within and outside the parliament, and national institutions deserved special compliment and praise for their continued support to the democratic process during the last five years. The country was now poised for general elections with the likely dissolution of the National Assembly on the expiry of its term. It is imperative that we initiate the process under Article 224 of the Constitution to arrive at a consensus on the appointment of care taker prim e minister, who could uphold the national interest and ensure free, fair and transparent elections in the country. The PM said that the people of Pakistan rightly expected the treasury and opposition to rise to the occasion and agree upon the most "suitable person" as caretaker prime m inister and pave the way for holding general elections in an impartial, fair and transparent manner. "Let us enable the people of Pakistan to express their will in an exemplary environment and ensure smooth transition of power to the next elected government. The letter concluded as: "I would be grateful if you could for - ward your nominations at the earliest so that we may arrive at a consensus on the caretaker prime minister, prior to the dissolution of the National Assembly on the expiry of its term otherwise we will be constrained to proceed further in the matter as per Article 224 (A) of the constitution".

Pakistan Today - Feburary, 2013

MNAs Slam Government for Out-Of-Turn Appointments, Patronising Banned Outfits

Legislators in the Lower House of parliament grilled the gov ernment for thousands of out-of-turn appointments in Sindh, giving extraordinary media coverage to leaders of banned outfits, influence being exerted by the PPP, President Zardari on the upcoming polls and immigration of thousands of Hindu families to India. The eighth sitting of the 50th session of the National Assembly opened with NA Deputy Speaker Faisal Karim Kundi in the chair. Kundi chaired the sitting for an hour, while the remaining session was presided over by the NA speaker and the members of panel of chairpersons. A calling attention notice about the power breakdown on the night between February 24 and 25, a motion u nder rule 259 regarding law and order, and the

Capital University of Science and Technology Bill 2012 were deferred. Welcoming the appointment of Engineer Shaukatullah as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor, Awami National Party member Bushra Gohar hoped that the move might prove positive in improving the situation.

Pointing out that the FATA Secretariat had become a hub of corruption, she said the governor should take notice of the issue and should get recover the millions of rupees after holding an impartial audit. The ANP legislator pointed out that the media was paying extraordinary attention to the heads of banned outfits and these people were being invited in various programmes on almost a routine basis, demanding that the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) should take strict notice of the situation. Syed Zafar Ali Shah criticised the growing number of towers of cellular companies, saying the rays being emitted from them were hazardous for human health, but nobody seemed to regulate them. He said he had informed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in writing that the Sindh government had imposed ban on government hiring on one hand, but on the other, thousands of people had been employed out of merit. Junior officers were being appointed on senior positions, President Asif Ali Zardari was trying to influence the coming polls and the PPP was involved in political victimisation of its opponents.

Shahzia Marri of the PPP flayed Shah for his remarks against the PPP and accused him of “destroying” Sanghar district. Khawaja Saad Rafique of the PML-N expressed his dissatisfaction over the poor performance by parliament, saying in the last five years, the parliament failed to give a solid performance, and no great expectations remained from it. Ghaus Bukhsh Mahar demanded the Sindh government issue a clarification over the statement by one of its ministers, who after the blast at Hajan Shah’s shrine, said the pre-election situation was being worsened to create no-go areas in Sindh. MQM’s Khawaja Sohail Mansoor raised objections to the continuous absence of minister for interior, calling it an insult of the House. Upon this Khurshid Shah assured that the minister would be called into the House. Advocate Usman Khan stressed on developing road infrastructure in Gwadar, saying it was necessary if the government really wanted to get benefits from the strategic asset. He also demanded the House take the nation on board over who in actual terms would benefit from the Gwadar port. Syed Asif Husnain grilled the treasury benches over the continuous abductions, kidnappings for ransom, forced conversions and marriages of Hindu minority members, especially females, adding that such things had forced a number of families to leave for permanent residence in India.

Pakistan Today - February 28, 2013

Government Should Start Talks With Taliban without Delay: Nawaz

PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif said the government should take Taliban’s offer for talks seriously, adding that the government should begin meaningful and result oriented talks without any further delay. In a statement, Nawaz said that war was not the solution to any problem and Pakistan is paying a heavy price for making the mistake to use violence as a solution to its problems. Nawaz also said that the PML-N has always supported the resolution of issues through dialogue and support talks with the Taliban even though the current government’s record is not such that it could give any guarantees. Nawaz further added that the resolutions passed by the parliament also stress that concrete measures be taken to solve the issues. Nawaz’s statement also said that the people of Pakistan need peace, as progress and prosperity cannot even be imagined without it. In a 27 minute video released earlier this month, the Taliban set two conditions to hold talks with the government. According to a Taliban spokesman, talks would be held if Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Munawar Hasan and Nawaz Sharif

came as guarantors. The second condition was the release of Taliban commanders being held by the Pakistani government.

The News - February 07, 2013

National Assembly

National Assembly Will Be Dissolved On March 16: Prime Minister

Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said that the national and provincial assemblies would not be dissolved before the end of tenure. Prime Minister Asraf added that the tenure of the National Assembly would expire on March 16. When asked about the caretaker setup, the prime minister replied that all decisions would be made according to the constitution and the caretaker prime minister of the country would be selected from within Pakistan. Prime Minister Ashraf further added that the setup would be constituted in consultation with Opposition leader Chaudhry Nisar.

The News - February 22, 2013

Covert negotiations: PPP, PML-N agree to dissolve assemblies on March 16

Negotiating teams for the government and the opposition, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), have agreed in principle to dissolve the National Assembly and all provincial assemblies on March 16, paving the way for elections for both national and provincial legislatures on the same day. Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said on Friday that the National Assembly will complete its tenure and will not be dissolved before March 16. In behind the scenes negotiations, the two major parties have reportedly covered significant ground over installing interim set-ups at both the centre and in provinces. Formal negotiations between the Prime Minister and Leader of Opposition in the National Assembly are yet to start. However many issues have been decided behind closed doors, between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) committee led by Khurshid Shah and PML-N committee led by Ishaq Dar. The two sides have also agreed in principle that the PML-N will accept the PPP's choice for interim chief minister in Sindh. The PPP has said it will reciprocate this gesture in Punjab, provided an acceptable name is chosen.

Although the tenure of the National Assembly will expire on March 16, the Punjab Assembly will remain functional until April 8, leverage the PML-N has been using to its advantage in its negotiations with the ruling party. If the PML-N doesn't dissolve the provincial assembly before April 8, elections of National and all provincial assemblies will not take place within a 60-day timeframe, unless the rest of the assemblies are dissolved before March 16. If the dissolution of assemblies occurs on different dates, it would be an administrative nightmare for election authorities to conduct elections for all legislatures the same day. There is no legal bar on holding these elections separately, but since the polls require huge financial and administrative resources, election authorities have been holding them on the same day since 1997. Law Minister Farooq H Naek told reporters that in order to hold elections on the same date, both the National and provincial assemblies need to be dissolved the same day. He said on March 16, the federal cabinet would stand dissolved but prime minister would continue for another few days till an interim premier takes office.

PML-N spokesperson Senator Pervez Rasheed told that the dissolution of the assemblies on March 16th is conditional from the PML-N, and depends on if all other related matters go smoothly. “We will keep this option till the last minute,” he said. However, he said that if the rest of the pre-election issues went smoothly between the two parties, PML-N would agree to it. Meanwhile, the opposition has floated many names for an interim prime minister with other opposition parties and in the media, while the PPP, in contrast, has been tight-lipped on the subject. When contacted, a number of PPP leaders claimed that their nominee will be both neutral and acceptable to the PML-N, adding that the party will reveal a name once formal talks begin.

Legal Position: The prime minister is supposed to write a letter to the leader of the opposition inviting his consultation over their perspective candidates for an interim premiership. In case the prime minister and leader of opposition fail to agree on a person to be appointed as the caretaker prime minister within three days of the dissolution of the National Assembly, they each have to forward two nominees to a committee to be immediately constituted by the speaker of the National Assembly. This committee comprises eight members of the outgoing assembly, the Senate, or both, with equal representation from the treasury and the opposition, to be nominated by the prime minister and opposition leader, respectively. In case this committee fails to make a decision, the matter is then referred to the election commission which is required to make a final selection within two days. The same procedure would be adopted for the appointment of provincial interim chief ministers.

The Express Tribune - February 23, 2013

PML-N Demands Agencies Brief National Assembly

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) members insisted on Tuesday on a commitment from the government for a briefing by the heads of security and intelligence agencies in a joint session of Parliament on the law and order situation, with particular emphasis on the Quetta carnage. However, despite several assurances, the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) did not give a specific date for convening the requested session. Religious Affairs Minister Syed Khursheed Shah said he would convey this demand to Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf to determine a set date. He referred to the imposition of Governor Rule in Balochistan, stressing the fact that the government had removed its own government in the province. Now, he said, the intelligence agencies must do their bit. Irrespective of religious affiliation, a common man in Balochistan is insecure. And a wealthy mafia has become active in Quetta to buy the lands of the Hazaras. This mafia is also active in other affected parts of the country. He expressed fear that the wave of terrorism and violence would intensify before the polls. Asif’s sentiments were readily seconded by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) representatives. Although the PML-N hit out at the PPP for what it said was its inability to control the volatile law and order situation, its own government in Punjab was also targeted during the proceedings for allegedly letting militants and banned outfits roam about freely in the province. Lawmakers from the MQM, Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) and the Awami National Party united in pointing the finger at the PML-N and urged action against terrorist sanctuaries in Punjab. Akhtar said that the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the outfit that has claimed responsibility for the Quetta tragedy, was operating freely in Punjab. He demanded law enforcement agencies seal their offices.

The Express Tribune - February 20, 2013

176 Bills Pending In National Assembly

According to the official website of the National Assembly, there are 176 private member bills that are waiting final voting. The bills after their introduction had been sent to their respective standing committees for mandatory reports, and now until and unless the relevant committees do not provide their reports on the bills, they cannot be presented to the house for voting. It would be right to deduce that with the dissolution of the lower house of the parliament impending, these bills will die their natural death. A private member bill is a piece of legislation that any member or a group of members of the house formulate on an issue of importance on their own without formal input from the treasury benches. The National Assembly's rules of business do not put a time limit within which a private member bill after introduction must be presented for final voting. Yasmin Rehman, an active member of the National Assembly from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), accepted the fact that private member bills were not taken seriously by the house and members. She had moved a private member bill to seek an amendment in the Census Ordinance 1959. If it had been passed, the federal government would have been bound to carry out national census in the country after every 10 years.

The last census was conducted in 1998, and the only purpose behind moving this bill was to ensure that the federal government through official gazette notification will direct all concerned departments to ensure allocation of necessary resources for the highly important exercise of census on time. Another lawmaker from the PPP, who didn't want to speak on the record, said that the National Assembly rule of procedure number 235 states that the concerned standing committee after receiving a bill was supposed to present its report within 30 days. However, the said condition was never implemented in most cases. The National Assembly's website shows 36 private members bill that were presented in 2008, but their reports from standing committees were not available.

According to the PPP lawmaker, this culture of apathy needs to be looked at seriously by members sitting on both sides of the aisle and may be the upcoming National Assembly could introduce new changes in the rules of the procedure, so that in the future if a private member bill is allowed to be introduced before the house, it gets due treatment afterwards. A senior official who advises the government on parliamentary affairs said that though the present assembly had passed all important bills and amendment, including the 18th, 19th and 20th amendment in the constitution, it still had room to do more legislation. The basic job of the house is to legislate, and one may hope the coming National Assembly will learn from the experiences over the last five years. Some important private member bills that have no chance of getting through:

- Islamabad Wildlife (Protection, Preservation, (2008)
- Conservation and Management (Amendment) Act
- Working Women (Protection of Rights) Act (2008)
- Charter of Child Rights Act (2009)
- Reproductive Healthcare and Rights Act (2010)
- Rehabilitation Authority for Victims of (2010)
- Violence and Abuse Act
- De-weaponisation of Pakistan Act (2011)
- Hindus Marriage Act (2011)
- Compulsory Declaration of Assets Act (2012)
- Pakistan Food Security for Poor People Bill (2012)
- Acid Throwing and Burn Crime Bill (2012)
- Works of Defence (Amendment) Act (2012)
- National Commission for Child Rights Bill (2012)

- Torture and Custodial Death Punishment Bill (2013)

Dawn - February 01, 2013

Counter-Terrorism Authority Bill Moved In National Assembly

In a major move to plan and execute the national effort against terrorism and extremism, the government introduced a bill in the National Assembly to create a National Counter Terrorism Authority, which could receive both foreign funds and advice. On a day the government-allied Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) walked out of the chamber to protest against growing terrorism in Karachi, the house also received a report of its Standing Committee on Interior recommending adoption of an earlier government bill seeking to strengthen the existing Anti-Terrorism Act's provisions to check terrorism financing. The new National Counter Terrorism Bill, introduced by Defence Minister Naveed Qamar in the absence of Interior Minister Rehman Malik, will now go to the same standing committee, which must approve it soon so that the draft is passed by the house and then by Senate in time for the present government to set up the authority before it runs out its five-year term in mid-March.

The proposed authority, which a bill statement said would be “at par with best international standards”, would have an overseeing board of governors headed by the prime minister and including key ministers, provincial chief ministers, intelligence and provincial police chiefs to provide a strategic vision and an executive committee of government secretaries to ensure implementation of board decisions. But the most focal official in the structure will be a national coordinator, which the bill said must be an “eminent professional of known integrity and competence” in the top government pay scale of 22, tasked with, besides other things, executing board-approved policies and plans and government instructions and establishing administrative structure at the field level. The 23-clause statement of objects and reasons said the draft “reflects Pakistan’s resolve to take all possible measures to counter terrorism and extremism” and that the authority would “play a pivotal role by coordinating with all law-enforcement agencies in taking effective actions against those who carry out acts of terrorism and extremism”.

Among the authority’s functions would be to “receive and collate information or intelligence and coordinate between all relevant stakeholders to formulate threat assessment”, coordinate and prepare comprehensive counter-terrorism and counter-extremist strategies, develop action plans, carry out research and “liaison with international entities for facilitating cooperation in areas relating to terrorism and extremism”. The sources of authority’s funds, according to the bill, will include federal government budget amounts, “grants made by the international bodies, organisations and entities in accordance with procedures laid down by the federal government”.

In another significant development of the day, a declaration came from the chair that the Election Commission could not stop the present government from granting funds or making recruitments before the announcement of a schedule for the next elections. Nadeem Afzal Gondal of the ruling Pakistan People’s Party, who is chairman of the house Public Accounts Committee, said the Election Commission had “practically suspended” the government by ordering against allocation of funds which he said could be done only after the election schedule had been announced. He said if the Election Commission’s order, already contested by a team of federal ministers that met the commission, were to prevail, the government better announce the election schedule right away without waiting for the expiry of its term.

The outspoken lawmaker from Punjab also complained of a judicial “trespass” on parliament’s domain as he referred to a ruling given earlier in the day by a judge of the Islamabad High Court

that declared the Gas Infrastructure Development Cess Act of 2011 about a levy on industrial sector as illegal, saying only parliament could impose taxes and it should not surrender its powers. Riaz Fatyana of the government-allied Pakistan Muslim League-Q, who was then chairing the house, responded to Mr Gondal by declaring that as long as the assembly and government exist, no work can be suspended, whether it is recruitments or funds. He did not explain whether it was an enforceable ruling or a mere observation.

In what could be an arrangement with the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-N behind the scenes, the defence minister also introduced a new bill to give a statutory cover to an existing Defence Housing Authority (DHA) in Islamabad functioning under an expired presidential ordinance, replacing a long-pending controversial bill that the PML-N had vowed to resist. The PML-N had been opposing the previous draft, based on a 2005 ordinance re-promulgated for the seventh time in April 2010, saying it gave a preferential treatment to what opposition leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan once called the “country’s biggest land mafia” that could grab lands falling in Punjab province’s territory adjoining the capital. But after the introduction of the new bill, Chaudhry Nisar told reporters that the draft would be acceptable if the authority functioned as any other housing society. The bill says its provisions would be “in addition to and not in derogation of any law for the time being in force” and its statement of objects and reasons says the DHA Islamabad will conduct its activities in accordance with the new law and “all existing laws applicable within” the Islamabad Capital Territory.

Before being adjourned until 11am on Friday, the house heard several lawmakers from both sides of aisle speaking on points of order for and against creating a new province in south Punjab while it was yet to receive the report made by a parliamentary commission set up in August. Some members from non-Muslim minority communities complained of inaction by authorities in Sindh against frequent abductions of Hindus there for ransom. Anusha Rahman Khan of the PML-N called for a treason trial of generals responsible for the Oct 1999 coup by then army chief Gen Pervez Musharraf that toppled her party’s Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as reportedly cited in a new book of Lt-Gen (ret’d) Shahid Aziz, which has yet to hit the bookshops. PPP’s Shazia Marri, speaking on the same issue, said her party was awaiting a Supreme Court verdict on a reference sent by President Asif Ali Zardari about the “judicial murder” of party founder and former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was toppled in a 1977 coup by then army chief Gen Zia-ul-Haq and later hanged after a controversial conspiracy-to-murder trial. PML-Q’s Kashamala Tariq, the last speaker of the day, was furious over what she called refusal of the Pakistan Television managing director to appear before a house committee on human rights hearing a complaint of a woman claiming his parentage of her child.

Dawn – February 01, 2013

NA Session: MQM Stages Walkout against Repeal of SPLGA

Lawmakers belonging to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) staged a walkout from the National Assembly on Friday against the repeal of Sindh’s People Local Government Act, 2012 (SPLGA). MQM’s Member of National Assembly (MNA) Asif Hasnain said that the Sindh’s local government bill was passed in haste, which was a non-democratic action along the same lines as in a dictatorship. The National Assembly session was headed by Chaudhry Abdul Ghafoor during which the MQM legislators protested against the replacement of the Sindh’s People Local Government Act, 2012 (SPLGO 2012) with the Sindh Local Government Ordinance 1979 and staged a walkout. Another MNA Abdul Qadir Baloch belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) said that the government should have taken the Baloch people and the political leadership into confidence before handing over the Gwadar port to a Chinese company. He

further demanded that the Assembly should be informed about the benefit derived out of handing over the port to China.

Dawn - February 22, 2013

Malik Comes Under Fire at National Assembly

The MQM, JUI-F and PML-N protested severely over the volatile situation in Karachi and the non attendance of Interior Minister Rehman Malik. During the National Assembly session, the MQM sought a debate over the situation in Karachi. MQM MNA Asif Husnain said the situation in the city had deteriorated and people were living with a sense of fear. Berjees Tahir of the PML-N demanded the presence of Rehman Malik and said that without him debate on the issue is useless following which the PML-N staged a walkout. Taking part in the discussion, Sajid Ahmad said responsibility rests with the security agencies to ensure protection of lives and properties of the people of Karachi. He said Karachi is the economic hub of the country and any attempt to destabilize it will have disastrous effects on the economy of the country. He said some foreign elements are behind the bloodshed in Karachi and these elements need to be exposed. JUI-F Asia Nasir said that the security situation in Karachi and Balochistan are at the lowest ebb. Yesterday in Karachi a cleric was killed while in Balochistan 7 dead bodies were recovered and the House should be informed about the situation. She said that Interior Minister is all talk and seems to be younger brother of Sheikh ul Islam Tahir ul Qadri. She said it was told that after Governor Rule the situation would get better but still dead bodies are being recovered from Balochistan. State Interior Minister Safdar Warriach told the house that Interior Minister Rehman Malik is not in the country and the walk outs were unnecessary.

Pakistan Today - February 01, 2013

Strong Anti-Terrorism Bill Introduced In NA

The government introduced a stronger anti-terrorism bill in the National Assembly on Monday with bars on reviving banned groups under new names and on court bails for offences punishable with death or more than 10 years in prison. On a day the ruling Pakistan People's Party saw one of its veteran lawmakers, Syed Zafar Ali Shah, confronting it after defecting to the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-N, the house also passed a toned down version of once-controversial bill governing a defence housing authority in Islamabad, and another to set up a centre to study the impact of global climate change. While the Anti-Terrorism (Second Amendment) Bill will go to a house standing committee on interior for vetting before coming back for approval, some lively discussion took place on the two other government bills before being passed with consensus, with PML-N patting its own backs for negotiating with military authorities to transform a previously objectionable draft into a new, acceptable Defence Housing Authority Islamabad Bill.

The new 25-clause draft came only six days after the house unanimously passed another amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 to strength provisions against terrorism-financing. One clause of the new bill says that "if any or all office-bearers of a proscribed organisation form a new organisation under a different name, upon suspicion about their involvement in similar activities, the said organisation shall also be deemed to be a proscribed organisation and the government may issue a formal notification of its proscription". The bill also provides that if members of such organisations or their associates were found "continuing the activities of the proscribed organisation, they would be denied passports and foreign travel,

and loans or financial support by any bank or financial institution and have their arms licences cancelled”.

In a move to meet a common complaint of law-enforcement agencies about courts releasing terrorism accused on bail, a clause of the bill says that “no court shall grant bail to a person accused of an offence under this act punishable with death or imprisonment for life or imprisonment exceeding 10 years”. Opposition leader Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan made a long speech on his party’s role to change what he said would have been a “state within a state” under the original bill based on a Musharraf-era decree simply to a housing society adhering to normal government laws. “It is now just a housing society,” he said about the Islamabad DHA as well as a sister organisation set up for nearby Rawalpindi. Chaudhry Nisar, who recalled his one-time threat to physically block the original bill as introduced in 2009 if the government bulldozed it without incorporating about 30 PML-N amendments, claimed all credit for his party for the change he said had been negotiated by a party team with one from the army General Headquarters in Rawalpindi.

Though he acknowledged a team of government ministers had agreed with the PML-N that the previous bill involved some “serious” constitutional anomalies, but said it would have been much better if the new bill had been made the product of consultations between the government and opposition rather than the opposition taking the case to the General Headquarters. The government accepted a few other PML-N amendments moved by its legal guru Zahid Hamid and even one from Syed Zafar Ali Shah, who continued to occupy a PPP bench despite announcing earlier this month that he had joined the PML-N. But it was during discussion on an earlier bill seeking the establishment of a Global Change Impact Studies Centre that party change by Mr Shah, a former deputy speaker of the house, came into focus with PPP chief whip and Religious Affairs Minister Khursheed Ahmed Shah objecting to his former colleague sitting in the house instead of resigning and some PPP back-benchers repeatedly shouting “lota” (deserter) for the elderly man. The PPP chief whip said Syed Zafar Ali Shah should have followed the constitution to resign from the house though he said nobody could be stopped from changing parties. But the dissident seemed in no mood to listen to such a demand and said the PPP chief whip better ask “his own leader” how much he was following the Constitution.

Dawn - February 26, 2013

MQM Allocated Opposition Seats in NA

The National Assembly allocated opposition benches to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). The applications were accepted and hence, MQM was to sit on the allocated opposition benches allocated to the party by the speaker, Dr Fehmida Mirza. The applications were made when MQM severed its links with the ruling Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP). On February 17 MQM leaders and its Sindh Assembly representatives registered protests against the tabling of a notification in the provincial legislature by the PPP-led provincial government about withdrawing target killing and murder cases filed against gangsters based in Lyari. The repealing of the Sindh Peoples Local Government Act (SPLGA) further added tension to the situation. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) members protested strongly against the repealing of the act. The ordinance was prepared after strong negotiations between the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the MQM in 2012.

The Express Tribune - February 25, 2013

Crisis-Like Situation: Energy Security Equivalent to National Security; NA

The National Assembly's Sub-Committee on Energy Crisis was informed on Monday that energy security of the country has become more or less equivalent to national security and ongoing crisis-like situation must be tackled on priority basis. NA Sub-Committee on Energy Crisis met in the Parliament House with MNA Shahid Khakan Abbasi in the chair, MNA Bushra Gohar participated in the meeting, where officials from Water and Power Ministry, PPIB, NTDC and NEPRA briefed different aspects of the crisis and ways to tackle the crisis. The meeting was informed that the next summer season would be very tough as the generation is witnessing marginal increase against the growing massive demand for electric power in the country. The government remained unable to take substantial steps on emergency basis to meet the power crisis. MNA Gohar was of the view that all the power sector institutions have their own story but they need to sit together and find the way out of the present power crisis. She also suggested complete withdrawal of power subsidy for the consumers consuming more power subsidy.

The chairman of the sub-committee was of the view that government should subsidise solar and wind generation projects by giving subsidy on the approved tariff and should eliminate power subsidy for upper class of the power consumers. Water and power officials Arshad Mirza and Zargham informed the committee that at present NEPRA's notified power tariff is Rs 11.91 per unit and government is charging Rs 8.81 per unit and there is Rs 3.10 unit subsidy making a total subsidy of Rs 215.632 billion for all consumer classes. In case the power tariff subsidy is rationalised, the subsidy bill would come to Rs 114.554 billion. If the power subsidy were reduced for consumers consuming higher power the power tariff will come at Rs 10.21 per unit for them and power tariff subsidy would come down from Rs 3.10 per unit to Rs 1.70 per unit on average basis. They were also of the view that power subsidy should be rationalised to save at least Rs 101.078 billion annually spent on subsidising power tariff even for the rich people in the country. They were also of the view that power subsidy should be limited only for lifeline consumers so that cash shortfall in the power sector is met through its own resources and not through power subsidies from the budget.

Explaining the way out from the present power crisis in the country, the officials of Water and Power Ministry informed that international financial institutions have some reservations on Diamer Bhasha Dam and willing to finance Dasu Hydropower Project. They also informed that government of Pakistan has decided to pursue both the projects as they would be important for meeting energy demand in the country in future. They also informed that government has recently concluded a study for utilising hydropower resources and there is 36,000 megawatts (MW) potential in small and medium hydropower projects in the country. They informed that work on this project has already commenced and if the government was able to harness 10,000 MW the crisis alike situation would be over come by the power managers. They also informed that due to the differential between NEPRA's notified tariff and power tariff charged by the government, Rs.190 billion power subsidy has been consumed during first seven months of the ongoing fiscal year 2012-13. They admitted that consumers consuming more power are also availing subsidy available for lower power tariff slabs. They also supported realistic power tariff for different power consumer categories and said that political will would be required in this regard.

The water and power officials further informed that country's survival is in coal, gas and hydel generation and government can't afford expensive oil-based power generation. In this regard, government is converting existing generation units on coal and a new generation unit at 650 MW coal-based power plant is being set up at Jamshoro. The NTDC managing director informed that until there is competition in the power sector distribution companies, there would be no benefit to the consumers after privatising the power distribution companies. He informed that

in the world only 14.8 percent power is generated through nuclear, 5.0 percent through oil and remaining power is being generated through hydel, coal and gas. NEPRA official informed that privatisation of the DISCOs could help improve the governance in the power sector entities.

The News - February 19, 2013

Senate

Hazaras' Massacre Echoes in Senate

The massacre of Shia Hazara community echoed in the upper house of the Parliament as the lawmakers termed the incident failure of intelligence and law-enforcement agencies, seeking explanation from the provincial law enforcers and the ministries of defence and interior on the issue. The debate on the adjournment motion moved by MQM Senator Tahir Hussain Mushhadi, on the bloodshed of Hazara people in Quetta, legislators proposed that heads of the law-enforcement agencies concerned and high-ups of the ministries of interior and defence should be summoned by the house for a detailed briefing on the issue. The house will continue the debate. Senate Chairman Nayyer Hussain Bokhari observed that a resolution would have to be moved under the rules to convert the house into a committee to have briefings from the officials concerned. Leader of the Opposition in the Senate Ishaq Dar said they would meet all the procedural requirements in this connection. Amid thin attendance of lawmakers in the house, Dar severely condemned Interior Minister Rehman Malik for his failure to brief the house in-camera on his statement that Pakistan was facing international conspiracies. He said a date should be fixed for the briefing of the interior minister. He also sought a joint statement from the ministries of interior and defence on the Hazara killings.

The government is criticised for holding the oath-taking ceremony of Saleem Mandviwala as the new minister for finance at a time when the dead bodies of Hazaras were lying on roads. He said the result of the APC called by Awami National Party was not tangible. The Senate chairman directed Leader of the House Jehangir Badr to talk to the Prime Minister to seek instructions from the government as to who would respond to a very sensitive issue. Senator Farhatullah Babar said, "Now we are talking about intelligence failure and tomorrow it might be interpreted as deliberate negligence." He said Lashker-e-Jhangvi activists, Usman Kurd and Daud Badani, were awarded death sentence in November 2003 by an anti-terrorism court, but on January 18, 2009, they escaped from the jail mysteriously at a time when a transition from dictatorship to democracy was in process. He said the minister concerned should throw light on the escape of the two terrorists as no formal inquiry into it was ever conducted. Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri of JUI-F said some very powerful forces were behind the Balochistan and Karachi situation. He blamed the US for spreading terrorism in the region. He said even the governor's rule could not solve the problem and now the army was being named. He said army was no solution to the problem as it could not keep peace in Swat and the tribal areas of the country. "Rs 2.50 billion are being spent on the FC from the provincial budget of Balochistan," he said, questioning how it would bring peace as it was a beneficiary. He stressed the need for the security institutions and intelligence agencies to filter out their internal mechanism and said they should have the courage to stop terrorist activities.

Meanwhile, the JUI-F staged a walkout as Haideri said the indifferent attitude of the government on the issue was unbearable. Mohsin Legari, an independent member, stressed the need for the passage of the anti-terrorism bill pending with the Parliament for several years. He pointed out that foreign funding was involved in the unrest of the country, which should be stopped following the example of Sri Lanka that fought Taamal Tigers. "We have become a playground

for a proxy war," he said and urged the need for a witness protection plan. Rafique Rajwana of PML-N suggested the constitution of a committee with the mandate to probe the Quetta blasts. Mir Hasil Bazenjo told the house that during the last two and a half years, over 3,150 people – 1,300 non-Baloch, 850 Baloch and over 1,000 Hazaras – had been killed in Balochistan. He said the involvement of international forces for spoiling the law and order situation in Pakistan could not be ruled out as similar attacks were carried out on Shia Muslims in Baghdad, Damascus and Quetta on one day. He called for summoning the law enforcers and high-ups of the relevant ministries in the house to have a briefing on the massive killings in Balochistan, especially Persian-speaking Shias, and the measures taken to counter such incidents. Senator Tahir Hussain Mashhadi said Quaid-e-Azam wanted a liberal, modern and democratic Pakistan, but today's Pakistan was devoid of such features.

The Nation - February 20, 2013

Fair Trial Bill Passes Senate Test

With an all "ayes" in the final voice vote on Friday, the Senate passed 'The Investigation for Fair Trial Bill, 2012'. The unanimously passed piece of legislation now needs approval of the president to become a law. Earlier, it was passed by the lower house of the parliament after incorporating a total of 32 amendments, proposed by the PML-N and MQM. It mainly aims at regulating the powers of intelligence and law enforcement agencies by empowering them to intercept emails, Short Message Service (SMS), telephonic calls etc to prevent terrorist acts. Under this law 'collection of evidence by means of modern techniques and devices' would be admissible in courts in cases registered under security related laws and it will also authorise intelligence agencies to acquire a 2-month arrest warrant for the suspects, if the scientific evidence against them holds weight. The statement of objects and reason of 39-claused bill states it is "to provide a legal mechanism for conducting lawful and transparent investigation that constitutes the integral basis for trial". It says, "All law enforcement and intelligence agencies will be governed by a uniform legal system for collection of evidence, which will be admissible even if collected prior to the registration of FIR."

The bill cited the ISI, three services' intelligence agencies, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and police as agencies that could seek surveillance warrant against any person. The bill provides that law enforcement and intelligence agencies would be allowed to intercept and record telephone communication of the suspect; video recording of any person, persons, premises, event, situation etc; and interception or recording or obtaining of any electronic transaction, including, but not limited to, emails, SMS etc; use of human intelligence; covert surveillance and property interference; access to any information or data in any form related to a transaction, communication or its content; and any other form of surveillance or interception notified by the federal government. After smooth sailing of the bill through the senate, legislators belonging to ANP and JUI-F separately staged walkouts over the law and order situation in Karachi and imposition of governor rule in Balochistan.

Speaking on a point of order, Senator Zahid Khan of ANP criticised Interior Minister Rehman Malik saying that he has assumed the role of an intimidator and has abandoned his ministerial responsibilities. "Somebody must tell him that his (Malik) responsibility is not just to caution public about future terrorist activities in the country. Why doesn't he just assure arrest of culprits," Khan said before walking out of the house along with ANP senators in protest over Karachi situation. On the other hand, JUI-F continued his protest on Thursday over imposition of governor rule in Balochistan. Senator Talha Mehmood of JUI-F threatened that if government continued to give a deaf ear to their protest than JUI-F would produce sit-in inside the house in

front of senate chairman's dice. JUI-F, once again, demanded the president must revoke his earlier decision and restore democratically elected provincial assembly of Balochistan. Later, JUI-F walked out of the house in protest. Senator Chaudhry Jaffar Iqbal of PML-N on the occasion recalled that governor rule was also imposed in Sindh in 1998 during the PML-N regime to normalise the situation arising after the assassination of Hakim Saeed. Senator Saeed Ghani of PPP on that clarified that it was imposed as MQM, which was an ally of PML-N in Sindh, had left the PML-N-led coalition government leaving it in minority. "After MQM's departure from coalition government, PPP was in a position to form provincial government. But Nawaz Sharif preferred to lift Ghous Ali Shah the position of PM's adviser and bestowed him with the powers of chief minister, that was totally unconstitutional," Ghani straightened the record.

The Nation - February 02, 2013

Senate Body Orders Report On Enforced Disappearances

Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights took serious notice of enforced disappearances of citizens and directed the ministry of defense to submit report in the next meeting. In a committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Senator Afrasiab Khattak, members were informed that the defense ministry has not received reports from intelligence agencies which is a major hurdle for them to submit report. The officials of the ministry ensured that they would receive required information till Feb 20 and will present a detailed report in the next meeting of the committee. On the issue of removing unnecessary check posts from the vicinity of federal capital causing inconvenience to the general public, Inspector General Islamabad Bani Ameen apprised the committee that since 2008 they have established 179 police check posts in the city. He said these check posts played a major role in controlling law and order in the city and the ration of various crimes including car snatching and bomb blasts reduced manifolds, adding, "There was no bomb blast in the city after 2011." Ameen further said that currently only 74 check posts are functioning in the city and the remaining pickets were removed to address grievances of the general public. The committee also ordered Capital Development Authority (CDA) to ensure provision of basic facilities including toilets, umbrellas etc. at all the pickets for on duty police cops who render their duties day and night despite harsh weather conditions and other challenges.

Dawn - February 08, 2013

Seraiki Bill Will Not Lapse In Senate After NA Goes

With the conclusion of the last sessions of the two houses of parliament this week, the constitutional amendment bill to carve out a new province out of Punjab will remain pending in the Senate though it may not be passed. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) plans to table the 24th constitutional amendment bill in the Senate during the current week to establish Bahawalpur Janoobi Punjab (BJP) province. Under article 76 of the constitution, a bill pending in the Senate which has not been passed by the National Assembly shall not lapse on the dissolution of the assembly; a bill pending in the assembly, or a bill which having been passed by the assembly is pending in the Senate, shall lapse on the dissolution of the assembly; and a bill pending in either house shall not lapse by reason of the prorogation of the house.

After the walkout of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) from the ruling alliance in the wake of exit of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) some time back, the coalition's numerical strength in the parliament has further whittled down. But still the PPP is all set to move the bill

in the Senate this week, said Senator Farhatullah Babar, who headed the parliamentary commission on creating BJP out of Punjab. However, the PPP's own house is not in order. Its highly respected senator, Raza Rabbani, has openly rebelled against it on the question of midwifing the new province. He gave a dissenting note on the report prepared by the Senate Standing Committee on Law on the amendment bill. But the PPP is undeterred in its resolve despite knowing that it is in no position to get the parliamentary nod to the proposed legislation. Even if the PPP succeeded to pass it in the 104-member Senate, it would not be able to get its approval from the National Assembly where the numbers game is even dicey for it.

Despite opposition to the constitutional bill by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and some other parties, the PPP has gone ahead with its plan to finalize it and table it in the parliament to tell people of southern Punjab that it cares for them and therefore, it deserves their votes in the upcoming general elections. However, much before the MQM left the ruling coalition, President Asif Ali Zardari declared during his visit to Multan, where he went to pacify estranged former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani, that the government did not have the 2/3 majority in the parliament to create the new province out of Punjab. Experts point out that even if the PPP manages to push the constitutional bill through the parliament, the proposed legislation will remain inconsequential because the Punjab Assembly would not approve it with two-third majority, which was mandatory under the constitution. As per the constitutional requirement, a bill which aims at altering the boundaries of a province will have to be passed by two-third majority of the concerned assembly before the president assents it.

Among the PPP allies, the Awami National Party (ANP) and PML-Q are also not enthusiastic about the BJP Bill. ANP leader Haji Adeel has been quoted as saying that his party would present its own amendment bill and that it was in favour of new provinces but has certain reservations on the present proposed legislation. As per Babar commission's recommendations, the BJP will consist of Multan, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan Divisions as well as the districts of Mianwali and Bhakkar. In the Senate standing committee, the PML-N senators Raja Zafarul Haq and Zafar Ali Shah strongly opposed the bill and termed it a PPP election stunt. "We want to know why creation of Bahawalpur province had not been recommended by the commission. Could a new province be created under article 239 and how did the commission prepare its report?" Raja Zafarul Haq asked. According to the parliamentary commission, it received over 2,300 communications by post and email and invited 15 experts for presentations. All the members of the National Assembly and Senate hailing from three divisions of southern Punjab were invited to express their views on the name and boundaries of the proposed province.

The news - February 25, 2013

Provincial Assemblies

Altaf Asks Ebad to Rejoin Governor's House

Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain on Wednesday advised Governor Sindh Dr Ishratul Ebad to withdraw his resignation and resume his responsibilities. Altaf called Ebad from London and asked him to reconsider his resignation in light of requests made by people belonging to the business community, religious scholars and from different walks of life, a statement from the party read. Matters have been at a head after Ebad departed for Dubai earlier in the week on account of his health, but not before he had sent his resignation to the president. The move came in wake of MQM's decision last week to quit the coalition government led by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and sit in the opposition. The PPP said that back channel talks were underway to get the MQM to reverse their decision. Altaf told Ebad that

although he had tendered his resignation voluntarily, there was a persistent demand from members of the business community, religious scholars, and people belonging to different spheres of life that he should be asked to take his resignation back. The MQM chief further told Ebad that Interior Minister Rehman Malik too had conveyed messages from President Zardari and other government personalities that even though the MQM was free in its political decisions to sit in the opposition, yet Governor Ebad should be asked to continue in the larger interest of Sindh and Pakistan.

Pakistan Today - February 28, 2013

Government Repeals Sindh Local Government Act, MQM Protests

Sindh Law Minister Ayaz Soomro announced that the government was withdrawing the Sindh Peoples Local Government Act 2012 (SPLGA) during a Sindh Assembly proceeding. The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) members staged an in-house protest after the law minister made the announcement saying that if the SPLGA 2012 was meant to bring prosperity to the people of Sindh at that time [when the government passed it], then why is it not prosperous now? The SPLGA, which was passed by the Sindh Assembly on October 1, 2012, had been a major source of contention between the PPP-led coalition government and various nationalist groups in Sindh. The law had envisaged six powerful metropolitan corporations in the province. It was opposed by Sindhi leaders who called it a “dual system” which would create greater ethnic divides in Sindh. It was feared that the law would allow the mayors of the two cities to be given the same powers enjoyed by a chief minister. The Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) and Awami National Party and the National Peoples Party (NPP) left the coalition after the ordinance was first passed. The 1979 Local Government Ordinance law will now come into effect. The SPLGA was passed by the Sindh Assembly last year and was vehemently opposed by nationalist parties. The ordinance was prepared after strong negotiations between Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the MQM.

July 9 , 2011: Acting Governor Khuhro, Nisar Ahmed Khuhro restored the local government ordinance 1979 by repealing SLGO 2001 following a political row between PPP and MQM on Dr Mirza’s statements.

August 6, 2011: Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ebad Khan promulgated an ordinance restoring SLGO 2001 in Karachi and Hyderabad by keeping SLGO 1979 along with commissionerate system intact in other districts of Sindh.

August 8, 2011: Governor restored the SLGO 2001 in entire Sindh following criticism that it was an effort to divide Sindh.

November 4, 2011: The Sindh Local Government Ordinance (SLGO) 2001 issued (for 90 days) by Governor Sindh on November 4 lapsed because both the coalition partners PPP and MQM failed to evolve consensus and bring the ordinance in Sindh Assembly. Automatically, the 1979 system was restored.

Sept 7, 2012: Governor Sindh signed “Sindh Local Government Ordinance 2012”.

The Express Tribune - February 21, 2013

Sindh Assembly Passes Five Government Bills

The Sindh Assembly passed five government bills and a resolution, moved by a lawmaker of Mutahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM), for establishment of a private university in Hyderabad. The bills include Sindh Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Bill, 2012, Sindh Public Procurement (Amendment) Bill 2013, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto University of Law, Karachi Bill 2013, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Dewan University Bill 2011 and Dawood University of Engineering and Technology Bill 2013. MQM's Khuwaja Izharul Hassan suggested amendments in powers of the syndicate of the Daud University bill but the PPP opposed it and the bill was adopted unanimously, brushing aside the proposed amendment. Opposition members belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League-F also opposed the MQM's amendments and supported the government's stance.

Under the bill, the government has been assigned powers to make admission policy at the Daud University. The MQM's member wanted to authorise syndicate of the University for framing the admission policy instead of the government. MQM's Syed Sardar Ahmed argued that the syndicates at Punjab University, Sindh University and Karachi University were authorised to make their admission policies. He said syndicates of the universities were appointed by the government. Khuwaja said the seats reserved for other provinces at the university should be kept on a condition that they would also accommodate students of Sindh.

PPP leader and Sindh Minister for Information, Sharjeel Inam Memon said that passage of the 18th Constitutional amendment was not aimed at handing over all matters to the syndicates. PPP's Rafiq Engineer said that he lived in Karachi and he had experienced the decisions of syndicates. He added that it was the reason that they had no confidence on syndicates of the universities functioning in Karachi. PML-F's Syeda Marvi Rashdi said the MQM's amendment was uncalled-for as powers pertaining to the admission policy should remain with the government.

The house also unanimously passed a resolution condemning the recent blast in Jacobabad moved by PPP's Imran Zafar Leghari. In the resolution they also condemned PML-N for its alleged support to banned extremist organisations. MQM's members chanted slogans 'shame, shame' when Deputy Speaker Shehla Raza announced the Governor's assent to the bill passed by the Assembly regarding withdrawal of Sindh People's Local Government Act, 2012, and restoration of Local Government System, 1979 in Sindh. National People's Party MPA Arif Mustafa Jatoi moved two separate adjournment motions about the commission's report on establishment of Southern Punjab Province and adjournment of Sindh Assembly session by the Deputy Speaker Shehla Raza on February 25, Monday. Dr Sikandar Mandhro, who was presiding over the proceedings at the moment, rejected both the motions by declaring them against the rules.

Earlier some 30 members of the MQM submitted another application at the Assembly secretariat nominating Aamir Moin Pirzada as opposition leader. Earlier the party had nominated Syed Sardar Ahmed for the office but fresh nomination was submitted due to delay in acceptance of resignation of Syed Sardar Ahmed as a minister. Deputy speaker assured them to allot opposition seats and appoint Aamir Moin as opposition leader shortly. Journalists covering the assembly proceedings staged a walkout in protest against what they described as a mysterious death of local senior journalist, Khushnood Shaikh, who died in a road accident couple of days back. Sharjeel Memon visited the journalists' gallery and assured them the government would order an inquiry into his death and would seek report within three days.

Daily Times - February 28, 2013

New Province

PML-N Moves Privilege Motion against New Province Commission, Report

The PML-N moved a privilege motion in the National Assembly against the parliamentary commission on creation of new province and its report. The motion, submitted by all PML-N members, said the commission has violated the mandate of resolutions passed by the Punjab Assembly. The commission has recommended one province instead of two as proposed by the Punjab Assembly. It said that only members of South Punjab were given representation in the commission. Nobody from other parts of Punjab was included in the commission, it complained. The resolution added that PML-N was not given representative in the commission in line with its members sitting in the National Assembly and the Senate. Leader of the Opposition in National Assembly was also not consulted before the formation of this commission. The PML-N should be told as to why reference was changed into President's message.

Pakistan Today - February 01, 2013

Senate Panel Approves Bill for New Province

The Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice approved on Wednesday the draft of a Constitution amendment bill for the creation of Bahawalpur Janoobi Punjab province amid protests by the Pakistan Muslim League-N. The committee also approved an amendment to Article 239(4) of the Constitution to address an objection raised by the PML-N. But there is no certainty of the bill getting approved by the house. The government introduced the bill in the Senate apparently to gain political mileage in Punjab in the coming election. The committee had summoned Senator Farhatullah Babar, chairman of the parliamentary commission on new provinces to clarify some issues in its report. Senators Raja Zafarul Haq and Zafar Ali Shah of the PML-N criticised the bill and termed it an election stunt of the Pakistan People's Party.

The committee endorsed inclusion of the word 'creation in Article 239 which currently only allows changes in the limits of existing provinces. Senator Babar said: "The commission had received over 2,300 communications by post and email, besides inviting 15 experts for presentations." All members of the National Assembly and Senate belonging to the three divisions of southern Punjab were invited to express their views on the name and boundaries of the proposed province. The committee was informed that the commission had concluded that one province should be carved out of Punjab to address the grievances of the people of its southern region. A resolution adopted by the Punjab Assembly had called for 'restoration' of Bahawalpur province.

However, during the commission's investigations no evidence came to surface that Bahawalpur ever had the status of a province in the past. It transpired that it was a state, like other princely states, that was merged into the then West Pakistan. After the dismemberment of 'one unit' it was merged in Punjab. A legal challenge to the merger of Bahawalpur into Punjab also failed. It was thus felt that making this former state a separate province would give rise to demands for turning other former states, like Khairpur and Swat, into provinces. The commission concluded that Bahawalpur should be given special consideration within the new province to address the longstanding grievances of the former state and in deference to the resolution of the Punjab Assembly calling for restoration of a non-existent province.

It proposed that the new province be named as Bahawalpur Janoobi Punjab with its capital in Bahawalpur. It was closer to the expression used in the resolutions adopted by the National

Assembly and the Punjab Assembly. The committee was informed that the commission had prepared various possible models of the new province and adopted one comprising Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalpur divisions and Mianwali and Bhakkar districts. Mr Babar said the commission considered various factors including sense of deprivation, under-development, geographical congruity, social cohesion and economic viability. It was beyond the mandate of the commission, he added, to consider division of any other province because neither any assembly had adopted such a resolution nor the notification had asked it to do so.

The bill is likely to remain pending in the Senate till the dissolution of assemblies and will not be passed by either house of parliament. Article 76 of the Constitution says: “A bill pending in the Senate, which has not been passed by the National Assembly, shall not lapse on the dissolution of the National Assembly,” but “a bill pending in the National Assembly, or a bill which having been passed by the National Assembly is pending in the Senate, shall lapse on the dissolution of the National Assembly.” When contacted, Law Minister Farooq Naek said: “We have two-thirds majority in the Senate and, therefore, the bill was tabled in the house.”

Dawn - February 21, 2013

Judiciary

SC Seeks Reply over Harassment of PIA Woman Pilot

The SC directed PIA managing director to submit a reply over the harassment of a lady employee at the hands of male employee of the national flag carrier. A three-member bench of the apex court was hearing a suo moto case against irregularities in the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) as well as constitutional petition, filed by PML-N leader Marvi Memon, seeking direction of the court to probe into the affairs of the airline through ascertaining corruption, mismanagement on part of the PIA.

Captain Rifat Haye of the national flag carrier, who had filed a civil miscellaneous application (CMA) in the suo moto case of irregularities in PIA, appeared in-person before the court and contended she has been the victim of extreme contempt from the male employees of PIA and has been subjected to severe intimidation and harassment by the male employees since early years of her career. She contended despite her repeated complaints, her grievances were not taken into account that ultimately forced her to file an application with the NA Standing Committee on Women Development. She said the committee vide its report on March 31, 2010, discovered that Captain Tariq Khoso, flight inspector had not only harassed her but also other female employees at different times and was aided and facilitated by another male employee of PIA, namely Captain Kaleem Chughtai, to sexually harass her.

At this, Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed asked her as to what she was saying whether she meant it. Yes, she replied adding she has also filed a petition in the LHC against the PIA management, CAA, Captain Tariq Khoso and Captain Kaleem Chughtai for her professional victimization and harassment, and the court had directed the flight inspector not to cause any illegal harassment to her besides directing the PIA management to take appropriate steps on the report of the NA committee. She however, said that despite of judgment of the high court and directions of the NA Committee, she is being victimized and harassed at PIA.

The News - February 08, 2013

Nobody Is Above the Law: CJP

Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry has said that violation of court orders will not be tolerated under any circumstances and that nobody is above the law and the constitution, and all cases will be heard on merit under the law. The judiciary was committed to fulfilling its constitutional obligations, as “it is the custodian of the constitution”. He said that judges had established with their performance and conduct during the past five years that the law was equal for all and nobody was above the law. Whenever a matter is placed before the courts, they decide it on merit and it is the reason that people of our country have confidence in the judiciary. The CJP said that people looked towards the judiciary for getting their grievances redressed. On account of such performance of judges, citizens have high expectations from the courts. An institute had been developed after great difficulties and judges must provide justice to all.

The judiciary was facing an increased number of cases due to increased confidence by the public. Justice Chaudhry said that the policy had been framed after consultation with all stakeholders, but there were complains about non-dispensation of justice for the last few years. Therefore, attention was paid not only to administration of justice but also to clear the backlog. There has been fixing dates for categorical disposal of cases from time to time, but there were some reservations by the bars. However, we pointed out to them that it was in the interest of the institution,” he said, adding that if there were reservations, the judiciary was always open to make amendments and corrections. He said that the NJPMC had appreciated the performance of the district judiciary, especially those who were working in Balochistan despite a difficult situation.

Refereeing to an attack on a judge in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and lawyers’ murder in Lahore, the CJP said that it was the responsibility of the state to provide security to them. He said that the number of judicial officers should be increased to improve justice dispensation but despite the judiciary’s demand, no progress had been made in this regard. The CJP asked the federal and provincial governments to ensure provision of justice and consider the plan moved for the purpose. He said that the meeting would review pending cases besides discussing cases of fiscal matters involving billions of rupees where persons did not pay taxes and obtained stay orders. The chief justices of Lahore, Sindh, Balochistan, Peshawar and Azad Kashmir high courts were also present on the occasion. Saturday’s session of the NJPC reviewed the implementation of the National Judicial Policy and other issues related to speedy settlement of cases.

Daily Times – February 03, 2013

Analysis

The Best Government: Analysis by Hussain H Zaidi

If the federal law minister is to be taken at his word, the Swiss authorities are not going to reopen money laundering cases against President Zardari. This may be either for the reason that these cases have become a past and closed transaction under the Swiss law or because Mr Zardari, being the head of a state, enjoys sovereign immunity. Indeed, a big cause for jubilation for the countrymen, as our beloved president will not have to face a trial offshore!

However, we’re such an unfortunate nation that we always have a fly in the ointment and good news seldom comes to us without a tinge of apprehension. In the instant case, the possibility is that the same cases may be revived once Mr Zardari vacates the office of the president. In view of this and taking into account the tremendous services rendered by Mr Zardari, this writer is of

the humble view that the former may be elected president for life, so that the sword of Damocles hanging over his head in the shape of graft cases – both at home and abroad – is removed once and for all and he continues to steer the ship of the state for years to come.

The president has a long list of contributions to his credit – not only to the nation but also to the art and science of government. Enumerating the same is beyond the scope of this write-up. Therefore, only a few of these can be referred to. The country we live in is full of fools, who labour under the delusion that a political setup is a contrivance for achieving some collective objectives, such as robust economic growth, a high standard of living for the masses and, at the very least, protecting the life and liberty of citizens. A government has to be judged not by its form but by its performance.

In particular, a popularly elected government ought to work for the greater good of the people. Mr Zardari, however, has turned all such ridiculous notions on their head and conclusively established that democracy is an end in itself and not a means towards an end; that the-be-all-and-end-all of a government is to complete its tenure; and that the political system reaches its nirvana the moment a political party is elected to power.

Subsequently, what it does and what it fails to do is beside the point. Following Mr Zardari, we can all say, of course with apologies to the poet Robert Browning, that “An elected government is in office, all is right with the nation.” Therefore, let no one pass any judgement on the acts of the government. Let no one question its misdeeds and bad governance. Let no one suspect its intentions. For that will amount to conspiring against democracy.

Policymakers and political economists all over the world, particularly in the west, have locked horns on the size of the government: whether a big or small government is in order. The neo-liberals argue that the least government is the best government, because it allows the market mechanism to work itself out unhindered paving the way for rapid economic growth. The counter view is that the government should lead the efforts for socio-economic development, because left to itself the market will end up in failure.

However, both neo-liberals and their opponents agree that the government must be effective. It goes to the credit of Mr Zardari and the party he heads that they have made it loud and clear that the best government is neither slim nor fat, neither small nor big, but one that does nothing – a laissez-faire government, so to speak.

People may face a choice between starving and selling their children. Poverty may drive them to kill themselves or others. Gangs and mafias may run rampage and cartels may rule the roost. The economy may go downhill. Public sector enterprises may be on the brink of collapse. State finances may be in straits. Industries may be forced to shut down. Energy shortage may assume dangerous proportions. But the party in power is only supposed to twiddle its thumbs. For when it comes to addressing public grievances, inaction is this government’s greatest virtue. By all means, the world has a lot to learn from us.

A few years back while she was facing money laundering cases in Geneva, it dawned upon the late Benazir Bhutto that more than anything else the nation was in need of grand reconciliation. Fortunately, the then President Pervez Musharraf, cornered by the lawyers’ movement, shared her vision and the two translated the same into the famous National Reconciliation Ordinance, the jewel in the crown of both the establishment and the popular leadership. That said it’s easier to begin a long and difficult journey than to complete it. Our hats off to Mr Zardari for taking the policy of grand national reconciliation co-started by his spouse to its logical end. The manner in which he has cobbled together the ruling coalition testifies to his statecraft.

On top of that, he has let it be known to the world in so many words that a country’s survival and salvation, progress and prosperity, consist in religiously following the policy of

reconciliation, in agreeing to let bygones be bygones and in casting off from a people's collective psyche the tales of massive loot and plunder by the high and mighty, which of course have no correspondence to reality. While cynics may put his reconciliation policy under question for the reason that it has made the nation worse off, their view hardly matters.

Politicians are notorious for turning back on their word. They promise the moon to the people and in the end even take away whatever the poor have. That said it goes to the credit of Mr Zardari that he has been as good as his word. He has demonstrated how promises should be kept and deals honoured. The only condition being that things should be done in their own good time. One doesn't become guilty of turning back on one's word merely because one is playing for time.

Alas, Mr Nawaz Sharif failed to discern this and parted ways with Mr Zardari! The two leaders have much in common: both are known for their unflinching commitment to democracy and uncompromising contempt for despotism. Both were wronged by dictators, have rendered enormous sacrifices for the cause of democracy and have high stakes in the continuation of the democratic process. Both believe in the rule of law and look down upon abuse of power. The only difference is that while Mr Zardari has the patience of a saint, Mr Sharif is wont to jumping the gun.

The Constitution of Pakistan debars a person from holding the office of the president for two consecutive terms. It's unfortunate that, while the 18th Amendment removed the restriction on serving as prime minister thrice, it didn't touch the condition relating to the office of the president. This only brings out the selflessness of Mr Zardari, who was in a position to get the constitution amended to his heart's desire. However, in politics it's never too late. Let's hope and pray that the PPP returns with a two-thirds majority and makes its supreme leader president for life.

The News - February 18, 2013

BALOCHISTAN WATCH

Governance Watch

Revealing Figures: ‘More Than Half of Balochistan Is Poor’

The country’s largest and most resource-rich province is also the most impoverished. Almost half of the population of Balochistan qualifies for financial support under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Over 60% of the entire population of the province is living below the poverty line, states a ‘Poverty Survey’ carried out under the flagship of BISP, an internationally recognised social security programme. More than 0.45 million families from total of 1.03 households in Balochistan have been declared eligible for financial support based on the survey results, said BISP Chairperson Farzana Raja.

Across the country, as many as 80 million people -45.7% of the entire population- live below the poverty line, states the survey. These results sharply negate the figures documented by an official survey that stated the incidence of poverty to be at 12%. The door-to-door poverty survey was launched to identify the lowest income households in order to provide them with Rs1, 000 monthly grants, said Raja. Over 7.3 million families belonging to 27 million households have qualified for the financial support. In the province of Sindh, more than 2.52 million families from a total 6.48 households are declared poor by the survey. The count in Punjab is 2.62 million families belonging to 14.75 million households. Around 1.33 million families of 3.61 households in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have been termed poor by the survey. The figures in Azad Jammu and Kashmir are 0.1 million families from 0.5 million.

In Gilgit-Baltistan region 0.04 million families or 0.1 households and in FATA 0.19 million families or 0.38 million households were declared eligible for the grant under BISP. When asked about BISP’s fate after the end of the incumbent government’s term, the minister said that the BISP is an independent authority. It was given a legal stature when the Parliament unanimously passed its bill, she added. The government has in the last four years disbursed more than Rs146 billion to the deserving citizens of the country with complete transparency. An amount of Rs1, 000 per family as monthly allowance is already being dispatched to over 7.29 million families that were identified by the poverty survey. Talking about other initiatives of BISP, the minister shared that over 20.3 million women got registered with the National Database Registration Authority and were issued Computerised National Identities Cards with the help of the programme. Other programmes working successfully under BISP include Waseela-e-Haq, Waseela-e-Rozgar, Waseela-e-Sehet and Waseela-e-Taleem.

Budget/International Support: About budget, she said Rs70 billion were allocated by the government in account of fiscal year 2012-13. Regarding international donors, she said around 300 million pounds were agreed upon for the beneficiaries. The United Kingdom, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the United States are major contributors for this social security programme. Britain’s Department for International Development, USAID, China, Turkey and Iran also made contributions for the programme.

- 60% of the entire population is living under the poverty line in Balochistan, according to a BISP survey
- 27% households have qualified for financial support in the country
- 45.7% people of the entire population of the country are living below the poverty line
- Over 7.3 million families of 27 million households have qualified for the financial support in the country.

- Over 2.52 million families of total 6.48 households declared poor who are living below the poverty line in Sindh,
- 2.62 million families of 14.75 million households in Punjab,
- 1.33 million families of 3.61 households in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa,
- 0.1 million families of 0.5 million households in Azad Jammu and Kashmir,
- 0.04 million families or 0.1 households in Gilgit-Baltistan
- 0.19 million families or 0.38 million households in FATA

The Express Tribune - February 25, 2013

For Many Children of Balochistan, Attending School Is Not an Option

A damning report on the state of education in Balochistan, Pakistan's most deprived province has revealed that 34.1% of children aged between six and 16 are not enrolled in schools. Around 77.7% children in the pre-primary school age group are not attending elementary schools in the province. These and other shocking statistics were revealed at the provincial launch of Pakistan's largest-ever citizen-led household-based Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Survey 2012 in Quetta. The survey also identified that children of school-going age across the country have an alarmingly poor learning ability in terms of reading Urdu, regional languages, English or doing basic levels of arithmetic. "Almost 92.2% of Class-III students are not able to read Class-II level story in Urdu or regional languages like Sindhi and Pashto, while almost 78% of students cannot read Class-II level sentences," the ASER report said. ASER's specifically trained volunteer team surveyed 16,303 households in 825 villages located in 28 rural districts of Balochistan and detailed information of 56,375 children (59% male and 41% female) aged between three and 16 years was collected. The report stated that 34.1% of children falling in the six to 16 age brackets were not attending schools in Balochistan. Girls account for 21% of this figure and boys account for 13%. However, the number of children falls dramatically as the progress is made to higher classes. "The number of children comes down drastically as they progress to higher classes. For every 8 children in Class-1, only 3 children reach up to Class-X."

The learning skills of children aged between five and 16 were assessed through specifically designed language and mathematics tests, which covered languages up to Grade-II level text and arithmetic covering up to Grade-III level textbooks. The depressing results showed that nearly 84.5% of children in Grade-III could not read even a sentence in Urdu or their own language. The lack of emphasis on learning English as a language has been well documented in the country over the years. English reading and comprehension tests reported that 68.1% of Class-V students, 49.5% Class-VI and 40.9% Class-VII students could not read Class-II level English sentences – raising serious questions about their learning abilities. All was not doom and gloom in the ASER survey. It reported that 34% of boys and 19% of girls were able to read at least Urdu, Sindhi and Pashto sentences. Similarly, 35% of males and 20% of females were able to correctly read words and sentences in English, while 38% of the former and 18% of the latter were able to do basic subtraction and division arithmetic problems. "As many as 58.3% of surveyed private high schools and 9.6% government schools had functional computer labs. While 41.6% private high schools and 12.9% government high schools had library books available for students to use in the schools premises," the ASER report noted. Up to 56% of the private primary schools and 14% government schools surveyed did not have adequate and useable water facilities. Similarly, 78% public and 19% private primary schools do not have functional toilet facilities.

The Express Tribune - February 10, 2013

Army Should Take Over To End Balochistan Violence: Shia Cleric

Majlis-e-Wehdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) Central Deputy Secretary General Maulana Amin Shaheedi has demanded that the army take over in Balochistan and put a stop to ongoing violence in the province. Shaheedi made these remarks while addressing a press conference in Quetta that condemned deadly bombings that killed 80 people. Commiserating with the mourning families, he put forward three demands. He asked the army to take over the region and preserve peace and put an end to these killings. He demanded security forces plan targeted operations on hiding places of suicide bombers and those who are responsible for sowing the seeds for sectarian violence. He demanded the immediate arrest and trial of the culprits involved. He also blamed the government, saying that it had failed to maintain peace. He also wanted the government to allow the public to practice self defence while remaining within constitutional limits. Yesterday, MWM and Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) called for the strike in Quetta and various political and religious parties including Pashtunkhwa Map, Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz (PML-N) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) backed it.

The Express Tribune - February 18, 2013

Analysis & Reports

The Truth about Balochistan: Analysis by Sanaullah Baloch

PART I: Over the years, the ruling elite has been polluting the public mind with baseless assumptions and storylines regarding Balochistan. This leaves little room for logical debate on the province and on the appalling socio-economic and political realities that have resulted in the Baloch people's hostility to the state system. Despite massive media outreach and the Internet revolution, the rigid perception about Balochistan and its people remains unchanged. Facts about Baloch society and its tribal structure, as well as the outdated government-sustained tribal system in which corrupt tribal chiefs are in collusion with the establishment are rarely analysed. These tribal chiefs have played a leading role in the wholesale destruction of the Baloch society. The establishment's standard narrative on the crisis in Balochistan revolves around such standard assumptions as: the sardars and nawabs are the main cause of the province's socio-economic backwardness; the Baloch uprising is foreign-funded; and Balochistan is fully empowered and governed by the locals.

No serious efforts have been made to understand Balochistan beyond the fact that the province is a mineral-rich region that produces natural gas, and is a colony populated by tribal warlords and their impoverished subjects. There is no denying that the power-hungry tribal chiefs are widely responsible for Balochistan's woes. But these sardars derive their legitimacy from Islamabad, and are sustained by the government and the civil-military-establishment. However, while the Baloch deeply respect their tribal traditions and culture, this doesn't hinder their participation in socio-economic development. The first universities, schools and other centres of learning in Balochistan were established by moderate and nationalist Baloch tribal chiefs who were staunch opponents of colonial rule in the Subcontinent, particularly in Balochistan. In the early 1930s, Nawab Yousuf Aziz Magsi established the first educational institution – Jama-e-Yousufia – in Jhal Magsi. He brought revolutionary changes in Baloch society by encouraging education and opposing the sardari system, despite being a sardar himself. Being very concerned about the welfare of the Baloch youth, he widely campaigned for social and political reforms in the province.

As far back as the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the Khan of Kalat provided scholarships to young people to help them gain access to education in some of the best colleges and universities of India. He also sought the help of the British to establish schools and colleges in Balochistan. Until 1972, Balochistan was completely ignored when it came to education and economic development. The first Baloch government, headed by Sardar Attaullah Mengal and his visionary education minister, Mir Gul Khan Nasir, gave to Balochistan a university and hundreds of schools and colleges, including a medical college. Special economic zones, including the Hub Industrial Area were a brainchild of Baloch nationalist sardars who wanted their people to be empowered. In 1972, a resolution was moved in the Balochistan Assembly demanding that the federal government abolish the sardari and jirga systems, since the assembly itself did not have the power to legislate such radical changes. The PPP government at the time took no action in this regard. On February 14 1972, eight months later after the passage of this resolution, the National Awami Party presented the resolution in the National Assembly. On June 8, 1972, a resolution was introduced demanding “the eradication of outdated institutions such as the sardari system, the jirga system and the tribal system so that the province of Balochistan may progress socially and economically.”

In his speech Balochistan’s senior minister Mir Gul Khan Nasir told the speaker: “Four things have been pointed out as hurdles to the economic and social progress of Balochistan in this resolution. These are: the sardari, tribal and jirga systems, and all other measures by means of which the people of Balochistan have been, and are still being, exploited.” He explained in his speech: “Sardari in the beginning wasn’t a parasitic institution, but when the sardars became agents of an imperial power, the integrity of this institution began to deteriorate. With the passage of time...some knights rose from within the ranks of the sardars...and succeeded in diminishing its influence. But despite this, we do not wish to keep this rusty skeleton of the sardari system as a monument or memorial of the past because as long as this institution remains, even as a vestige, it will keep our nation divided into various tribes and sub-tribes, which will render it impossible for us to achieve economic progress. Therefore, the main objective of presenting this resolution is to completely eradicate from the face of this earth the disease-stricken sardari system...”

In Quetta, Chief Minister Attaullah Mengal unequivocally spoke in favour of the resolution, saying, “Now that the tribal system has lost its advantages, keeping it is going to act as a hurdle in the development of the people of these tribes. And the large amounts of annual allowances being given to the royal families of the states that merged with Pakistan and the sardars are putting undue pressure on the country’s economy. Therefore, the sardari system should be abolished...and the annual allowances to former royal families should be discontinued. And all the responsibilities of the sardars need to be transferred to other institutions, just like in the other parts of the country.” Despite the opposition of pro-establishment nawabs and jams, the Balochistan Assembly adopted the resolution with overwhelming majority. But Islamabad paid no heed to the demand. Furthermore, any socio-economic development of the Baloch bothered the regional powers, resulting in the dismissal of the first truly elected Baloch government and also in a full-fledged military operation.

The News - February 02, 2013

Balochistan Peace Hurdles: Analysis by Abbas Nasir

IF Baloch nationalist leader Akhtar Mengal does return to take part in the next general election as announced, it’ll be a significant development and may help stabilise Balochistan. The last election was boycotted by all nationalist forces following the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti in a

military operation just over a year earlier and the disastrous consequences of an alienated Baloch nationalist leadership and electorate are there for all to see. Not only did the last elections see many credible leaders sitting on the sidelines, it also witnessed the coming to power of a coalition government headed by a largely dysfunctional chief minister whose lifestyle and health issues kept him away from his seat of power for long periods. All this while the province was being ruled by armed bands striving for separation and not shying away from drawing innocent blood; murderous anti-Shia gangs; pro-government thugs run allegedly by the intelligence agencies and a belligerent paramilitary Frontier Corps.

This lethal combination where respect for law and civil conduct took a back seat inflicted such wounds on large swathes of the Baloch population — the Shia-Hazara community as also non-Baloch settlers — that some fear they may never heal. It is difficult to speculate confidently how many people from among the Baloch ‘missing’, the Shia-Hazaras and the settlers (the last mentioned mostly falling victim in the earlier half of the strife) actually died. But given Balochistan’s population even a few thousand would be a huge number. While the Baloch alienation went from bad to worse, the plight of the Hazaras manifested itself in passive protest and eventually saw the dismissal of the Raisani government and the imposition of governor’s rule as per the protesters’ demand last month. But some who follow and understand the dynamics of the politics and the ‘games’ being played in the province are not optimistic that though significant, this dismissal would bring longer-term relief to the community given that underlying factors remain.

It isn’t rocket science to know what’ll placate the Baloch: a sense of ownership over their own destiny and resources, and provision of justice, particularly a commission which transparently investigates all allegations of rights abuses, especially the ‘kill and dump’ cases. In fact, the first step towards assuaging Baloch anger would be to ensure that ‘real’ representatives are allowed to run and win in a free, fair election and there is no attempt to engineer a result. If such elected representatives are able to form a government, it would be safe to assume that addressing the genuine grievances of their people will be a top priority. And the incoming government will have unprecedented resources at its disposal. The latest constitutional amendments and the National Finance Commission award would ensure that; and the government would also have significant autonomy in how it allocates its resources. Even this, in all probability, is unlikely to placate the separatists. But a more representative government may be better placed to initiate a quiet dialogue with the separatist leadership. It will also be mindful of its mandate in keeping an eye on the excesses of the state apparatus and unlikely to look the other way as the Raisani government did.

Peace in Quetta city, with its delicate ethnic balance disturbed by the mass arrival and settlement of Afghan Taliban and their ideological allies and supporters in an apparently planned move is an issue far more difficult to address let alone resolve. While a lot of focus has rightly remained on the Shia faith of the Hazaras as they have been hunted and hounded by armed religious zealots’ murder squads, very little is said about other motives such as material gain and property prices. A Baloch analyst says that despite the murder and mayhem associated with the Balochistan capital, property prices have not nosedived. “The city is a valley, a small bowl. Land here isn’t infinite. For every property being sold, there are many buyers.” The analyst also points out that billions in ‘drug money’ from Helmand, Kandahar and other poppy-growing neighbouring provinces of Afghanistan are being invested heavily in the Quetta real estate. And whether it is the settler or the odd Shia Hazara who sells, the buyer is always the same. “You’ll find the bulk of the buyers belonging to one ethnic group: the Afghan Pakhtuns, whether they have been regularised and able to buy directly or purchasing through third parties i.e. proxies,” the analyst said.

He also said the traditional commercial stakeholders of the city were Hazaras and Hindus but the balance started to tip with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the late 1970s when not just refugees but millions of dollars of 'war' money started to flow in. However, if one looks at Google images of the areas along the western and eastern bypasses of Quetta, it isn't difficult to immediately observe how large, relatively well-laid out settlements were created to cater to the exodus from Kandahar following the US action in the wake of 9/11. Where in much older and well-settled parts of the city, residents say, there was little provision of services like natural gas, water, electricity etc, the big plots and the houses built on these were connected without even the usual requirement of furnishing proper paperwork or allotment letters. It was as if a powerful hand was guiding the process and facilitating the guests. But there are bigger prizes to be had in Quetta. Marriabad, home to the tragically well-known Alamdar Road, where there is a large Hazara settlement for the past several decades, now forms the biggest real estate prize particularly from the security angle. It is barely a stone's throw from the city's sought-after cantonment. For peace in Quetta, while it is rightly said a clampdown on terrorist organisations such as Lashkar-i-Jhangvi is an imperative, it is also important that other factors such as a shrinking supply of land and who covets whose property are also taken into account. Or else a solution will not be forthcoming.

Dawn - February 02, 2013

ELECTION WATCH

Political Stakeholders & Elections

ECP Gives Clean Chit to Six Fake Degree-Holding Senators

Taking a plea of “law”, the Election Commission of Pakistan revealed that it gave clean chit to at least seven lawmakers who contested last general elections on the basis of fake degrees. In a press release, the commission said under Section 76 of the Senate Election Act 1975, no prosecution for an offence under Section 58 shall be commenced except (a) within six months of the commission of the offence. The commission said due to the law, no action was taken against six fake degree-holding senators. They include Israrullah Khan Zehri, Mir Mohabat Khan Mari, Rehana Yahya Baloch, Nawabzada Muhammad Akbar and Dr Israr Hussain.

Israrullah Khan: The commission said the time taken to verify his degree was consumed for a period of more than six months, as such, following the dictates of law; the commission closed the case on August 11, 2011 due to the legal bar referred above.

Mir Mohabat Khan Mari: The ECP said the case was also closed on January 31, 2012 on the same ground.

Rehana Yahya Baloch: The case was closed on May 21, 2012 on the same ground.

Senator Wali Muhammad: The commission said the case was closed on December 15, 2010 on the ground that he returned as Senator in 2009 when the condition of BA degree was not compulsory.

Nawabzada Muhammad Akbar: Defending the lawmaker, the ECP said he contested the Senate Elections in 2009 when the condition of possessing a graduation degree was not compulsory.

Dr Israr Hussain: The ECP said it had been pointed out by the petitioner Senator Haroon Akhtar Khan that he had approached a sessions court for prosecuting Senator Dr Israr Hussain and cognisance of the offence had been taken up by the court, therefore, he did not want to proceed any further and desired to take back the petition. The case was disposed of on January 7, 2011.

The ECP added that it did not take action against two female fake degree-holding lawmakers as they submitted their resignations.

They included Shumaila Rana and Shabina Khan.

The case was closed by the chief election commissioner on January 15, 2011 due to the resignation.

The press release added that the ECP derived its jurisdiction from the constitution and law, as well as directions issued from time to time by the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

“The Election Commission was directed by Supreme Court to initiate action against all such persons who were accused of commission of corrupt practices; of committing forgery and of using, as genuine, documents which they knew or at least had reason to believe to be forged.”

“The Election Commission shall ensure that the investigations in these matters are conducted honestly, efficiently and expeditiously and shall depute one of its senior officers to supervise the same.”

It said the sessions judges to whom these trials would then be entrusted, had also been directed to conclude the same without any delay, “in consonance with the spirit of the Elections laws as displayed, inter alia, by the Provisos newly added to subsection (1-A) of section 67 of Representation of the People Act, 1976 through the Amending Act No IV of 2009 promulgated on November 2,-2009”.

Pakistan Today - February 28, 2013

Political Parties

Pakistan People’s Party (PPP)

1,300 Want PPP Tickets for KPK’s 35 NA, 99 PA Seats

A total of 1300 intending contenders have so far applied for PPP tickets to contest on 35 National Assembly and 99 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly seats in the upcoming general elections. Of these applications, 500 have been submitted by candidates for trying their luck on 35 seats of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in the National Assembly, while the remaining 800 aspirants have desired to contest for 99 seats of the provincial assembly. The PPP KPK chapter has set February 8, 2013 as the last date for submission of applications for party tickets. Moreover, PPP has also constituted four committees to finalise election arrangements in the province and submit reports to top brass of the party. In this connection, the committee for southern zone will be headed by party’s provincial president Anwar Saifullah Khan; Malakand division position by Senator Ahmed Hassan Khan; Peshawar division by Zahir Ali Shah and Hazara division by Shamroz Khan. These 1300 applications would be presented to the federal parliamentary board for approval of the central leadership. The provincial board would present three names for each of the national and provincial assembly constituencies, after which the final board at central level would take a decision.

The PPP KPK has time and again said that the party would not enter into alliance with any party, but would keep the option of seat-to-seat adjustment open in all districts, as the KPK PPP has authorized its district presidents and secretary generals to negotiations with other political parties for seats adjustment. So far, it has already held negotiations with Qaumi Watan Party, JUI-F, JUI-S and Jamaat-i-Islami to finalise any possible seat adjustments. To contest on four NA and 11 PA seats in Peshawar, some 53 candidates have applied for PPP tickets in next general elections. For NA-1, former Town Nazim, Haji Shaukat Ali, Fahim Khan, Zulfiqar Afghani, Ghulam Mustafa, Hamidullah Zahid and Saqib Khan while for NA-2, Arbab Alamigr Khan, Ejaz Khalil forwarded their applications for attaining the party ticket. For NA-3, sitting Speaker KPK Assembly Kiramatullah Chigarmatti, Razaullah and Suhail Hashim Awan while for NA-4, Misbahud Din, Ghazanfar Ali and Muhammad Javed applied for PPP ticket. Likewise, to contest on provincial assembly seat PK-1, Akbar Khan Advocate, Aziz Khan, Jamil Qamar Advocate and Haji Irshad and for PK-2, Syed Zahir Ali Shah, Khwaja Yawar Nasir, Saeed Ahmed Khan and Niazi Adil forwarded their applications for party ticket.

Similarly, intending candidates for PPP ticket for PK-3 are Haji Iqbal Mohmand, Suleman Orakzai, Daud Khan, Nematullah Khan and Malik Taj and for PK-4, Azam Khan Afridi, Kifayatullah Orakzai and Jehanzeb Thekadar while for PK-5, Malik Jehangir, Pir Fida Khalil and Mali Imtiaz Khalil.

For PK-6, Malik Himayatullah, Ashfaq Khalil, Khurshid Alam and Ejaz Khalil, for PK-7, Kiramatullah Chigarmatti, Razaullah and Amanullah Kanezai, for PK-8, Malik Tehmash Khan, Malik Firdaus and Qazi Muhammad Iqbal, for PK-9, Haji Muhammad Sharif, Iftikhar Jhagra and Taj Muhammad Doranpur, for PK-10, Alhaaj Ghazanfar Ali, Bismillah Jan and Noorzada while for PK-11, Muhammad Javed, Shaukat Mohmand and Muhammad Daud Barki have also applied for party ticket. In 2008 general elections, PPP had won 124 out of 342 National Assembly seats, 107 out of 371 Punjab Assembly seats, 93 out of 168 Sindh Assembly seats, 30 out of 124 Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Assembly seats and 12 out of 65 Balochistan Assembly seats.

The Nation - February 11, 2013

9 PPP MPAs, 2 Q-League MNAs Join PML-N

As many as nine MPAs of the Punjab Assembly and two MNAs, belonging to the Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Q respectively have joined the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. They announced their decision during a meeting with the Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif. PPP lawmakers who left the party to join the PML-N included Uzma Bukhari, Rana Babar Hussain, Jameel Shah, Irshad Ahmed, Javed Allauddin, Rana Munawar Ghaus, Qaiser Sindhu, Shumail Gujjar and Zaffar Hiraj. Q-League MNAs Ashiq Hussain and Peer Aslam Bodla also joined the PML-N.

The News - February 15, 2013

PPP Leader Uzma Bukhari Resigns from Party, Punjab Assembly

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) member Uzma Bukhari has resigned from the Punjab Assembly and the party. She has resigned because of differences with the party. While speaking Bukhari said the "current PPP is not the one she joined under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto." "I had expressed my concerns but to no avail," she said. Bukhari said the party failed to provide relief to the common man. Earlier in December 2012, three PPP MPAs submitted their resignations in the assembly secretariat and announced their decision to join Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N).

The Express Tribune - February 15, 2013

SBC to Contest Elections against PPP

Sindh Bachayo Committee (SBC), a platform of various nationalist and political parties, decided on Wednesday to jointly contest the forthcoming general elections against the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Sindh. The decision was taken at a meeting of the SBC held at the residence of Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) Chief Pir Pagaro. "All parties, part of the SBC, will contest elections one-to-one against the ruling coalition," announced Pagaro after chairing the joint meeting. The SBC meeting was held a day after PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif's meeting with Pir Pagaro and National People's Party (NPP) leadership, where they had announced formation of an anti-PPP alliance in Sindh. SBC Chief Jalal Mahmood Shah had already signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the PML-N. The SBC parties demanded of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to ensure impartial caretaker setup in the country.

Daily Times - February 28, 2013

PPP Divided Over Award Of Tickets

The Pakistan People's Party ticket holders are likely to face strong opposition from their own party men in shape of independent candidates in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in coming general election despite hectic efforts made by its provincial president Anwar Saifullah Khan to muster support of all the disgruntled activists.

Since his appointment as KP president in Sept 2012, Mr Saifullah has made serious efforts to activate the annoyed workers and for this purpose he also frequently spoke against the Awami National Party for not giving due share to the PPP in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He believed that it was because of the ANP that PPP workers could not get jobs, development schemes and even faced problems in postings and transfers in different districts.

During past few months, Mr Khan visited different parts of the province, spoke to public and workers' meetings, and managed to bring several leaders of other political parties into PPP folds. They included women MPA Nighat Orakzai from Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid, MPA Shazia Aurangzeb from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, Iftikhar Khan Jhagra from Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf and many others in southern districts. However, some others have quit the PPP during this period. Party insiders say that many more are planning to leave the PPP due to the attitude of its central leadership. A former provincial minister and provincial general secretary Dost Mohammad Khan of Swat told Dawn that PPP was no more a party of workers and Bhuttos, but that of Zardari and his sister Ms Faryal Talpur.

"They do not want anyone work for the party, but they are using the workers for own interests," he said and added that he and many of the party people would soon join other parties, most likely the PML-N.

Another former MPA from Dargai, Haji Jahangir Khan, told Dawn that in case the PPP awarded ticket to MPA Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha he would contest the elections as an independent candidate.

"Workers are disappointed and not ready to vote for Mr Bacha and even Dargai tehsil president Pir Zahir Shah is opposing him. The provincial leadership should avoid allotting tickets to sitting MNAs and MPAs otherwise most of them will lose the election," he warned.

Mr Jahangir said that other parties were ready to offer them tickets. He criticised provincial finance minister Mohammad Humayun Khan and revealed that many of senior PPP activists had planned to nominate an independent candidate from among themselves.

Qasim Qasab, another founding member of the PPP in Malakand Agency, said that it seemed that their party had no authority and only the ANP was ruling the province.

He said that majority of workers were annoyed with the local MPs.

“I have applied for party ticket against Mr Humayun and will contest independently if not allotted the ticket,” he maintained. The MPs are obliging only landlords and poor workers are not paid attention, he said and added that during military operation he lost four of his family members, but the government did not pay him compensation.

PPP workers in Upper Dir are also opposing MNA Najamuddin Khan and said that he had done nothing for development of the district. Sher Bahadur Khan and many others said that workers were not ready to support Mr Najamuddin in coming election. The workers have also started a protest campaign against state minister Azmat Khan of Lower Dir and warned that they would support the opponent candidate if he was given party ticket.

Requesting anonymity, some of senior PPP leaders and office-bearers in Peshawar division also complained against their central leadership for ignoring the ideology of Bhuttos and said that the party was run on ad hocism. They said that Faryal Talpur had no position in PPP’s organisational structure, but everyone had to bow before her for tickets and party slots.

They said that democratic culture should be developed in PPP and the dictatorial behaviour of leadership stopped forthwith. A member of the PPP parliamentary board revealed that many of the party candidates could face independent candidates from within the party if the central leadership failed to allot tickets on basis of merit.

However, PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Anwar Saifullah Khan said that the parliamentary board would send the applications to central leadership with recommendations and tickets would be allotted on merit.

Dawn – February 22, 2013

Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML - N)

PML-N, PML-F Agree On Electoral Alliance

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) have agreed on an electoral alliance for the upcoming general elections. The decision was taken when PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif met PML-F Chief Pir Pagara at his residence in Karachi. Other important members of both the parties were also present at the meeting. PML-F also proposed that both the parties should run the elections under the same electoral symbol, which is a red rose, in Sindh. However, PML-N did not agree to this proposal. Despite the mutual agreement on supporting each other’s strong candidates, the previously outstanding issues of seat adjustments and agreeing upon electoral symbols still remained intact, however leaders of both the PML factions resolved to discuss these issues in upcoming meetings. Committees have been formed, comprising members of both parties, to solve the issues and reach a consensus. Sharif also lent his support to the Grand Alliance, which consisted of 10 political parties, formulated by Pir Pagara and offered him to assume the leadership of the Alliance. The leaders also decided to have dialogues with other parties to persuade them to join the Grand Alliance.

The Express Tribune - February 26, 2013

Punjab Govt May Not Act Against Lej PML-N Has Seat Adjustments with Defunct SSP

While the federal government wants the Punjab government to launch a massive crackdown on the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ) and defunct Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif is unlikely to oblige. The main reason is a seat-to-seat adjustment deal between the PML-N and Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) for the upcoming elections. Well-informed circles in the ASWJ (previously the SSP) confirmed that following extensive discussions, the two parties had agreed to have seat adjustments in the general election on at least 15 seats of the National Assembly from South Punjab where they would not field candidates against each other. Two former key leaders of SSP, Maulana Mohammad Ahmed Ludhianvi and Malik Mohammad Ishaq, who are currently the president and vice president of the ASWJ respectively, are all set to run for two National Assembly seats from the South Punjab in the coming polls, with the support of the PML-N.

After being banned by the Musharraf regime as a terrorist group in 2002, the SSP was renamed as the ASWJ and it will be using the same platform to contest the election. Malik Ishaq, who has been commanding the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi since his July 14, 2011 release from a Lahore jail, was made vice president of the ASWJ on September 18, 2012 by Maulana Ludhianvi. He was formally inducted into the ASWJ hardly a few days after Interior Minister Rehman Malik had written a letter to the chief secretary Punjab, asking him to arrest Ishaq for allegedly sponsoring sectarian terrorism. The letter was never responded to. On the other hand, in September 2012 Ludhianvi said: "I deserve praise for making Ishaq throw away his weapons. Now the Interior Ministry should talk to a deweaponized Ishaq". However, the federal government believes sectarian terrorism has multiplied, especially in Quetta against the Shia Hazaras, following the release of Ishaq.

Rehman Malik has only recently blamed the Punjab government for harbouring the Lashkar and Sipah, adding that it must take stern action against them to nip the evil of terrorism in the bud. Giving a speech in the Senate on February 20, he said if the Punjab government won't take action against these groups, he would himself raid their hideouts. "The central headquarters of these groups are in the Punjab, while their sub-headquarters are in Karachi". About the February 16 suicide hit in Quetta, he said, "Liquid explosives were used for the first time with the composition of diesel and potassium chloride. The tanker bomb was assembled in Lahore by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and transported to Quetta". But informed circles in the ASWJ believe the PML-N government in the Punjab would not risk jeopardising its recently concluded pact on seat adjustments by acting against the ASWJ leaders in a big way. The ASWJ is an active component of Difa-e-Pakistan Council (DPC), which is packed with the establishment's favourites who dabble in extremist rhetoric. These circles added that the PML-N's latest strategy of confronting the PPP in South Punjab is hinged on its understanding with the ASWJ. They conceded that the PML-N and ASWJ had reached a consensus on seat adjustments in the Punjab and National Assembly for the upcoming elections.

The understanding was reached after hectic parleys between Maulana Ludhianvi and the Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan. The ASWJ has a strong Sunni Deobandi vote bank in many constituencies of South Punjab and the PML-N obviously wants to take advantage of that in the coming general election. According to the ASWJ insiders, the PML-N has agreed to support their candidates on four National Assembly seats from South Punjab. In return, the ASWJ will not field its candidates against the PML-N in 12 constituencies. The five Punjab districts where the two parties will support each other's candidates include Jhang, Faisalabad, Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan and Layyah. The ASWJ sources did not rule out the possibility of Malik Ishaq and Maulana Ludhianvi contesting the next general elections on two of the four National Assembly seats from South Punjab where the PML-N will support them. To a question, the ASWJ sources

said if Malik Ishaq was not allowed to contest the polls due to the pending cases against him, his son Malik Mohammad Usman will be their most likely candidate from NA-177 Muzaffargarh.

Ludhianvi is most likely to contest from NA-89 Jhang, which was previously won by Sheikh Waqas Akram of the PML-Q, who is all set to join the PPP to run for the same seat. To recall, the PML-N and ASWJ had jointly contested a by-election on a Punjab Assembly seat for Jhang in March 2010. Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah chose to campaign for the PML-N candidate in PP-82 [on February 20, 2010] along with Ludhianvi, which was bitterly criticised by the then Governor Punjab Salman Taseer. The election was eventually won by Azam Chaila of PML-N with SSP's crucial support. Approached for comments, central secretary general of ASWJ Khadim Hussain Dhiloon said his party was open to talks with all the political and religious parties in connection with the upcoming polls. Even during the 2008 elections, he said, almost all the major political parties including the PPP, PML-N, ANP, PML-Q and the JUI had sought the ASWJ's support in the four provinces of the country and subsequently won their seats. Dhiloon said Maulana Ludhianvi was already on record having produced to the media [in 2012] a list of 25 PPP leaders who won their seats in the 2008 polls because of the ASWJ's support. Therefore, he said, the PPP had no moral justification to criticise the other parties if they want an election understanding with the ASWJ".

Approached for comments, Siddiqueul Farooque, a central executive committee member of the PML-N, expressed ignorance about a seat adjustment agreement between his party and ASWJ. However, he claimed that many key leaders of the PPP had won the 2008 general elections with the support of the SSP, including Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Syed Khurshid Shah, Qamaruz Zaman Kaira, Jamshed Dasti and several others. "It is totally moral and principled for the PPP to seek the support of these groups when they need their votes. But if any other party even thinks of getting their electoral support, it is lambasted by the PPP and declared pro-fascists". He then raised a few queries about the status of the "so-called" banned organisations, saying: "I want to know if allegations against these groups have already been established in any court; have these groups already been declared terrorist outfits by any court; has the Election Commission of Pakistan barred the leaders of these groups from casting their votes in the coming elections; have these leaders not been set free from jails?" The PML-N leader concluded: "If the government still believes all these groups are involved in terrorism and anti-state activities, it should approach the Supreme Court to get them banned".

The News – February 22, 2013

PML-N in Election Gear

The PML-N appears to be in the election gear as it has sought applications from prospective candidates for award of party tickets for the upcoming elections. It has given two-week time to party men to process their applications on prescribed forms which can be had from party's central and provincial offices. March 5 has been fixed as the cut off date for the purpose. Party men are expecting a large number of applications this time around owing to the anticipated tight scrutiny of candidates by the Election Commission under Articles, 62, 63 and 218 of the Constitution. Political parties will have to field more than one candidate as 'covering candidates' to ensure presence of their nominees in the election arena. As per party sources, some key decisions regarding award of party tickets to the PPP and PML-Q turncoats, new and old, would be taken in the coming weeks. Barring a few, majority of the PML-Q legislators who formed a forward bloc in Punjab Assembly against their parent party in the very beginning would also get the PML-N tickets. A source in the PML-N told TheNation that party high-ups would award tickets to the candidates in the light of a constituency-wise study conducted one year back. It is

based on reports from party men and the provincial intelligence apparatus, also detailing weak and strong pockets in different constituencies. As the time for elections is drawing near, the party is also planning to intensify its election campaign in Punjab and elsewhere. Hunt for more 'electables' from other parties is also part of the campaign. Influential party leaders have been tasked to do the necessary homework in this regard. Punjab Law Minister Rana Sana Ullah's statement warning Chaudhrys' of Gujrat to get ready for more 'shocks' is meaningful in this context.

The Nation - February 18, 2013

PML-N, MQM Stage Walkout in NA over Quetta Carnage

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) staged a walkout from the National Assembly over blast incident in Quetta. The protesting legislators called for a joint session of the parliament and for practical steps to be taken for the establishment of law and order. The session of the National Assembly was headed by Chaudhry Abdul Ghafoor. MNA Abdul Qadir Baloch belonging to the PML-N declared that six countries including Saudi Arabia and Iran were involved activities in Balochistan. He further said that results could be achieved if the army was sent in Quetta for a few days. Another PML-N minister Barjees Tahir demanded the removal of Governor Balochistan and the provincial chief secretary adding that the intelligence agencies had failed to perform their duties. MQM lawmaker Wasim Akhtar said that the Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LeJ), who was responsible for the Kirani road incident, had offices functioning in Punjab and demanded that the law enforcement agencies seal those offices. Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Syed Khurshid Shah said that the government had removed its own government in the province and enforced governor rule and the onus lay on the intelligence agencies now to play their role. Earlier the MQM had moved an adjournment motion in the Senate over the Kirani road incident in Quetta.

Dawn - February 19, 2013

Resolution to Fan Hatred: PML-N

The PML-N has refuted the allegations levelled by the Sindh Assembly through a resolution on Wednesday that the Punjab government had links with terrorists and was patronising terrorist cells. Reacting to Sindh Assembly's terse resolution, the PML-N described the move as the means to fan hatred and create fissures in the inter-provincial relations which, it said, could disserve the federation. "There is no substance whatsoever in the accusations which the Sindh Assembly made," asserted Ahsan Iqbal, party's deputy secretary general. The Sindh Assembly eschewed the fact that all the arms licences to terrorist outfits were provided by Balochistan and the Sindh government itself, but finger was being pointed at the Punjab, Iqbal pointed out. He said the Sindh government had been trying to politicise the issue of terrorism to gain a vantage position by shifting the onus onto the Punjab and maligning the PML-N that had been ruling it. The PPP government was doing the same what Musharraf had earlier done by branding every other (person) a terrorist except himself. He said terrorism was a serious issue, but the PPP government was trying to get political mileage out of it. By accusing the Punjab of having links with terrorist cells, Iqbal said, the PPP was only fomenting hatred and dividing the provinces. This attitude would not help curb terrorist activities but would help terrorists instead, he added.

The PPP was trying to malign the Punjab government as it was scared of PML-N's rising popularity in Sindh, Iqbal said, and "It should have put its own house in order before charging the Punjab government." He further said the PPP was ruling in Sindh and Balochistan where arms licences were provided to terrorist groups. About Sindh Assembly's resolution, the PML-N leader said it did not have any binding or legal effect to force the Punjab government. Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah meanwhile said the provincial government asked the interior minister a number of times to provide the evidence that it had been facilitating terrorists. "But he never came up with any proof," he said, and alleged that the ruling party was looking to pit one province against the other and create hatred among them. The minister said it was the Punjab government that broke the network of terrorists and ensured peace in the province which its rivals were not able digest. He said the Inter-Services Intelligence was befittingly and effectively carrying out action to stem terrorism and if there had been any proof against the Punjab government, this agency would not have spared an action against it.

The Nation - February 28, 2013

Pakistan Tehreek - e - Insaf (PTI)

PTI Outlines Its Rs2.5 Trillion Education Policy

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan unveiled his party's comprehensive policy on education. The policy outlines a plan to spend Rs2.5 trillion on the education sector in Pakistan for if and when it comes into power, according to a press release from the PTI. Khan vowed to increase the education budget from 2.1% to 5% of the GDP and pledged to spend Rs2.5 trillion on education in what he described would be an 'education emergency' in the country, which would be declared the moment his party assumes power. The PTI chief also said that his government would devolve educational institutions to the town level and their management would be devolved to district and sub-district levels. He once again reiterated his party's long-time stance on establishing a uniform education system throughout the country. "The rich man's son and poor man's son will study the same syllabus," the PTI chief had told an annual Insaf Students Federation convention last year.

The Express Tribune - February 20, 2013

PTI Representatives Meet Tahirul Qadri, Discuss Alliance, ECP Reformation

The top leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) met Tehreek-e-Minhajul Quran leader Dr Tahirul Qadri here on Wednesday and discussed the possibility of an electoral alliance and reconstitution of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Briefing the media following the meeting, PTI President Javed Hashmi said their stance was similar to that of Qadri's. Hashmi added that an electoral alliance along with other issues was discussed during the meeting. "We are trying to unite all political parties which have the desire for change," Hashmi said. According to Hashmi, the PTI was not satisfied on the issue of the caretaker government and Election Commission. PTI leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi said if a neutral caretaker government was not formed, free and fair elections could not be held. Qureshi further said the PTI did not require the crutch of the establishment. Meanwhile, addressing the press conference, Tahirul Qadri said there was agreement on several issues with PTI. Qadri also announced that he would submit a petition in the Supreme Court for the reconstitution of the Election Commission.

The News - February 06, 2013

Intra-Party Elections of PTI

Second and one of the most crucial phases of the PTI intra-party elections took place in Lahore and other parts of Punjab in which votes will be polled for the slot of district presidents. In Lahore, a tough contest is expected between the Unity and Nazriati Groups led by Abdul Aleem Khan and Mian Mehmood-ul-Rasheed respectively. The first phase of intra-party elections held in the second week of February, both the groups had claimed victory over other but insiders in PTI stated that actual position would become clear today when members elected in first phase of polls from different Union Councils of Lahore would now vote for the slot of Town and district President. The polling will take place in Aiwan-e-Iqbal and results are expected to be announced after one day. During the last phase of intra party elections, situation remained tense between the two noted groups and an incident of firing also took place in the area of NA-121, Sabzazar, which left two party workers injured. According to the Unity group candidates, situation merging so far is reflecting that the PTI Unity Group is close to victory, as many groups and even candidates from Nazriati and tsunami groups have withdrawn their nominations and announced to support the Unity Group.

The News - February 26, 2013

Muthida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

MQM Quits PPP-Led Coalition Government Ahead Of Polls

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement announced its decision to quit the coalition government with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The decision was announced by the deputy convenor of Rabita Committee MNA Dr Farooq Sattar who made it clear that the decision was taken after deliberation in several party meetings and that this decision was final. He announced that the MQM will now sit on the opposition benches in the provincial and national assemblies. Explaining the reason for their latest split, Sattar said that the MQM could not sit with the PPP which was seemingly patronising criminals' part of the Peoples Aman Committee and members involved in the Lyari gang war by withdrawing cases. He added that another contributing reason of their decision was the excess baggage that the PPP had taken on during the course of their governance and that at a time when the party has to go to the "court of the people," it could not do so with the baggage.

Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Memon via telephone told that while MQM quitting the coalition is not a loss for the government, but the PPP would have preferred if the MQM did take that decision, and would have instead chose to complete five years in government with them. Memon said that with the MQM sitting in the opposition changes the scenario a little, but the information minister insisted that the PPP will take decision with consensus. Earlier, reacting on the MQM's decision, Memon said that they will not start counter accusations over the MQM's decision to quit the coalition government. The minister reminded that the PPP had enough numbers after the 2008 elections to form a government in Sindh but it decided to include all parties. The decision for reconciliation was not just to create government. At the time [after elections] Peoples Party had single majority in Sindh and could have formed a government on its own, but we included other parties because we wanted to let by-gones be by-gones and move on.

The Express Tribune - February 16, 2013

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Human Rights Updates & Reports

Army Dismisses another Human Rights Watch Report

A spokesperson of Inter-services Public Relations (ISPR) has termed the Human Rights Watch (HRW) recent report a pack of lies, propaganda driven and totally biased. In a statement issued on the ISPR website on Saturday, the spokesperson said that the report was yet another attempt to malign Pakistan and its institutions through fabricated and unverified reports, completely favouring an anti-Pakistan agenda. The HRW has based its opinion on imprecise facts and biased views. The HRW report seems to be a clear attempt to further fuel already ongoing sectarian violence and to create chaos and disorder in Pakistan. HRW has no credibility and has been criticised world wide for raising controversies through its biased reports and funding from certain quarters and its reports have been rejected by many countries of the world. The 635-page HRW World Report 2013 launched in late January had alleged that the Pakistani government had failed to act against abuses by security and intelligence agencies and allowed extremist groups to attack religious minorities.

The Express Tribune - February 02, 201

Karachi Third Worst In Human Rights Violations

After Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the part of the country where the most serious human rights violations are carried out is Karachi, said the former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association. Hamid Khan was attending the session titled 'Rights and Wrongs: Human Rights in Pakistan' at the 4th Karachi Literature Festival. Khan said the situation in Balochistan was dire in terms of missing persons and another unfortunate thing was ethnic cleansing. He said the Punjabi population living in Quetta had been wiped out, while the Shia population living just outside Quetta was also being eliminated. The Punjabis and the Shias have suffered the most, as the government and security agencies have proven useless. He said that instead of saving these communities, the intelligence agencies killed Baloch people based on their own secret reports and without any trial. "Thus, 'wrong against wrong' has been the story of Balochistan for the past five years," he added. He said Karachi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were the other regions where the most serious human rights violations were carried out.

"Recently, the apex judiciary has shown sensitivity towards the Karachi and Balochistan situations. The judiciary can issue verdicts, but it cannot stop the killings. Thus, the apex court has certain limits," he added. However, he continued, it is healthy development that the judiciary is now giving priority to the enforcement of human rights. Khan said that apart from these internal factors, some external factors were also responsible for the human rights violations, such as drone attacks, turning the victims' families into fodder in the hands of militants. Human Rights Watch Pakistan head Ali Dayan Hasan said the demands of human rights activists were reasonable, as they wanted an end to kidnappings and killings as well as implementation of the rule of law. Hasan said that it was their contention that implementation of human rights would not hurt Pakistan and, instead, would benefit the country. He said 500,000 Hazaras were living in the ghettos in Quetta, but in January this year, their supposed sense of security was shattered when armed militants entered their localities and killed them,

adding that this happened despite the presence of two check-posts. “We should not live in a state of denial,” he proposed, adding that impunity results from a weakened criminal justice system.

Hasan said an independent judiciary was essential for the protection of rights, but it was going through a phase of transition. Prominent human rights activist Asma Jahangir said cases of impunity were increasing across the country. If you are associated with religious militants or the establishment, you can get away with murder, she added. She called for addressing the issues of impunity and extremism. She said extrajudicial killings in Balochistan would have long-term implications for the entire country. She also said the government had recently introduced the “notorious law” that allowed government agencies to keep people in their custody for years. Besides, she added, this law has retrospective effects, which means that the years-long detention of people in the past had also been “legalised” through the law.

Another prominent human rights activist IA Rehman, referring to the earlier speech of Hamid Khan, said that these were “situational problems”. He said the real issue was that the rights guaranteed by the constitution were either weak or never implemented, adding that the wrongs had been institutionalised in the country because of the nature of the rule. “Balochistan is not under civilian rule and this is the major problem. The Balochistan problem reflects the aspirations of the Balochs for their share in the national cake as well as for autonomy. However, he continued, new development in the country is arbitrariness institutionalised by the army. He said rising extremism was another disturbing development, which meant more wrongs would be committed. Implementation of human rights is a cultural matter, but there is an unreasonable attitude towards it in the country, he added. Resultantly, he continued, human rights activists who have been struggling for the rights of children, women and minorities for the past 20 years have been unable to create any dent. Rehman said, “We don’t have a culture of tolerance and respect for others because we don’t have informed and intelligent discourse.” The judiciary is quite selective in taking up human rights violations, as it was not taking up the cases of wrongs against the poor and the wrongs committed by militants, he added. Justice (retd) Nasira Iqbal, who moderated the programme, observed: “Our problems cannot be resolved until we raise our voices and identify the same.”

The News - February 17, 2013

Human Rights Subject in Curriculum Demanded

The Union of Small and Medium Enterprises (Unisame) has urged the Ministry of Education to include human rights as a subject in the curriculum of schools, colleges and universities to educate the masses about their rights and duties. President Unisame Zulfikar Thaver said it is very important to create awareness and educate citizens about their human rights. The people must know their rights, their obligations and to voice their grievances collectively when they are deprived of their rights or treated badly. Unisame by virtue of its membership with the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) has launched a campaign against corruption, labour laws violations, environment pollution and deprivation of human rights to citizens. Unisame also intends to work for setting up of best business practices bureau with the help and support of trade leaders and welcomes trade leaders to come forward and volunteer for the cause to check the menace of poor services, sub standard goods, counterfeits and fraud and forgery and bring bad practices to book.

The Nation - February 11, 2013

Karachi Literature Festival: Declining State Of Human Rights in the Country

Intolerance, impunity and institutional complicity were the dominant themes during an hour-long session on human rights on day two of the fourth Karachi Literature Festival. Chaired by Justice (retd) Nasira Iqbal, the audience was hard pressed to find a bright spot in the country's struggle for civil liberties once the session was over. "I'm horror struck," every single time the Baloch issue is visited, said Human Rights Watch Pakistan director Ali Dayan Hasan. "By voicing their demands, by speaking for those killed ... it doesn't mean you're speaking out against Pakistan but for its benefit. But in Pakistan, kal aap ko utha liya jayay ga, kal mujhay utha liya jayay ga," the beleaguered activist said before passing the microphone to Hamid Khan, ex-president of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan. Khan took the audience through Balochistan's travails in some detail. "What is most unfortunate about the situation is that ethnic cleansing is taking place." The Baloch nationalist parties' boycott of the 2008 polls led to parties "like PML-Q with no roost" in the province to win seats, he explained. "As long as women were not asking for rights, there was peace. When she wants to study, asks for her inheritance, it is a problem. Similarly, the Baloch wanting their rights is a problem," said Human Rights Commission Pakistan director I A Rehman. "Justice is a commodity you can buy - there is no justice for the poor, women or the Bheel." "There are more things which cannot be discussed today than there were 24 years ago ... We have made no dent in 24 years," Rehman stated. Human rights lawyer Asma Jahangir, who dedicated her talk to Malala Yousufzai, said: "Please understand ... all our institutions are rotting. First we said the generals could do no bad, now we say the chief justice can do no wrong ... in no other country would those lawyers get away with garlanding Salman Taseer's killer".

The Express Tribune - February 17, 2013

GENDER WATCH

Violence against Women

Gender-Sensitive Policing

WORLDWIDE perceptions regarding women's participation in law enforcement are changing, but in Pakistan policing is still a male-dominated career. In Pakistan, the origin of women policing can be traced to the 1970s. In the Police Act 1861 and Police Rules 1934 there is no reference to women policing. However the Police Order 2002 recognises the need and importance of women policing. During Benazir Bhutto's first stint as prime minister, her government expressed keen interest in women's participation in policing. As a result, women's police stations were established in a few urban centres. Yet there was no real change in attitudes. Issues regarding recruitment, training, the work environment, promotions and women's role in operations were not addressed in an organised manner. There are 1,544 police stations in the four provinces while there are 12 women's police stations in the country, including three in Punjab, six in Sindh, two in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one in Islamabad. Most women's police stations merely operate as holding or detention areas. The 4,000 women police personnel in the country constitute less than one per cent of the total police strength.

According to a survey conducted by the UN, amongst Asian countries Singapore has 19.1, Malaysia 9.5, and Sri Lanka 5.3 per cent women's representation in the police force. To increase women's participation in law-enforcement agencies the UN determined a goal of 20 per cent. Therefore instead of gender equality the priority should be gender mainstreaming. Owing to social taboos women are reluctant to join the police. To attract women to the force it is imperative to carry out workplace environmental assessments. In the first phase, information should be collected on areas in which female officers have traditionally faced barriers, such as in recruitment and selection, sexual harassment, non-acceptance by peers and supervisors, pregnancy, childcare, etc. In the recruitment process fair representation and effective say of female police officers is also required. Additionally, reluctance on the part of female officers to accept the challenge of field assignments is another issue confronted by supervisors. Training centres primarily cater to the needs of male police officers. In 14 police colleges and schools, women police personnel try to adapt themselves to the harsh training environment. Due to an unattractive training environment, a fair proportion of women recruits either drop out or opt for non-policing assignments. Non-availability of women trainers is another issue.

In Pakistan, cases of suicide, murder and 'honour' killings are primarily dealt with by male police investigators. The presence of male police officers provides excuses to the heirs of the victims to create hindrances in the investigation. Thus it almost becomes impossible for investigators to collect, preserve and exhibit circumstantial evidence in court. In cases of 'honour' killings and other forms of violence against women, the role of female doctors, investigators and relatives is of vital importance. During the initial stage either due to hindrances in access or the poor professionalism of investigators, it becomes difficult for the courts to convict the accused. Such situations are being successfully exploited by the perpetrators; as a result the majority goes unpunished. Investigation by women officers can enhance the comfort level of female victims, reduce human rights violations and enhance the image of the police. From the successful experience of the developed world, one learns that integration of women in the police force is a phased process. In the initial phase the roles to be assigned to women police personnel are to be defined.

Induction of more women in the police force will not only improve police-community relations but also enhance human rights standards. Increased women participation in policing will also earn a 'soft' image for the police. Constable Shazia Gul of the Nowshera police was the first policewoman of the country to lay down her life in the line of duty. Her sacrifice dispelled the myth that women are incapable of handling the hazards of policing. Also, Pakistani woman peacekeeper DSP Shahzadi Gulfam received the prestigious International Female Police Peacekeeper Award. The achievements of such female police officers need to be highlighted. In Pakistan during the last few years violence against women has indicated an upward trend. Pakistan ranked 134 out of a total 135 countries in the Gender Gap Index 2012. The index was introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006. It is a measure to assess the scope and magnitude of gender disparities.

According to a report compiled by the Aurat Foundation 8,539 women fell prey to violence in 2011. During this period, a 6.74 per cent increase in reported cases of violence against women in the country was recorded. To prevent such violence the state has introduced the Criminal law (Amendment) Act 2004 and Provisions of Qisas and Diyat in the Pakistan Penal Code. Further, to document violence against women, the National Police Bureau has established the Gender Crimes Cell (GCC). The GCC is primarily dependent on data provided by provincial police. Still, in rural areas, cases of violence targeting women are not reported therefore the GCC needs to depend on other reporting methods too. From best international practices it is clear that recruitment, retention and integration of women in policing are achievable goals. Integration of women in policing is the best method to improve human rights indicators.

Dawn – February 25, 2013

Study On Crucial Aspects of Gender-Based Violence Launched

The findings of a research study titled 'Social and Legal Responses to Rape' published by Gender Equity Programme (GEP) reveals that incest and rape by one's close relatives, family friends and neighbours exist at a much larger scale than previously thought. The study makes part of the five researches launched by Aurat Foundation (AF), under its USAID-funded Gender Equity Programme (GEP) on Monday providing a comprehensive analysis of some crucial aspects of GBV prevalent in Pakistani society. The researches include A Primary Data Research Study on Domestic Violence by Sebcon; A Research Study on Internal Trafficking of Women and Girls in Pakistan by Maliha Hussein and Shazreh Hussain; A Primary Data Research Study on Customary Practices Leading to Gender Based Violence by Department of Gender Studies, University of Lahore; A Primary Data Research Study Sexual Harassment by Semiotics Consultants (Pvt) Limited and A Primary Data Research Study Social and Legal Responses to Rape by Nagma Imdad.

In Primary Data Research Study on Domestic Violence, almost 100 per cent respondents viewed domestic violence as a serious issue. Approximately 71 per cent respondents reported that usually the husband is the instigator of violence, often with the aid of other family members. The study shows that victims of domestic violence are unable to make their own decisions, voice their own opinions and protect themselves and their children and demands that women and children are entitled to state protection even within the confines of their homes. It says that children often repeat the violence they see at home. In Primary Data Research Study on Customary Practices Leading to Gender Based Violence, 68 per cent shared that early marriages, Watta Satta and honour killings are the most prevalent customary practice that leads to gender based violence whereas 64 per cent of the time, cases of GBV linked with customary practices are not filed with police.

Research Study on Internal Trafficking of Women and Girls in Pakistan says that human trafficking is most likely to occur in areas where there is a concentration of illegal migrants or internally and externally displaced individuals owing to natural disasters or political and social conflicts. The factors that assist internal trafficking to thrive in Pakistan include criminal intent, financial gain, poverty, illiteracy, patriarchal views and injustices imbedded in deeply held beliefs and customs in context to women. GEP is AF's five-year USAID-supported grant-making program which aims to close the gender gap in Pakistan. Implemented with the collaboration of Asia Foundation, GEP strives to facilitate behavioural change, enable women to access information, resources and institutions, acquire control over their lives and improve societal attitudes towards women and their empowerment. Combating gender based violence is one of the four major objectives of GEP.

Speaking on this occasion, Agreement Officer Representative USAID Charles Cutshall said that in all societies, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological violence. He said the first step of solving the problem is to identify the source. "The information in these studies must be used to advocate for better support and laws for women." He said only youth can bring the desired change. "Findings and recommendation of these studies have not only helped to assess the enormity and patterns of different forms of GBV prevalent in Pakistanis society, but have also proved to be an invaluable asset for GEP sub-grant cycles 6 that is designed to offer seamless service to victims and survivors of violence. They will also help in the design of grant cycle 8 which is on access to justice," said Chief of Party GEP Simi Kamal.

The News - February 26, 2013

Gender Disparity in Job Ratio Expands Further

Social Policy and Development Centre launched two research studies under its Gender Research Program funded by Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pakistan. The Socio-Economic Impact of Floods in District Thatta: A gendered Analysis analyzes the socio-economic impact of the 2010 floods in the district Thatta by focusing on gendered indicators of the development such as education, health, households' structure, and changes in workload of men and women and post-flood stress symptoms experienced by the affectees. The report reveals that women's role and responsibilities increased and so did their sufferings. The research reports were launched at a ceremony held at local hotel on Friday, which attended by prominent personalities including Javed Jabar, SPDC Director Khalida Gaus, Kaiser Bengali, Muhammad Sabir, Haroon and others. The report stated that the increase in the economic and social vulnerabilities of women was accompanied by the reduction in employment opportunities. Closer look at male and female employment ratio shows that while male population ratio to employment remained more or less the same, women employment to population ratio decreased from 38 percent (prior to the flood) to 26 percent of working age population at the time of survey in 2012. As a result, gender disparity in the population to employment ratio further widened.

The report examines the impact of flood beyond the social, cultural and economic activities of women and men, and includes various indicators of their well-being. According to the respondents, some 98 percent of women and 91 percent of children faced severe food shortages after the flood as well as suffered from health related problems. As a part of coping strategy to deal with food insecurity, 86 percent of the affected families did not eat food for one full day and 85 percent reduced their food consumption either by reducing their intake or by reducing number of meals. A significant percentage (82.6) of the households ensured availability of food for children by reducing adult food consumption. The study concludes by providing a set of recommendations effectively deal with such disasters in future. The 2nd study Gender

Dimension of Rural Non-Farm Employment in Pakistan focuses on rural households in Pakistan and focuses on economic, social and behavioral aspects that affect non-farm work participation. The study evaluates gender differences in terms of patterns, determinants and extent of participation in rural non-farm income generation activities.

The report indicates that overall, about 32 to 35 percent of the rural male labor force is participating in non-farm wage employment sector in three provinces, whereas the percentage in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is quite high (48 percent). Conversely, 4 percent of the rural female labor force is reportedly working as wage employees in the non-farm economy. The incidence of female employment is highest in Punjab (5.37) province and the lowest (0.59) in Balochistan. About 3 percent of female wage employment each is observed in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Almost 83 and 63 percent of male and female wage employees respectively are working in private sector (manufacturing, construction, trade and services); whereas about 15 percent of wage workers, irrespective of gender are in public sector. Female employees are also reportedly working as domestic employees. Overall 8 and 3 percent of male and female rural labour force is respectively engaged in non-farm income generation activities through self-employment. Highest (11.45) incidence in rural male labour force is observed in Punjab, while highest (6.75) female incidence of rural self-employment is found in Sindh province. The incidences of self-employment activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan are minimal.

The study reveals that almost 90 percent of women, among those who reported non-farm work participation through self employment are involved in the production and sales of home-made products. In contrast, male participants are engaged in diverse activities such as wholesale and retail trade, personal and household services and transport. The survey estimates an incidence of 6 percent (2 percent girls and 9 percent boys) child labour participation in non-farm wage employment. Highest incidence is reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while surprisingly incidence is relatively low in Sindh and Balochistan. Keeping high poverty level in rural Sindh and Balochistan, it is plausible to argue that child (boys and girls) are working on-farm in these provinces. Careful analysis of differences in wages between men and women indicates that women are either underpaid or involved in low-paid (unskilled) rural non-farm activities. The gap is relatively low in case of public sector employment(male 13000 and female 7000 monthly earnings), while in others sectors average wages of male employees are three or four times higher. For example, in private sector female earns 2000 against 6600 earnings of male, in NOGs, Religious Institutions and Domestic sectors females' wages are much lower than males. However, the gap in wages is considerably narrow in case of agricultural labourers.

The measurement of women empowerment in household decision making process is not an easy and straightforward task. Nonetheless, with help of scoring system against series of decisions, an attempt has been made to do so. Out of 45 maximum score, participating women have obtained 26 points as against 16 in the case of non-participating wives. An average score is significantly higher for women who are participating in non-farm activities either through wage or through self employment. Participating women are more empowered, according to their perceptions and opinions in decisions related to economic, social and other aspects. The study also highlights some major constraints and obstacles in non-farm work participation. Surprisingly, cultural constraints or restrictions, as a barrier to enter into non-farm rural income generation activity, were recorded by very few female respondents. The study concludes with a set of policy recommendation for promotion of this sector.

The Nation - February 24, 2013

Gender Disparities Widen In Thatta after Floods: Report by Staff Reporter of Dawn

Gender disparities have further widened while some 98 per cent of women and 91 per cent of children have faced severe food shortages and suffered from various illnesses, says a report that examines the impact of 2010 floods beyond the social, cultural and economic activities of women and men in Thatta district and includes various indicators of well-being. The report titled *The Socio Economic Impact of Floods in District Thatta: A Gendered Analysis* was launched along with *Gender Dimensions of Rural Non-Farm Employment in Pakistan*, another study. The Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) has prepared both reports, the seventh and eighth in a series, under a Gender Research Programme funded by the Royal Norwegian embassy. "As part of coping strategy to deal with food insecurity, 86 per cent of the affected families in the district did not eat food for one full day and 85 per cent reduced their food consumption either by reducing their intake or by reducing number of meals. A significant percentage [82.6] of the households ensured availability of food for children by reducing adult food consumption," says the report.

During the post-floods period, homelessness, chronic and epidemic diseases caused by stagnant water, unhygienic conditions and a reduction in the number of trained health personnel led to health-related challenges. The data collected also shows that some 99pc of the female respondents and 60pc of the male respondents continue to live with psychological distress at the time of the survey. The three common reasons cited by female respondents were under-nourishment, absence of proper shelter and economic deprivation along with overall uncertainty. Around 500 households consisting of 3,000-plus family members of the affected talukas of Thatta district were contacted for the survey.

According to the report, the increase in economic and social vulnerabilities of women was accompanied by reduction in employment opportunities. A closer look at male and female employment ratio shows that while male population ratio to employment remained more or less the same, women employment to population ratio decreased from 38pc (prior to the flood) to 26pc of working age population at the time of survey in 2012. As a result, gender disparity in the population to employment ratio further widened. The survey indicates that the responsibility of household work was imposed disproportionately on women even before the floods, which further increased in the post-flood period and while the role and responsibilities of women increased in the household unpaid care work, their socialising, that was visiting relatives, also significantly decreased during the post-flood period.

It also clearly portrays worsening conditions, particularly in the sectors of education and health with the help of a comparison between 2008-9 and 2010-11. For example, the proportion of illiteracy rate, both among males and females has increased (6.4pc and 3pc, respectively) along with an increase in out-of-school boys and girls (12.9pc and 2.7pc, respectively). The proportion of flood victims with no immunisation and Tetanus Toxoid injection also increased by 3.3pc and 20.4pc, respectively. The key findings of the second report, which evaluates gender differences in terms of patterns, determinants and extent of participation in rural non-farm income generation activities, are: about 32 to 35pc of the rural male labour force is participating in non-farm wage employment sector in three provinces, whereas the percentage in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is quite high (48pc).

Conversely, 4pc of the rural female labour force is reportedly working as wage employees in the non-farm economy. The incidence of female employment is highest in Punjab (5.37) and the lowest (0.59) in Balochistan. About 3pc of female wage employment each was observed in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Almost 83pc and 63pc of male and female wage employees respectively are working in the private sector whereas 15pc of wage workers, irrespective of gender are in public sector. Female employees were also reportedly working as domestic

worker. The survey estimates an incidence of 6pc child labour participation in non-farm wage employment. Highest incidence was reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while surprisingly its incidence was relatively low in Sindh and Balochistan. Analysis of differences in wages between men and women indicates that women were either underpaid or involved in low-paid (unskilled) rural non-farm activities. “The study clearly indicates that distinct policies for accelerating the rate of participation should be made for each agro-climatic zone. These policies should consider the available agriculture endowments, human resources and extent of dynamism and commercialisation of agriculture,” the report suggests.

Dawn – February 23, 2013

Women in Politics & Government

Discrimination on Gender Basis

THIS is about awarding, on a gender basis, 20 marks to women for recruiting teachers in Sindh. This is injustice with talented youths. Men are head of their families and have to support them financially. I secured 88 marks in the test in 2008, but I was not appointed because girls were given 20 extra marks just on the basis of their gender. All girls of my union council and taluka were appointed all over Sindh. And the same policy is being followed in 2013. This is a World Bank project about education for all. It is, however, a pity that our government is adopting a strange policy of selection where candidates who have done masters will be left behind and girls who have merely passed their Intermediate examinations are recruited. The Sindh education department does not give preferences to more educated youths. Moreover, marks of the interview should also be announced while an impartial team from Islamabad or Karachi should conduct interviews instead of the local officials. Another bitter truth was that many candidates had changed their test centres to be able to use unfair means for they had friends there. Students who changed their test centres should be disqualified. All anti-corruption departments are requested to help in implementing merit in Sindh teachers’ recruitment. It was also requested to the Sindh government to implement merit in teachers’ selection.

Dawn - February 23, 2013

SECTARIAN CRISES & CONFLICT WATCH

Conflict & Sectarian Crisis

Incidents of Attacks in Sindh in the Month of January

Date	Incident	Killed	Injured
February 01, 2013	Twenty-eight Shia persons were killed and 46 others injured when a suicide bomber struck outside a mosque just after the Friday prayers in Pat Bazaar in Hangu Town of same District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	29	46
	Eleven members of the Kamarkhel Peace Committee were killed as clashes with LI militants intensified in the Lakai Sar, Madai and Tor Lagad areas of Takhtakai in Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency in FATA.	11	0
	Six militants were killed when a mortar shell fired by NATO and Afghan troops from across the border hit a bunker in Zeba Ghar area near Angoor Adda, some 60km from Wana, in South Waziristan Agency.	6	0
February 02, 2013	Thirty six persons were killed when TTP suicide bombers attacked an Army camp in Sarai Naurang area of Lakki Marwat District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. 13 soldiers and 12 militants were killed.	36	11
February 06, 2013	At least 10 militants were killed and several others were injured when jet fighters pounded their hideouts in the TTP stronghold of Mamozai town in Orakzai Agency of FATA.	10	∞
	Five persons were killed after six missiles hit a house in Tehsil Spain Warm of North Waziristan Agency.	5	0
February 07, 2013	SFs killed 12 militants in an air raid on militant hideouts in the Mamozai area of Orakzai Agency in FATA.	12	0
	Police killed three suspected militants who attacked a Police van near Yar Hussain village in Swabi District of KP.	3	0
February 08, 2013	A bomb blast killed 16 persons and injured 27 others in Kalaya, the capital of the Orakzai Agency in FATA.	16	27
	Nine militants were killed after jets bombed militants' hideout in Upper tehsil of the Orakzai Agency in FATA.	9	0
	Seven militants were killed and six others injured when the US drones fired six missiles and pounded two separate mud-built houses in Babar area of Ladha subdivision in South Waziristan Agency in FATA.	7	6
February 11, 2013	Three persons were killed and three others were injured in an armed attack at Haji Allah Buksh Welfare office within the limits of Ahsanabad Police Station in Karachi of Sindh.	3	3
	At least five AI militants were killed and four others were injured in clashes with TTP in Tirah valley of Khyber Agency in FATA.	5	4
	Four persons were killed and another was injured when unidentified persons opened fire on them in Palai area in Malakand District of KP.	4	1
February 12, 2013	Eight militants were killed and 15 others received injuries as the militants of TTP and AI clashed in Bhuttan area of Tirah valley in Khyber Agency of FATA.	8	15

Date	Incident	Killed	Injured
February 13, 2013	The on-going infighting between the TTP and AI killed 19 more militants from both sides in Drey Stani area of Tirah Valley in Khyber Agency of FATA.	19	0
February 14, 2013	At least 11 persons, including three Frontier Corpse (FC) personnel, two Policemen and one Levies man, were killed and over 23 persons were injured as a suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden vehicle into a security post in Spin Thall area of Hangu District.	12	23
	An explosion in the village of Hassanzo in Orakzai Agency of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) killed seven people and wounded 13.	7	13
February 15, 2013	At least eight militants were killed and two hideouts were destroyed in Army air strikes in the Mamozai area of Orakzai Agency in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).	8	0
February 16, 2013	A remote-controlled bomb targeting Shias killed 84 people including women and children and wounded more than 200 in Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan. Wazir Khan Nasir, senior Police officer in Quetta said. "It was a sectarian attack; the Shia community was the target.	84	200
February 17, 2013	10 Militants were killed when the jetfighters pounded their hideouts in Jandary Killay, Mir Qalamkhel and others adjoining localities in the TTP-controlled Mamozai tehsil area in Orakzai Agency of FATA.	10	0
	Four persons were killed near their houses in Kharadar area within the precincts of Kharadar Police Station.	4	0
February 18, 2013	An ASWJ cadre, identified as Haji Fayyaz (42), was shot dead by unidentified assailants near Farooq-e-Azam Chowk in Surjani town within the precincts of Sarjani Police Station. During the protests that followed, unidentified assailants attacked and injured five men, including three ASWJ cadres, outside Jamia Masjid Subhani in Burhan Bazaar of Patel Para. The three ASWJ activists, identified as Abdul Raheem (35), Shahrum (28) and Raju (25), died of injuries later.	4	2
	Four Security Force personnel and two civilian were killed while five persons, including a senior government official, were injured when two suicide bombers attacked the Khyber House, office-cum-residence of Khyber Agency's political agent in the Cantonment area of Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	8	5
February 19, 2013	SFs killed four suspected militants and arrested seven others accused of killing Shias, including an alleged mastermind of a bomb attack that killed 89 persons in Hazara town of Quetta (Quetta District), the provincial capital of Balochistan.	4	0
	Four shopkeepers, three of them brothers, were sprayed with bullets and killed, while the same numbers of their colleagues were injured when armed men opened fire at a mobile phone market of Quaidabad.	4	4
February 20, 2013	Nine militants were killed and several others injured in shelling and bombing by military jets in Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency in FATA.	9	NS
	At least eight terrorists were killed in air strikes in Upper tehsil of	8	0

Date	Incident	Killed	Injured
	Orakzai Agency.		
February 23, 2013	At least six labourers working on the Makran Coastal Highway, which links the area to Karachi, were lined up and shot dead by unidentified assailants in the Shadi Kaur area of Gwadar District of Balochistan.	6	0
February 24, 2013	The jet fighters bombarded the positions of TTP in Sorkas, Sra Vella and Dwatoy in Kukikhel area in Tirah Valley in Khyber Agency of FATA. At least, 10 militants were killed and eight injured in the air strikes.	10	8
	SFs encountered with the LI militants in Nala area during a search operation in various areas of Bara subdivision including Mandikas, Bachi Nehar and Yousaf Talab As a result of crossfire, five militants and two security personnel were killed while 10 soldiers and six militants were injured.	7	16
February 25, 2013	At least seven Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists were killed when Security Forces (SFs) pounded Kukikhel area of Tirah Valley in Bara tehsil (revenue unit) of Khyber Agency in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)	7	0
February 28, 2013	At least eight militants were killed and 12 suffered injuries as jet fighters pounded militant hideouts in Jendri and Shah Wali villages of Mamozai tehsil in Orakzai Agency of FATA. Sources said jets targeted militant positions in Jendri and Shah Wali villages of Mamozai tehsil at 4:50pm.	8	12
	The Balochistan Levies recovered three dead bodies from Gazba Road area on Chaman bypass in Qilla Abdullah District.	3	0

[Compiled from different dailies]

Reports on Conflict

Open-Ended Drone War in Pakistan to Continue: US

The United States will have to keep up an open-ended drone war against Al-Qaeda militants in Pakistan and elsewhere to prevent another terror attack on America, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. The assassination of Al-Qaeda figures in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia with unmanned, robotic aircraft has provoked widespread criticism from human rights groups and some US allies. The CIA “targeted killings” should be curtailed in coming years; there was still a need to continue the drone strikes more than a decade since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Before taking over as defense secretary, Panetta oversaw a dramatic increase in drone raids in Pakistan as head of the CIA from 2009-2011. The CIA drone bombing raids, by Predator and Reaper aircraft armed with Hellfire missiles, have caused an unknown number of civilian casualties and prompted accusations that Washington is carrying out extra judicial killings in the shadows with no genuine oversight by courts or lawmakers. Panetta, who as CIA director presided over the successful raid that killed al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden, said the campaign still needed to be regularly reviewed but did not say he favoured turning over the spy agency’s drone war to the military. Some critics have called for giving the US military authority over the drone air strikes, which would require openly reporting every operation. The right standards that we’re abiding by the laws of this country, that we’re doing it in a way that hopefully can be a little

more transparent with the American people. But he said “to protect this country” it was not enough to have operations carried out openly by the military.

Daily Times - February 03, 2013

Outgoing Year Saw 2, 000 Killed In Karachi: Sindh Police, HRC of Pakistan

ECONOMIC WATCH**Facts & Figures****PR Generates Rs 1.4 Billion Revenue in 1st Half of FY13**

The government has taken appropriate measures to control losses of Pakistan Railways by putting it on self-sustained bases due to which PR generated revenue of Rs 1.40 billion from July to December of fiscal year 2012-13, which is over and above the revenue generated during the corresponding period of previous financial year. An official in the Ministry of PR said during the last four years the PR was able to save an amount of approximately Rs. 4 billion per annum. It was hoped that this saving would continue during the next two financial years. The Ministry of PR registered an overdraft of Rs 4.6 billion with State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) during the fiscal year 2009-10, but after that no overdraft has been taken so far in two-and-a-half-year. The official further said that the subsidy, which covered the expenditures of salary, pension, fuel, electricity, materials etc prior to FY 2011-12, is now being taken to defray the expenses of salary and pension only. The other operating expenses are being met out of railways revenue receipts. Foreign debt servicing has partially been taken over by Economic Affairs Division and for the remaining portion no deduction at source is being made by the Finance Division. Train operations are presently being run within generated revenue as only economically viable trains are being run. Only the burden of salary and pension is being provided by the federal government, the officials maintained.

The government has also taken various steps to control losses of PR. The official said for meeting the present crises, PR is procuring up to 275 new locomotives and repairing old ones through various sources. Railways has involved private sector to participate in different activities of PR like rehabilitation of ageing locomotives, development of dry ports, commercial management of passenger trains etc. Through track access regime, private sector has been invited to operate freight trains on PR infrastructure on payment of track access charges to PR. The idle capacity available with PR will be utilised and additional revenue for PR will also be generated. Doubling of track between Karachi and Lahore will be completed by December 2013, providing additional capacity to run more trains, the officials maintained. Installation of modern signaling system is in progress, which will facilitate in smooth train operations. About main reasons of losses to PR, the official said less availability of locomotives due to deferred maintenance of old fleet on account of paucity of funds has badly affected passenger and freight train operations, the main source of earning for PR. PR is a public service entity and does not operate purely on commercial lines. It has to keep operative some un-remunerative and un-economical routes in larger public interest. Increase in salaries of government employees, and relief provided to pensioners has added to the financial burden. Increase in fuel, gas and electricity cost has also contributed to rising deficit. Damages to railways assets worth Rs 6.73 billion due to floods of FY 2010-11 is another contributory reason causing losses.

Daily Times - February 03, 2013

Pakistan 31st Biggest Black Market

Pakistan stands 31st out of 91 countries in the world with more than \$6 billion black market value, according to Havocscope. The website listed the countries 'by their estimated black market crime value'. According to the website, Havocscope Black Market Value is the estimated

value of the global black market. This figure is determined by combining the total value of 52 black market products and activities with the total value of the black market activity in 91 countries. World crime statistics and values are gathered from law enforcement and security agencies, international organisations, industry lawyers and representatives, and news articles.

The website stated that Pakistan black market's estimated value is \$6.12 billion per year with cocaine price in Pakistan at \$118.7 per gramme; heroin price \$3.0 per gramme; price paid to human smugglers \$22,000; and human traffickers' price is \$342. Similarly, book piracy in Pakistan is estimated at \$55 million; counterfeiting \$358 million; cigarette smuggling \$116 million; drug trafficking \$4.8 billion; and gas and oil smuggling is estimated at \$66 million. Havocscope further stated that heroin trafficking in Pakistan is hovering around \$1.2 billion; illegal logging \$782 million; music piracy \$25 million; and software piracy stands at \$278 million. It is worth adding that Pakistan has bad record against Iraq despite the fact that Iraq is broken by external and internal wars for the last decade. It is worrisome that even Iraq has better security situation than Pakistan regarding black market. On the other hand, India stands 18th out of 91 countries in the world with the black market estimated value of \$16.84 billion, more than double as compared to Pakistan. Yet, India is better in many areas than Pakistan considering mentioned security risks. The drug trafficking figures of Pakistan are quite alarming as they are much higher against Indian figures. To the horror of the government, Pakistan has more than double drug trafficking rates from India despite much low population figures.

Meanwhile, India's estimated value in prostitution is \$8.4 billion while the website did not show any figures regarding this sector in Pakistan. It doesn't mean that prostitution is not practiced in Pakistan, but the fact is that prostitution is included in un-reported crimes in Pakistan due to which international monitoring institutions face problems in collecting data. The credibility of these statistics is not questionable because Havocscope's website collects data from credible public sources including newspapers, government reports, and academic journals. Every single data point is listed with its original source. It is to be noted that corruption and bribery, money laundering and organised crimes are not included in the Havocscope black market value because the money involved in these activities is usually generated from other illicit activities that are already included in the value, the website mentioned. Hvocscopoe claimed, "As the premier global provider of information on black market activities, the World Economic Forum used our data in its 2011 Global Risks Report to highlight the issue of illicit trade. In 2012, the Council on Foreign Relations utilised our work when researching the issue of transnational crime."

Daily Times - February 20, 2013

CPI Inflation Rises By 8.1 Per Cent in January

The rate of inflation in Pakistan rose in the month of January 2013, though it remained within single digits, as the benchmark consumer price index clocked in an increase of 8.1 per cent in last month compared to the same period the previous year. According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) has recorded at 8.1 per cent during the month of January compared to the same month of the preceding year. Rate of inflation has started increasing from last few months, as it was 7.9 per cent in December 2012 and 6.9 per cent in November 2012. Discount rate might witness an upward revision by 50 basis points, thereby increasing to 10 percent from the existing 9.5 percent mainly due to an increasing trend in core inflation in the upcoming monetary policy, which is to be announced on February 8. Earlier, due to decline in inflation rate, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has reduced interest rate by 50 basis points to 9.5 percent with effect from 17

December 2012. The government has successfully kept the inflation rate in single digit figure during the first seven months (July-January) of the ongoing financial year 2012-13, as it recorded at 8.28 per cent in period under review against corresponding period last year. This broad-based deceleration in inflation is now expected to keep the average inflation for the fiscal year 2012-13 below the 9.5 per cent target for the year. Meanwhile, Sensitive Price Index (SPI) based inflation surged by 7.71 per cent and Wholesale Price Indicator (WPI) based inflation increased by 8.03 per cent during July-January period of the ongoing financial year 2012-13. Meanwhile, according to the PBS figures, CPI based inflation increased by 1.7 per cent in January 2013 against December.

The break-up of CPI-based general inflation (8.07 per cent in January 2013 over January 2012) showed that food and non-alcoholic beverages prices have gone up by 7.62 per cent, alcoholic beverages and tobacco prices have increased by 18.24 per cent, clothing and footwear prices soared by 15.27 per cent, housing water, electricity and gas fuels, 3.59 per cent, health care charges went up by, 13.69 per cent, transportation charges, 10.89 per cent, communication charges 5.15 per cent, recreation and culture charges went up by 17.59 per cent, education charges, 9.91 per cent and restaurants and hotel charges by 10.39 per cent and miscellaneous 10.49 per cent in January 2013 against the same month of the preceding year 2012.

Meanwhile, according to the PBS figures, price of tomatoes has increased by 61.12 per cent in the month of January against December, price of wheat enhanced by 11.32 per cent, price of chicken went up by 10.84 per cent, price of wheat flour surged by 9.69 per cent, price of wheat products increased by 8.21 per cent, rice price surged by 3.38 per cent, pulse masoor price increased by 2.56 per cent, fish price enhanced by 2.52 per cent, price of pulse moong went up by 2.39 per cent and besan price surged by 1.85 per cent in January 2013 as compare to December. Similarly, price of motor fuel increased by 7.02 per cent, price of gas enhanced by 6.13 per cent, price of woolen readymade garments by 4.16 per cent, price of communication and apparatus went up by 3.95 per cent, firewood whole, 2.35 per cent, house rent up by 2.04 per cent, medical equipment, 1.28 per cent, construction wage rates, 1.15 per cent, newspaper, 1.07 per cent, tailoring, 1.05 per cent and woolen cloth 1.02 per cent in January 2013 compared with the month of Dec 2012. However, according to the PBS figures, price of potatoes decreased 14.55 per cent, price of onions down by 7.62 per cent, prices of spices went down by 3.43 per cent, prices of fresh vegetables reduce by 2.45 per cent, price of vegetable ghee down by 0.89 per cent, fresh fruits prices decreased by 0.57 per cent each in January 2013 against in December.

The Nation - February 02, 2013

Breaking Downward Streak: Inflation Rebounds; Clocks In At 8.1% for January

After setting up new lows in recent months, inflation picked up for the second successive month clocking in at 8.1% for January, raising prospects for an increase in interest rates by the State Bank of Pakistan in its next monetary policy announcement due on February 8. The inflation rate, measured by the consumer price index (CPI), rose to 8.1% in January over the corresponding month of the preceding year, inflation bulletin released on Friday by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics shows. In November 2012, inflation – the rate of increase in prices of commodities – slowed down to 6.93%, the lowest level achieved in five years. However, post-November inflation rebounded, precisely according to the central bank's and the International Monetary Fund's expectations. Average inflation during the first seven months, July to January, of the fiscal year 2012-13 climbed to 8.3%, according to the data from PBS. The continuous

increase in the CPI proves the claims of the government of achieving the macroeconomic objective of price stability wrong.

The experts believe that it will make sense for the SBP to increase the interest rates in its monetary policy statement, if it takes the decision by ignoring political advice, due to the continuous rise in inflation particularly core inflation – non-food and non-energy inflation – and the monetary aggregates. The core inflation is sticking too close to double digits for comfort, hitting 9.9% in January, and climbing for the second consecutive month. Officials say the reduction in discount rates did not bring an end to falling investments and stopped the economy from shrinking. Moreover, there was no credible evidence available that could suggest that investment was picking up due to monetary easing – injecting money into the system. Similarly, credit figures to the private sector was also discouraging as till January 18 the figure stood at a meagre Rs 95 billion against Rs 210 billion in the same period of the last year. Earlier, The SBP warned that due to increasing government borrowing, there is little credit available for the private sector to grow. After cutting interest rates, the only positive signs emerged in the real estate sector and the stock market that the analysts believe was more about profit taking rather than improvements in fundamentals of the economy.

Due to significant reduction in interest rates, the Directorate of National Saving Schemes had to reduce the saving rates. Investors pulled their money out of the national saving schemes and started investing in real estate and the equity market. The boom in equity market was also because of an amnesty scheme that the government offered last year. The government's loose fiscal policy was also contributing to inflation, according to the officials. During the first six months of fiscal 2013, the budget deficit remained at 2.8% of the gross domestic product (GDP) despite receipts of \$1.9 billion from the United States on account of the coalition support fund (CSF). The CSF receipts did reduce the budgetary borrowings from the central bank but borrowings by government from commercial banks continued unabatedly. Till January 18, the government had borrowed Rs771 billion from the commercial banks for budget financing. In return, the central bank was injecting money in the system to support the government's borrowings. In its recent assessment of Pakistan's economy, the IMF observed that monetary and exchange rate policy needs to better contain inflation and external risks. It noted that the achievement of durably lower inflation will require more prudent monetary policy, accompanied by substantial fiscal adjustment to ease the government's funding requirement, which has been driving inflation. The IMF said that inflation in Pakistan will return to double digits by the end of fiscal year 2012-13.

The Express Tribune - February 02, 2013

International Funding Institutes (IFIs)

Bring Deficit Down, Raise Power Tariff, ADB Tells Pakistan

Terming macroeconomic instability, energy crisis and declining investment as major challenges for Pakistan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has said that Pakistan would have to bring down its budget deficit for achieving macroeconomic stability. For resolving the monster of energy crisis, Pakistan will have to ensure change in energy mix and raise electricity tariff, said ADB Country Director Dr Werner E Liepach. He said no financial institution could invest into circular debt because it had re-emerged again. Pakistan will have to resolve the issue of circular debt if it wanted to lure investment in the energy sector, he maintained. He said Pakistan is facing a very difficult situation mainly because of the energy crisis and declining foreign

investments. He said the Bank could finance the Bhasha Dam provided requirements of consortium were met in an effective manner. Rune Storem said a shale gas extraction company may pay the price of water but the relevant question is whether a farmer has the capacity to pay. He hoped that a water sector report approved by the cabinet last week will also help trigger a wider debate over the price of water and its efficient use. He said water requirements for shale gas extraction were very large and one thing which was never done in Pakistan was the value of water that had to be measured now before actually implementing the policy. He said fracking technology was being used in shale gas extraction that consumed tremendous amount of water besides huge requirements of research and development funds. “Being a water deficient country, Pakistan should use water efficient technology as shale gas water requirements are part of the overall equation”, he added.

On the use of Thar Coal in Jamshoro power plant, Rune said in this case too, economic analysis before making a choice between the Thar Coal and imported coal was missing. “Why fuel should be domestic when it is expensive,” he left the question for the nation to ponder over. The issue was not a choice between imported and domestic coal but between cost effectiveness versus expensive and between environment degradation and cleanliness,” he added. He said to produce equal amount of electricity, the indigenous lignite coal requirements were four times more than the requirement of the imported bitumen, which is very cost effective. He said the reserves of Thar Coal were far away from the Jamshoro power plant, which will also increase cost of transportation due to four-times more requirement in addition to damaging roads. Timing is an essence as the country is facing a serious energy crisis and decisions should be taken to address the crisis immediately,” he said while highlighting that Thar Coal’s extraction was yet to start. He said due to gravity of the situation, the country needed immediate solutions to resolve the energy crisis. The ADB’s findings show that by converting thermal-based Jamshoro power plant to coal, the country could save \$500 million annually. Liepach said the ADB will give \$900 million for power sector expansion during the next two years while urging the government to introduce much-needed reforms necessary for rehabilitation of the energy sector.

The News - February 28, 2013

‘Better’ Ways to Meet Pakistan’s Energy Needs than Pak-Iran Gas Deal: US

The United States says there are “better and more cost-effective” ways for Pakistan to address its energy needs than projects like the Pak-Iran gas pipeline deal. Pakistan has significant energy needs and requirements, but there are other long-term solutions to Pakistan’s energy needs that we would believe would have better potential for success and would better meet Pakistan’s needs than spending scarce resources on projects like this, said by State Department Spokesperson Victoria Nuland. She was responding to a question about press reports that Pakistan would face US sanctions if it went ahead with the Pak-Iran pipeline project. The United States is involved in many ways to help Pakistan address its energy needs, including ones that will add some 900 megawatts of power to the grid by 2013, enough power to supply an estimated 2 million households. These include renovating the power plant at Tarbela and the Mangla Dams, modernizing the thermal power plant at Guddu and Jamshoro, Muzaffargarh and building new plants at Satpara and the Gomal Dam. When specifically asked if the proposed gas pipeline with Pakistan come under the sanctionable items under the UN sanctions and US Lawsons which Nuland said she is not in a position to make that kind of an assessment but there are more better, secure and cost-efficient ways for Pakistan to get its power.

Dawn – February 22, 2013

DEVELOPMENT WATCH

Government's Role in Development Programmes

Punjab Government Okays Rs 150bn Development Funds: Punjab

Health Projects

Research-Based Policymaking: Public Health Systems Are Challenged By Urban Migration

For a densely populated city like Karachi, where 45 per cent of residents are living in squatter settlements, and where people from all parts of the country come to settle every day, policymakers need to give public health some serious thought. Experts made the observation during the “Community Health Sciences Research Day” of the Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH) on Friday. They also lamented that authorities had never given public health its due importance, and that the country still lacked a concrete healthcare policy. They also highlighted the need for policymakers to make informed decisions based on research. Over 100 papers were presented on the occasion. They were based on four main research themes: health systems and public healthcare development, women’s health and empowerment, environmental and occupational health, and chronic disease and nutrition. “We want policymakers to review the present healthcare system, and make the required changes based on systems research, rather than clinical research,” said Dr Imtiaz Jehan, associate professor at the community health sciences department at AKUH. If a balance is achieved between these two types of research, then the cost of healthcare can be brought down and a high yield of healthcare services obtained as well. There should be a direct link between research and policymaking, stressed Dr Jehan.

Dr Fauziah Rabbani, chairperson of AKUH’s community health sciences department, observed that a healthy population directly contributed to a country’s economy. Coming back to the healthcare system in Pakistan, she lamented that “access to healthcare is dismal, and there is no coherent or concise healthcare policy”. The experts also noted that there was an increased focus on curative rather than preventive healthcare in the country. Dr Agha Xaher Gul, a researcher at the AKUH’s Urban Health Programme, observed that there was a need to overcome the “dependency syndrome,” so that people realise that they were themselves responsible for their health. “Every day we have more and more people migrating to cities, but this mass urbanisation has not come without its share of problems.” He added that many migrants held a “rural” mindset when it came to taking care of the health of their women and children. Dr Rabbani told the audience that the disorganised rise in the urban population did not bode well for public health systems in these cities, which were already being stretched thin by their own residents.

The Express Tribune - February 23, 2013

Health Minister Says Vaccination Teams Were Not Under His Control

Lawmakers from the opposition as well as the treasury benches in the Sindh Assembly for once let go of their political differences as they united in their criticism of the provincial health

department, which has failed to control the measles outbreak. The health minister's response to the criticism was, however, equally unusual. Dr Sagheer Ahmed said that when the measles outbreak was first reported, the health department had nothing to do with the vaccination process in the province. He added that political appointees to the vaccination programme, Peoples Primary Health Initiates (PPHI), were also not coordinating with the health department during the initial stages. During the Sindh Assembly session on Tuesday, Pakistan Muslim League-Functional's (PML-F) Nusrat Seher Abbasi moved an adjournment motion on the outbreak. However, Ahmed's explanation seem to have fallen on deaf ears, as lawmakers belonging to the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party, Sassui Palijo, Humera Alwani and Bachal Shah, roundly criticised the health department for failing to control the outbreak.

MPA Abbasi pointed out that the "health department claimed that everything is fine, but the adviser to the chief minister on relief [Haleem Adil Sheikh] exposed what is happening behind the scenes and how the health department is not performing its duty." Culture minister Sassui Palijo added that if the health department had taken proper measures to control the outbreak, then many lives could have been saved. Dr Ahmed explained that the health department had only recently taken control over the PPHI. "We have removed some negligent officials, and vaccination drives are now going on all over the province," he said. Ahmed added that malnutrition was a major factor for the spread of the measles outbreak. "Around eight districts of upper Sindh have been affected by the disease, where 219 cases have been reported," he said, while disputing statistics presented by other lawmakers. "Every child's death cannot be attributed to measles," the health minister claimed. He admitted, nevertheless, that additional measures were needed to get the situation under control. Female literacy also came up for discussion during Tuesday's Sindh Assembly session. MPA Anwar Mahar requested the Sindh government take measures to ensure that the female literacy rate in the province is brought up to at least 80 per cent by 2015. However, Jam Tamachi Unar, chairperson of the provincial public accounts committee, said that the target was impossible to meet, as the "teaching staff in Sindh has become a mafia, and teachers are reluctant to teach."

The Express Tribune - February 13, 2013

Education Projects

Bill Passed: Free Education for All Children Up To 16 Years

Sindh became the first province to make a law providing free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of five and 16 years. Adopting the 'Sindh Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education 2013' bill, the education minister Pir Mazharul Haq was proud that Sindh has once again taken the lead in implementing Article 25-A of the Constitution, which ensures that education, remains a fundamental right of every child. According to the law, all children whose parents cannot afford to pay for education, or have become victims of terrorism shall be enrolled for free in private schools, where they will form 10 per cent of the total class. Every school will now have to constitute a management committee of government representatives, teachers and school principals to ensure that the policy is implemented. Both the school management and the parents can be fined or imprisoned if the law is not followed, according to the bill. These children would also be exempted from paying any extra fee or expenses that may prevent them from pursuing secondary education.

In order to help the students, the government will also establish a system of grants-in-aid to support the school where these children are enrolled. In the past five years, Sindh has managed

to raise literacy rates by 10 per cent, the education minister told the house. He pointed out that even Ethiopia, Somalia and other under developed countries are spending more on education than Pakistan. Congratulating the government on this remarkable bill, Muttahida Qaumi Movement's parliamentary leader Syed Sardar Ahmed stressed that it should be implemented properly. Ahmed, who served as a senior bureaucrat for years, recalled that there used to be good quality education in public sector schools before Partition because access to education was compulsory for all. With the passage of time, however, education levels fell and today, Pakistan stands at 143 out of 180 countries. Even the opposition leaders appreciated the move. National Peoples Party's Arif Jatoi suggested the government gives more incentives, stipends and funds to private schools so that the law takes effect soon. Pakistan Muslim League-Functional's Marvi Rashdi also felt that the bill will reduce the gap between the education systems for the rich and the poor. Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Nawab Taimour Talpur suggested that the right of free education should include transgenders as well. Later, Haq read the whole bill at which all the lawmakers thumped their desks and passed it unanimously.

The assembly also passed joint resolutions recommending the provincial government approach the Punjab government to register cases against police officials who had tortured the deputy parliamentarian of the PPP Shaukat Basra. Meanwhile, four other bills including ones on Sindh Protection of Breast Feeding and Child Nutrition, Education City 2012, Sindh Arms Bill 2013 and Hyderabad Institute of Arts, Science and technology 2013 were deferred. The session has been adjourned till today, when the Sindh IGP Fayyaz Leghari will explain Karachi's violence to the legislators in an in-camera briefing.

The Express Tribune - February 14, 2013

ENERGY CRISIS

Government's Role in Energy Crisis

ADB, Punjab Sign MoU for Energy Sector Cooperation

A MoU was signed between Punjab government and Asian Development Bank (ADB) under public-private partnership for promotion of cooperation in energy sector. Under the MoU, collaboration will be made in energy-related projects for alternative water, coal and other energy sources. The energy secretary signed the MoU on behalf of the Punjab government while a representative of Asian Development Bank signed the document on behalf of the bank. The ceremony was attended by Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, Special Assistant Zaeem Hussain Qadri, planning and development chairman, information secretary and Country Director of Asian Development Bank Pakistan Resident Mission Warner Liepach and other representatives. Under the MoU, Punjab government and ADB would identify various energy projects and, after making initial review, would extend cooperation to each other. In the first phase, Punjab government will not be liable to pay any fee while in the second phase, complete cooperation would be extended by ADB under transaction advisory service agreement with regard to technical, financial, legal, commercial and other aspects of the project, besides preparing a financial structure of the project. In the third phase, a fund will be established, under a separate transaction advisory services agreement, and a fund manager would be selected. Shahbaz Sharif said cooperation of ADB in energy-related projects was a significant development.

The News - February 28, 2013

Ministry Warns Of Severe Energy Crisis

Warning of a severe energy crisis in summer, the Ministry of Water and Power has informed a special sub-committee of parliament that energy crisis has become a national security issue that should be given the kind of attention the country's security demands. At a meeting of the committee, the ministry conceded that despite injection of huge funds the performance of power sector had not improved. Headed by Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the sub-committee was formed to make specific recommendations for resolving of the power crisis, circular debt and non-recoveries and theft. Musaddiq Khan, a joint secretary in the ministry and Managing Director of National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC), told the committee that power shortage during the coming summer was anticipated to be quite serious.

Arshad Mirza, an additional secretary in the ministry, said subsidy in power sector was a serious issue. He recommended limiting the subsidy only to poor domestic consumers. He opposed subsidy for all sectors of economy, bureaucrats and parliamentarians. Mr Abbasi said the government had provided over Rs 190 billion to the power sector in seven months and the amount would reach Rs 350 billion by the end of the year. Subsidies in power sector had gone beyond the expenditure on running the entire federal government and soon it would surpass the defence budget.

According to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority, privatisation of distribution companies through initial public offering was the only solution to improve the condition of power companies in view of the involvement of independent shareholders and monitoring by

the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan. Musaddiq Khan said the basic problem with distribution companies was political interference, adding that power crisis could be overcome in two to three months by appointing “right person for the right job”. He said national interests were compromised in the privatisation of Karachi Electric Supply Company. The experiment of privatisation could not be successful in a monopolised environment, he said, adding that it could succeed only in a competitive environment where the management was removed when it failed to achieve targets. When Mr Abbasi asked if the power sector had shown any improvement after the investment of Rs350-400 billion per year, Mr Mirza said there was no improvement in practical terms even though the ministry was now focusing on administrative corrections.

Joint Secretary Zargham Eshaq Khan said almost all sectors of economy domestic, commercial, industrial and agriculture were being provided subsidy in power sector the total impact of which had now been estimated at Rs 215.632 billion for the current year. He said domestic consumers were being provided about Rs 1.80 per unit subsidy that worked out at Rs 57.5 billion. Commercial consumers enjoyed Rs 2.09 per unit subsidy involving a financial impact of Rs 10.44 billion while industrial consumers were getting Rs 1.10 per unit subsidy involving a total amount of Rs 20.88 billion. Agriculture consumers on an average enjoyed a subsidy of Rs 2.57 per unit or Rs 12.352 billion. Mr Abbasi said some private producers were interested in selling electricity directly to consumers but government rules did not allow them to do so.

Dawn - February 19, 2013

All Parties Have an Energy Plan, but None Is Seeking a Mandate

Every major political party in Pakistan is claiming to have a plan to address the energy crisis, but none of them are using the 2013 election campaign to secure a mandate from the voters about the tough reforms that will be necessary to fix the biggest problem crippling the economy. In the upcoming elections, the energy crisis is the foremost issues on the voters' minds, and all three major political parties – the incumbent Pakistan Peoples Party, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz, and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf – have put out plans of what they think will fix the problem. But the parties seem reluctant to tell the voters just how hard it will be or how long it will take. There are many similarities between the three plans, since by now the policy cognoscenti of every political party have to agree on the reality of what needs to be done: deregulation, privatisation of large parts of the energy chain, and depoliticised management of the few parts of the energy chain that remain within government control. And at some level, each party also realises that without fixing energy, they have no hope in hell of accomplishing anything in their five years in office, since they will be too busy dealing with either the political or the financial consequences of not having done so.

PTI: The most detailed plan currently available is that of the PTI, which is the brainchild of the party's policy wizard Asad Umar, the former CEO of Engro Corporation and a man who has been intimately familiar with the evolution of the Pakistani energy sector for the past decade. Umar favours privatisation and deregulation of many parts of the energy chain in principle. He even has a preference for exactly how it should start.

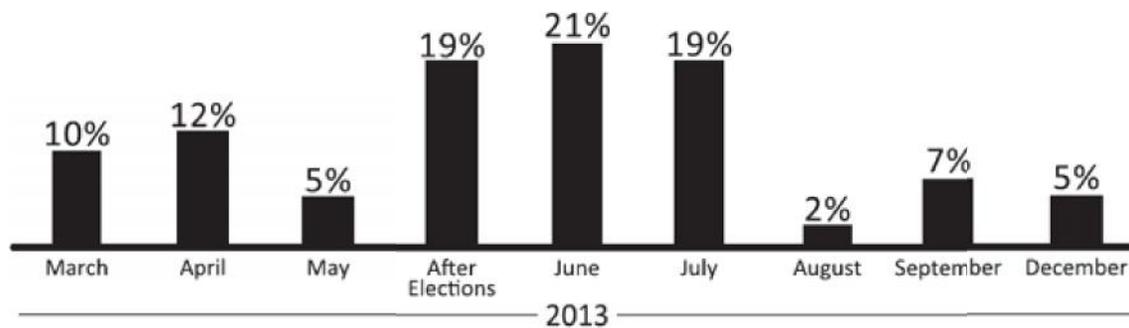
PPPP: The ruling PPP has the advantage of currently being in government, and thus having access to all of the data that has been compiled by the ministries of petroleum and power. It also has more detailed access to the studies produced by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank on the subject. So it is no surprise that the PPP does – at least in theory – support deregulation, privatisation, and independent management. The problem with the PPP, however, is that they have the least credibility on the matter. Having spent five years in office, their case

as the party best equipped to make the changes appears weak at first glance. There is, however, the argument that in its first term, the PPP did not expect to last a full term in office. Now that it knows that is possible – and has the benefit of experience in government – is the party most prepared to hit the ground running on the day after the elections. Whether or not voters believe that to be a strong argument is up to the voters to decide.

PML-N: The PML-N's policy appears to rely mostly on privatisation, with the party favouring the privatisation of the state-owned power distribution companies. The plan does have merit, but does not adequately address questions of energy sector regulation. Would the government, for instance, still set prices for oil, gas and electricity? Or would that be done by private companies?

Timing of re-entry into IMF programme

(percentage of respondents)



The PML-N has a well-deserved reputation as being a pro-business party. But pro-business does not mean the same thing as pro-free markets. The two are often at odds, and the PML-N has yet to clarify which side it will fall on.

The Express Tribune - February 18, 2013

Worst-Ever Crisis Predicted: Ministry Proposes 16 Percent Raise in Power Tariff

Amid predictions of the worst-ever power crisis in the country during coming summer, Ministry of Water and Power has proposed increase in power tariff by 16 percent. "The country's energy security is now equal to national security. May Allah have mercy on us? Next summer will be worse," said an official of Water and Power in a briefing to a panel of National Assembly chaired by Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. The panel appreciated the role of National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) for determination of real tariff for Discos but criticised the government for not passing it on to the consumers especially those who can afford. A Joint Secretary of Water and Power, Zargham Eshaq Khan presented a new tariff mechanism and suggested that minimum average tariff should be increased to Rs 10.91 per unit from Rs 8.81 per unit. Presently, average tariff is Rs 11.91 per unit but the government is charging at the rate of Rs 8.81 per unit. This implies that the government is extending Rs 3.10 per unit subsidy to the consumers which include domestic, commercial and industrial. The amount of subsidy has been calculated at Rs 215.622 billion to the consumers per annum with the prevalent tariff.

"If the minimum average tariff is increased to Rs 10.21 per unit from Rs 8.81 per unit, the amount of subsidy will be reduced to Rs 114.656 billion per annum and per unit subsidy will be Rs 1.70 per unit instead of Rs 3.10 per unit," Zargham added. He supported complete elimination of subsidy for the big domestic consumers, besides commercial and industrial

sector. He said Nepra's determined tariff for the consumers using upto 50 units per months is Rs 3 per unit whereas Discos are charging Rs 2 per unit and extending subsidy of Rs 2.246 billion. Likewise subsidy on consumers using 1-100 units per month is Rs 4 billion as government is charging Rs 5.79 per unit. The amount of subsidy for consumers using 101-300 units is Rs 55 billion per month as the government is charging Rs 8.11 per unit against determined tariff of Rs 13.05 per unit.

He said the government has paid Rs 199 billion subsidy in seven months of current fiscal year. He, however, did not mention how much financial loss companies are facing in the shape of generation, transmission and distribution loss, which are at 40 per cent of total generation. "We are generating 99,000 GwH of electricity but only 70,000 GwH is billed to the consumers," he confided. A representative of Nepra suggested that the government should stop charity in the name of subsidy to the consumers or allocate sufficient amount in the budget for this purpose so that the issue of circular debt may not arise. He argued that the government should go far privatisation of power sector or at least listing of shares of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco). This idea was opposed by the Ministry of Water and Power.

Additional Secretary Water and Power agreed to the plan of the committee saying that subsidy should be targeted, adding that the Ministry will formulate policies but there should be political will to implement those policies. He said that the Ministry of Water and Power is launching energy conservation campaign and area of Faisalabad Electric Power Company (Fesco) is being taken as a model. The committee members felt that the government including the Ministry of Water and Power is not serious in resolving power crisis and a couple of officials present in the meeting did not disagree with the committee's observation. Managing Director, National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) proposed that Nepra should determine upfront tariff for hydel power projects so that new investment may be attracted for new projects. He said the government should also work on small hydel power projects. Priority should be given to power sector in allocation of shale gas.

He also pointed out that there are middlemen who get approval of tariffs and other documents from the concerned departments but they do not find investors and due to this number of projects have been delayed. He suggested that this practice should be discouraged, adding that the government should provide one window facility to the investors. He requested the committee to get approval of upfront tariff for hydel power projects at a tariff of 9 cents per unit and those investors who want separate tariff should be allowed to file separate application with the Nepra. Chairman of the Committee recommended that private sector should be allowed to have direct power sale purchase agreement with the consumers without wheeling charges. The officials of Nepra however, argued that the regulator has announced incentives for the hydel power projects but investors and lenders are shy to come to Pakistan due to unresolved issue of inter circular debt. The representative of Alternate Energy Development Board (AEDB) suggested that the government should also focus on alternative energy sources like wind and solar as short term measure. Chairman of the Committee, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that the government should give indirect subsidy to consumers by supporting alternative energy resources instead of direct subsidy which also benefits to the rich.

The Business Recorder - February 19, 2013

CM For Alternative Resources to End Energy Crisis

Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has said Kalabagh Dam should be constructed only when there is a consensus of all the four provinces as it has now become a political issue.

Addressing inaugural ceremony of Center for Energy Research and Development at Kala Shah Kaku (KSK) Campus of the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) here Saturday he said there was a need to immediately start work on alternative resources of power generation so as to get rid of energy crisis. He said unfortunately the rulers of Islamabad have wasted five precious years of the country due to which it has plunged in darkness. UET Vice Chancellor Lt-Gen (r) Muhammad Akram Khan, Special Assistant to CM Zaeem Hussain Qadri, Assembly Members Mian Javed Latif, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Rana Afzaal, Khurram Gulfam, Ch Ghulam Nabi, Pir Ashraf Rasool, Rana Tanveer Nasir, Irfan Dogar, Waseem Qadir, Secretary Energy, RPO Sheikhpura, DCO Sheikhpura, faculty members, and a large number of students attended.

The chief minister said Pakistan had become a hostage to darkness and its industrial sector was facing a slow death. He said Bhasha and other dams were good long term projects but side by side work on hydle option should be started as energy crisis promoted unemployment and poverty which were also linked with extremism and terrorism. He said Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with natural resources and energy could also be generated through husk of rice. According to him, 2,500 megawatts of power could be produced if the bagasse of 74 sugar mills had been used by the federal government. He observed solar energy was also very important and there were great opportunities of generation of power with solar energy in Cholistan and other districts of south Punjab. Shahbaz Sharif said it was unfortunate that Punjab government had to import solar channels from China for its Ujala programme as no company produced solar penal in Pakistan. He said Germany where solar power was extremely low produced 22,000 megawatts solar energy whereas Pakistan was much behind in this field despite having sunlight throughout the year. He also said Thar had the largest reserves of coal while coal was also available in Chaghai and Punjab which could be used for generation of power.

The News - February 10, 2013

Crippling Energy Crisis

The torture of loadshedding has again hit every one, eight hours in cities and twice as much in rural areas in mid winter. It would be further maximized in the coming summer. The PPP's five years rule has given us the gift of prolonged loadshedding that has paralyzed all industrial, educational and social activities for a large part of the day. The progress of a country is measured by the rate of power used by it, the shortage of which retarded our progress, all due to lack of interest and planning by our rulers. The failure to build a single hydroelectric dam for the last four decades has plunged the country into the dark ages with no relief in sight. The carrot dangled before the eyes of gullible people Bhasha Dam would be on line in next 12-15 years, while two ground breakings of the project site have been blasted in 2006 and 2011 with no report of any progress in the past seven years. By this time Kalabagh Dam would have been built to rid the country of endemic water and power shortage, but this was not to be courtesy of the ruling coalition of PPP, ANP, MQM and opposition party of PML (N).

The Nation - February 03, 2013

International Aiding for Energy Issues

Poland Offers Solar Energy Expertise to Pakistan

Poland will assist Pakistan in solar energy sector and all kind of technical expertise will also be provided in this regard to strengthen the bilateral trade relations between the two countries. Ambassador of Poland Andrej Ananicz said business community of Pakistan should explore the trade markets of Poland to promote business activities. Exchanging views with the members Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) he said Pakistan has immense investment opportunities and foreigner investors should come and invest in the country.

Daily Times - February 28, 2013

REGIONAL WATCH

Pakistan & United States

Cameron Set for Talks with Pakistan and Afghanistan

British Prime Minister David Cameron will meet the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan this weekend as part of moves to prevent Taliban resurgence when foreign troops leave. The premier will dine with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari at his country retreat Chequers in Buckinghamshire, southeast England. Cameron will then hold the first in-depth top-level talks with both leaders and their key officials. The Prime Minister will host the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan at Chequers as part of his ongoing efforts to help to strengthen Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, support an Afghan peace and reconciliation process and promote regional peace and stability. For the first time, we will bring together the political and security establishments from both Afghanistan and Pakistan, with foreign ministers, chiefs of army staff, chiefs of intelligence and the chair of the Afghan High Peace Council attending the meeting. "Discussions are expected to focus on the Afghan-led peace process and how the Pakistanis and international community can support it. We also expect the Afghans and Pakistanis to make further progress on the Strategic Partnership Agreement they committed to in September."

Karzai flew to London on Saturday for a three-day trip, during which time he will also meet Prince Charles. "The talks in this summit will be focused on ways to accelerate peace process in Afghanistan and further strengthen cooperations between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the fight against terrorism and extremism," said a separate statement issued by Karzai's office. Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan remain uneasy, despite some recent improvements. Pakistan, the chief diplomatic backer of the Taliban, when the group was in power before 2001, has been regularly accused by both Kabul and Washington of helping destabilise Afghanistan. Back in December, Cameron had announced Britain would withdraw 3,800 of the country's 9,000 troops from Afghanistan in 2013, as NATO prepares for a full security handover to Afghan forces at the end of next year. There are growing concerns that a civil war could erupt as the US-led NATO troops leave the country. Monday's talks will meanwhile be the third trilateral session since summer last year, after meetings in Kabul in July and in New York in September. "This trilateral process sends a very clear message to the Taliban: now is the time for everyone to participate in a peaceful political process in Afghanistan," the spokesperson added. "As the Prime Minister has set out previously, a stable Afghanistan is not just in the interests of Afghans, but also in the interests of their neighbours and the UK.

"We share the same vision for Afghanistan: a secure, stable and democratic country that never again becomes a haven for international terror. "We are working together to achieve it and Afghanistan's neighbours have a vital role to play. It is vital not just for the future security of their citizens, but for their prosperity too." Meetings of the three leaders will spread over more than one session and Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar, Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Director General ISI will also participate in the meetings. As the deadline for withdrawal of NATO and ISAF forces draws near, there is added urgency in the efforts of international community to foster a political settlement between Afghan government led by President Hamid Karzai and Taliban to keep Afghanistan peaceful and stable. Afghanistan's High Peace Council led by Salahuddin Rabbani has enhanced its role by holding meetings with leadership of countries, which have been playing important part to bring along disparate groups in Afghanistan for permanent political reconciliation.

Daily Times - February 03, 2013

US Seeks Closer Relations with Pakistan

The United States seeks to boost its relationship with Pakistan, though it is committed to winding up its combat operations in Afghanistan by the end of next year, says a top Pentagon commander. Gen Lloyd J. Austin, nominee for commander of US Central Command (Centcom), told his confirmation hearing earlier this week that the conflict in Afghanistan remained Centcom's top priority despite the Obama administration's determination to end the war by December 2014. President Barack Obama announced this week that 34,000 US troops, about half of those now there, would leave Afghanistan over the next year and this, the general said, had increased Centcom's responsibilities. The movement of so many troops and their equipment would be a "Herculean undertaking," Gen Austin told the Senate Armed Services Committee. Last week, reports in the Pakistani media said the US had already started the pullout and was using the Karachi port for the purpose.

Senator Joseph Donnelly, a Democrat, suggested the United States should also make alternative arrangements for withdrawal from Afghanistan. "One of the things we want to do is to continue to work closely with Pakistan on that plan, but also have alternative options, if there are bumps in the road as we proceed forward with borders and with other things," he said. Former US ambassador to Pakistan Cameron Munter told a briefing in Washington on Wednesday that Washington's "callousness" over the killing of 24 Pakistani troops in a US air strike on a post in November 2011 had strained ties between the two nations. "The fact that we were unable to say that we were sorry until July (2012) cost our country literally billions of dollars," Mr Munter said. But Gen Austin assured the Senate committee that ties with Pakistan were on a positive trail now. "I think our relations with Pakistan are critical."

Gen Austin, now the Army's vice chief of staff, said as the new Centcom commander his goal would be to "immediately work to continue to boost the existing relationship, which is on somewhat of a positive slope right now, a positive path." When a senator asked how he would deal with Pakistan as the Centcom chief, Gen Austin said: "I want to continue to build on that. They will be a key throughout going into the future." But lawmakers underlined the problems that strain relations between the two allies and urged him to deal with those too. "Among the greatest threats to stability are the safe havens for Afghan insurgents across the Pakistan border, which the government of Pakistan has failed to disrupt or eliminate," said Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Ranking Republican Senator James Inhofe said: "In Pakistan, we see a nuclear-armed government teetering on collapse while militant groups have enjoyed that as a safe haven."

Dawn - February 17, 2013

Pak-US Relations Have Come a Long Way Since 2011 Tensions: Sherry

Pakistan's ambassador to the United States Sherry Rehman on Tuesday said her country's relationship with the US has "come a long way" since 2011 tensions and mistrust, as she looked forward to advancing bilateral ties "defined by confidence, trust and mutual respect". "I am happy to report now that the relationship is now on a stable and, we hope, uphill trajectory, and our expectations are clearly articulated to each other," she told an audience of senior American journalists in an interaction at the Christian Science Monitor Breakfast. Ambassador Sherry noted that the two countries have mutual goals of stabilising the region and working together to

forge peace and stability in South and Central Asia as well as Pakistan, especially Afghanistan, "a task that is daunting, but must be driven by Kabul totally taking the lead". "We look forward to engaging the US as a new democracy," she said as Pakistan progressed towards a peaceful political transition with the completion of the constitutionally mandated term of the democratically elected government.

The top Pakistani diplomat to the US explained that Islamabad and Washington have revived bilateral cooperation and are now working at institutional level in wide-ranging areas of common interest to both, including law enforcement, economy, finance, strategic stability, counterterrorism, energy and defence. In addition, the two countries have also seen high-level engagement on sustained basis. Pakistan, she said, wants a long-lasting relationship with the United States, which is broad-based and far wider than cooperation on issues like the ongoing transition in neighbouring Afghanistan. "We are looking forward to a relationship that is defined by confidence, trust and mutual respect and investment in each other, as nations not just as states, to grow together." Sherry Rehman, who was a parliamentarian and a federal minister before her appointment as ambassador in Washington, noted that Pakistan is pivoting for regional peace and productive engagement with neighbours to foster stability and that the country's relations with other countries including the United States are moving forward in accordance with Parliamentary guidelines. When asked, she said she looked forward to working with the new Secretary of State John Kerry and other Obama Administration officials on taking the relationship forward.

The Pakistani envoy also appreciated Kerry's predecessor Hillary Clinton for being an ally of her country during her term as top US diplomat. On the issue of drone strike, the US carries out to target suspected militant targets in Pakistan's tribal areas, Ambassador Sherry reiterated Islamabad's position that they are counterproductive, and constitute direct violation of the country's sovereignty and international laws, and fuel the emergence of new militants. There is "no question of any quiet complicity" in the US drone strikes on Pakistani soil, she responded emphatically, when asked if Pakistan was publicly criticizing the drone operations while privately allowing the US to go ahead with strikes. "We have been working together to degrade and destroy al Qaeda ranks while we move towards diminishing al Qaeda ranks in our region, the time for drone strikes is over." Responding to a series of questions on the subject, Sherry said drones, as precision anti-terror tools, may have some efficacy, but Pakistan does not see them as operationally productive the way they are used.

She argued that the use of US drones on Pakistani soil gives the impression that the fight against terrorism is the United States' fight and not Pakistan's and that these operations also cast US in negative light. On the question of assisting the Afghan reconciliation process, Sherry said Pakistan is fully committed to and using its political and diplomatic resources to support an Afghan-led drive. She said the Afghan Taliban prisoners are being released in response to Kabul's demands. At the same time, she said, Islamabad has made clear that it cannot guarantee the outcome and it is the Afghans themselves who have to decide on their future. Islamabad, she said, has legitimate anxieties regarding the transition in Afghanistan and wants this exit to proceed in a responsible manner, so that the region does not revert to chaos and unrest as it did 30 years ago. This would have serious repercussions for Pakistan, which has been hit by years of militant attacks and has had to contend with an influx of narcotics, guns and militancy since that encounter. Pakistan still hosts the biggest refugee population in the world.

The Express Tribune - 06 February, 2013

Pakistan & India

Loc Tensions: Understanding Indian Aggression against Pakistan

Eminent political and defence analysts are of the view that the rising tensions between Pakistan and India should be viewed in the context of the planned withdrawal of US-led foreign forces from Afghanistan next year. Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, former interior minister and chief of the Qaumi Watan Party, Dr Hassan Askari Rizvi, Lt Gen (retd) Talat Masood and Air Vice-Marshal (retd) Shahzad Chaudhry believe that the recent improvement in Pakistan-US relations on Afghan affairs has particularly disturbed the Indians. According to some senior officials in the ministry of foreign affairs, the tension on the country's eastern borders reflects India's keenness to create military problems for Pakistan when US forces are preparing to get out of Afghanistan. "The key role that Pakistan has attained in international efforts to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan is one of the main causes of India's annoyance with Pakistan," a senior official said, requesting anonymity.

However, Zafar Hilaly, a former ambassador, rejected the idea and said that such tensions have nothing to do with Afghanistan or the scheduled pull-out of US troops from that country. "The domestic political situation in India is the real cause of the tension between the two countries. The Congress-led government in India is trying to make Indian people believe that it is not less than the BJP in its anti-Pakistan attitude," he asserted. He also rejected speculations that the US was behind Indian aggression to pressure Pakistan to come to Washington's terms on regional peace. "The US is not at all involved in any such move," he said. Sherpao has been playing a role in the efforts to normalise Islamabad-Kabul ties for regional peace and stability. He told The Express Tribune that the recent tension in Pakistan-India relations is linked to the US/Nato troop withdrawal strategy from Afghanistan in 2014. Meanwhile, Dr Hassan Askari was of the opinion that New Delhi wanted to embarrass Pakistan as it was trying to make Washington believe that Islamabad was not a reliable partner in the peace process.

Talat Masood, on the other hand, agreed that Indian frustration towards Islamabad was building up over improving Pakistan-US ties. "Domestic political expediency is another cause of such behaviour by the Indians," he said. "Congress versus the BJP, in terms of anti-Pakistan policies, is also one of the factors in the situation. But the Indian role in Afghanistan is also important and a reality which should not be ignored by any players in the future scenario." Another former ambassador, Shahzad Chaudhry, said that the US plans to pull out its forces from Afghanistan in 2014, after recognising Pakistan's importance in the region and in the future set-up, has destroyed Indian plans against Pakistan. "Washington's initiatives to engage Islamabad in the peace process as a major player is not acceptable to New Delhi. Such an initiative, on the part of Washington, is one of the causes for the tension, if not the only reason."

The Express Tribune – February 01, 2013

Pakistan & Afghanistan

Pakistan Wants Close Ties With Neighbours

Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar invited the ambassadors of the "Heart of Asia Group" to brief them on the perspective and approach of the democratically elected government of Pakistan towards its neighbours as well as in the context of its broader region. The briefing was attended by the ambassadors/representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran,

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan. The Foreign Minister said that the regional pivot of the democratic government of Pakistan was based on wide political consensus that the challenges and complexities that Pakistan faced could only be addressed through improving and deepening relations with all its neighbours, both immediate and distant. Consequently, Pakistan had been single-mindedly focusing on improving relations with not only its immediate neighbours but with all Central Asian and Middle Eastern countries as well as with Russia and Turkey.

Talking about Pakistan's relations with its immediate neighbours, the Foreign Minister said that Pakistan enjoyed exemplary relations with China which were based on complete trust and convergence of strategic interests. With Iran, Pakistan enjoyed strong cultural and historical relations. The government has further invested in deepening its friendship and cooperation with Iran. Regarding India, the Foreign Minister noted that despite difficult relations in the past, Pakistan strongly believed that the only way forward was through building trust and confidence. While Pakistan remained committed to normalising its relations with India, to sustain these relations on a long-term basis, it was essential that the two countries addressed all their outstanding issues, including Kashmir, in a meaningful way.

While discussing Afghanistan, the Foreign Minister noted that peace and stability in Afghanistan was not only essential for peace and stability in Pakistan but also for the broader region. She briefed the ambassadors about the various initiatives Pakistan had taken on the request of High Peace Council to facilitate the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. Talking about regional connectivity, the Foreign Minister said that Pakistan fully supported CASA-1000, TAPI, IP Gas Pipeline Project and extension of APTTA to Central Asian countries. She also briefed the ambassadors about the excellent relations Pakistan has with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Russia and all the Central Asian countries. The ambassadors acknowledged and praised the role Pakistan was playing in facilitating the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. They also commended Pakistan's vision for the region and the efforts it had made towards normalising relations with its neighbouring countries.

The Nation - February 20, 2013
