



PAKISTAN
GOVERNANCE
FORUM

An Initiative of 'The Researchers'

October 2013
Edition IX, Volume VII

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GOVERNANCE WATCH**Government Working****Nawaz Blames Outsiders for Terror**

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that external forces are involved in the terrorism campaign inside Pakistan and far from being a sponsor; Pakistan was actually a victim of foreign-funded well-organized wave of terrorism. Reluctant to condemn the Taliban and other Jihadi terrorist groups, Nawaz Sharif said the Taliban had announced that they were not behind the attack in Peshawar's Qissa Khawani Bazaar. Pakistan believes that India is involved in direct and indirect funding of several separatist and religious groups operating in Pakistan. It was clear from Nawaz Sharif's interaction in London that he prefers avoiding a confrontation with the Taliban and other Jihadi terror groups at this stage. The premier urged Manmohan Singh to resolve all the issues between Pakistan and India through talks as peace was the only way forward for both the countries. Nawaz Sharif said that he had presented Pakistan's' principled viewpoint in the UN General Assembly in the manner that it should have been. Nawaz Sharif said that he had outlined Pakistan's foreign policy in his address to the General Assembly and attempted to convey Pakistan's concerns to the world. Nawaz Sharif claimed that American trade companies viewed Pakistan with optimism, especially after the election of his party at the federal level.

The News – October 01st, 2013

TTP Welcomes Ulema's Appeal for Truce

The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) welcomed the appeal of Pakistan's prominent Ulema and Mashaikh for announcing simultaneous ceasefire by the government as well as the TTP to pave the way for congenial atmosphere for peace talks and to end the nine-year-old bloody war. The top Ulema of Wafaqul Madaris had appealed "In the name of Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (SAW), to the government of Pakistan and local Taliban/militant groups to immediately declare a ceasefire and stop all kinds of armed and militant activities in the country so as to stop the bloodshed." Talking to this correspondent, the TTP spokesperson said the TTP was more than willing to talk to the government for a permanent solution to the imbroglio and it had decided in its Shura to go ahead. It may be recalled that the TTP had convened an emergency meeting in the North Waziristan Agency following the appeal by Pakistani clerics and it was unanimously welcomed by all the members. The TTP spokesperson thanked what he termed as PTI Chairman Imran Khan's suggestion to allow the Pakistani Taliban their office before the talks start.

The News - October 02nd, 2013

APC Resolution: 'Government Must Delink Itself from US War'

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) unanimously adopted a resolution during an all parties' conference, recommending that the central government withdraw its support for the American war on terror. In the wake of the latest spate of terror attacks in the provincial capital, JI decided to convene an APC on the law and order situation. The groupings that attended the APC also urged the federal government to announce a dialogue team to start negotiations with Taliban without

any further delay. The resolution adopted at the meeting urged the federal government to try and bring all armed groups on the table for talks. Special arrangements should be made for the security of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Fata. It asked the centre to announce special funds for infrastructure rehabilitation in these areas, and demanded the establishment of a foundation for the rehabilitation of terrorism affected people. Demand for effective steps regarding security of the religious places for minorities was also made. It was pointed out during the conference that none of the previously passed resolutions at high level government echelons were implemented, and it is feared that the September 9 APC which mandated the Centre for starting dialogue process with Taliban will meet the same fate. JI leader Professor Muhammad Ibrahim said that security forces and Taliban are the real stakeholders in the issue. KP economy is getting badly affected by the so-called war on terror and it needs to be get rid off. ANP leader Mian Iftikhar said that it is a good tradition that people holding various views jointly sit in APC.

The Express Tribune - October 05th, 2013

General Kayani announces retirement on November 29

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani announced his retirement on November 29 after serving six years as the military chief. General Kayani, who served for two tenures of three years each as army chief, during a turbulent period in the war on terror, made this announcement to put an end to all rumors. General's decision has paved the way for the civil administration of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to take a firm and free decision to appoint a new commander of Pakistan's most potent institution "the Pakistan Army". Simultaneously, General Kayani has helped the nation in removing deep-seated confusion over the appointment of the next army chief, which otherwise should have been made by now. The firm decision taken by General Kayani was preceded by a spree of baseless and ill-informed media reports. Someone tried to give him extension, while others say he would be made Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and some others give him both the hats (army chief and chairman JCSC and so on). All such speculations made negative impact on the institution and those who led it.

The News - October 07th, 2013

Qamar Zaman to head NAB, agree Nawaz, Khursheed

After holding several meetings in a marathon consultation process, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Syed Khursheed Shah finally broke the deadlock and reached a consensus on making Interior Secretary Major (retd) Chaudhry Qamar Zaman the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman. Major (retd) Zaman, a DMG bureaucrat who is to retire on December 4 this year, is currently serving as interior secretary. He has headed many important departments in the past and also served as aide-de-camp (ADC) of former dictator Gen Muhammad Ziaul Haq. Before the general election, his name was recommended for the post of chief secretary Punjab but he refused to assume charge. Major (retd) Zaman's name was not among the probables to head NAB in the last five meetings between the prime minister and the opposition leader.

The News - October 09th, 2013

Government to Use Media to Defend 'Unpopular Decisions'

The prime minister's office has ordered heads of ministries to proactively influence the media in order to generate a favourable opinion about the recent unpopular decisions, including a steep increase in the prices of electricity and petroleum prices. The orders are a reversal of the earlier strategy adopted by the government soon after it came to power wherein it had ordered bureaucrats to black out the media and try to control the flow of information as much as possible. Now, however, the PM Office's Press Wing has directed all ministries, divisions and departments to issue backgrounders, rationales and salient features of politically unpopular decisions. The orders have been sent to all the federal secretaries who are operational heads of ministries and divisions. The directives can also be seen as an admission of the fact that the government's media strategy, during its first five months, has failed. "Major policy decisions in connection with the revision of petrol prices and rationalisation of electricity tariff were taken in the best national interest but limited information made available to the citizenry through the media cast a false impression of serving certain vested interests by the government," reads the PM Office order. It noted that the policy decision regarding the privatisation of public sector enterprises has been taken in principle and people must be briefed through the media about the rationale of the decision.

According to analysts, about 400,000 people could be laid off as a result of what a former finance minister, Dr Hafiz Pasha, called the "golden sale of the century". Regarding such steps, the order says: "These decisions are being taken keeping in view the hard economic realities and also that the general public will be looking at them favourably if they are properly briefed through the media." The order has asked to hold background discussions and press briefings regularly to take media persons into confidence. For conveying the government's side of the story, the Press Wing asked ministries to substantiate the statements through facts and figures. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Pervaiz Rashid said interaction with the media needs to be further improved. "There is always room for improvement and transparency requires giving access to information to the media," he added. Responding to a question, Rashid said the government would explain the rationale behind tough economic decisions. However, so far, the ministries of finance, water and power, petroleum and natural resources, and privatisation have kept the media at a distance. Even the bureaucracy is afraid of interacting with journalists.

According to a finance ministry official, Minister of Finance and Privatisation Ishaq Dar was following a policy of interacting more with anchorpersons than with the print media. He has not held even a single background discussion or an on-the-record briefing with economic journalists, except a few day-to-day issue-based press conferences. "Dar is yet to take the media into confidence about the IMF programme," he said. Another issue that was creating an image problem for the government was the negligible interaction among the ministers. Dr Ishtat Hussain, former State Bank governor, wrote in an article, that "the ministers do not seem to be working as an integrated team". Dr Hussain's assertion is confirmed by the fact that Dar kept Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal at arm's length and did not involve him in finalisation of the IMF programme that is now widely perceived as 'anti-growth'.

The Express Tribune - October 24th, 2013

National Assembly & Senate

100 Parliamentary Days: FAFEN Report Criticises Lack of Cabinet Presence in NA

Government's lack of interest has marred overall performance of the country's 14th National Assembly which completed its 100 days last month, according to a report released by the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN). The prime minister and his cabinet's miniscule attendance of assembly sessions coupled with the government's parliamentary agenda not reflecting the premier's priorities also resulted in a lackluster legislative performance, revealed the report. On assuming office, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had identified eight themes that the government would focus on during its tenure namely; economic development; democracy and political development; better foreign relations; good governance; strengthening the federation; peace building and conflict resolution; energy sector reforms and protection of human rights. However, during the first 100 days, the government tabled only three bills: one each on economic development, good governance, and democracy and political development. The treasury did not present any legislation or motion that supported democratic processes or pledged to deter any unconstitutional move despite the prime minister's announcement on the floor of the House on June 24, 2013 to move against the former military ruler for high treason.

In comparison, private members seemed more proactive in tabling legislation with four bills presented in the assembly; three on democracy and political development and one on good governance. Equally discouraging was the delay in the formation of Standing Committees by more than a month and a half: the formation of 34 Standing Committees of the National Assembly was approved in the fourth session on August 21. Opposition benches, during this time seemed more interested in pushing forth a pro-people agenda with the combined opposition moving 12 resolutions on matters identified by the Prime Minister in his speech and seven motions under Rule 259. Comparatively, the government only moved four resolutions and six motions under Rule 259. There were 546 Points of Order raised in the first 100 days. Analysis showed that 318 of these were related to issues directly identified by the prime minister in his speech. Treasury members raised 95 POs, of which 36 were on good governance, followed by 22 on peace-building and conflict resolution, economic development (12), democracy and political development (nine), foreign relations (seven), protection of human rights (five), and energy sector reforms and strengthening of federation (two each).

The tradition of bypassing elected houses in major decision making unfortunately continued during the first 100 days, with government taking critical decisions, such as an operation in Karachi, without bringing them to the floor of the National Assembly or Senate. Opposition benches were seen as more active in sponsoring the good governance agenda with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) legislators coming up with two separate resolutions calling upon the federal government to take immediate steps to control inflation. The MQM moved another resolution urging the government to take steps to provide inexpensive and expeditious justice to the people. None of these resolutions were taken up by the House.

The Express Tribune - October 19th, 2013

PPP Invites MQM to Join Coalition in Sindh Again

A delegation of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leaders met former president and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari in the emirate of Ajman, UAE, where the latter has formally invited MQM to join the Sindh government. Sources privy to the meeting

confirmed that Zardari had offered the MQM delegation, comprising deputy convener Khalid Maqbool and Anees Qaimkhani, to make a coalition government in the province, but the MQM has said that its Coordination Committee will decide the matter later. Discussions are currently underway between the two parties over the upcoming local body elections and the delimitation of Karachi, as MQM has serious reservations over the matter, according to sources. However, Ameenul Haque, a member MQM Coordination Committee refuted reports of negotiations between the two parties. Sources privy to the development added that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had also invited MQM to formally join the federal government, but MQM leaders had sought the time. A final decision is likely after the arrival of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif before the Ajman meeting. Dr Ishratul Ebad Khan had held meetings with the former president at Bilawal House where the schedule for the UAE meeting was decided. Earlier, former Interior Minister and Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Rehman Malik indicated that he would soon visit London to invite Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leadership to join the Sindh government. The two parties were on-again-off-again coalition partners in the federal and Sindh government between 2008 and 2013.

'Nawaz Misleading Nation'

Talking about the prime minister's visit to the United States, the PPP leader said, "Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is misguiding the nation. The US president has not assured him of stopping drone strikes," he said, adding that drone attacks could only be stopped by using strong diplomatic channels. However, Malik assured the federal government of his party's support in fighting against the ongoing wave of terrorism in the country. Referring to terrorist attacks in the country, the PPP leader said Pakistan was facing multiple threats and next three to four weeks were critical. He also told reporters that the PPP government had also attempted to negotiate with the Taliban, but the Taliban were not sincere about bringing peace in the country. Regarding the worsening law and order situation in Balochistan he said, "It is now an open secret who is involved in inciting terrorism to bifurcate Balochistan," he said implying Indian influence in the province. The former interior minister also appreciated the role of the Sindh government in containing the law and order in Karachi and said the provincial government would further improve the deployment of police and law enforcement agencies to cope with targeted killings, extortion, kidnapping for ransom and criminal activities in Karachi.

The Express Tribune - October 25th, 2013

Provincial Assemblies

Sindh Government Seeks Ban on Messaging Apps

The Sindh government announced a proposal calling for the temporary banning of four applications "to disrupt terrorist and criminal activities in the province, especially in the urban areas". During a press briefing in Karachi, Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon announced the proposed decision to ban the multiplatform video conferencing service Skype, multi-media communication and instant messaging applications WhatsApp, Tango and Viber. The decision was taken during a meeting on law and order at the Chief Minister House the same day. The ban will be imposed for three months, provided the federal government approves its request. Referring to the recent investigation carried out by the Joint Interrogation Teams, comprising the police, Rangers and intelligence agencies, the minister explained these applications enable terrorists to connect with their network of gangs and criminal groups via messages, images and free audio and video calling over the internet. The Pakistan People's Party, the ruling party in Sindh, had been seeking a massive website blocking system since

2012, when they were in power at the centre. The five years of the PPP government had seen an unprecedented period in the growth of internet adoption and bans on social media networks in the country including Facebook. More infamously, the country witnessed two spells of blocking the popular video-sharing website, YouTube. The second spell has continued for the past 374 days. PPP member and former interior minister Rehman Malik had begun the 'tradition' of banning communication. He shut down cellular networks for extended periods on important national and religious holidays to 'ensure the safety of the people'.

The Express Tribune - October 04th, 2013

LB Polls: Punjab Reserves a Seat for the Youth

Reserving a seat for youth in the Local Bodies' scheme, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz led Punjab government has attempted to steal Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) thunder, which identifies itself as the youth's party. According to the LB scheme in Punjab, each Union Council (UC) shall consist of a directly-elected chairman and a vice chairman, six general members, five members elected on reserved seats, two women elected on reserved seats, a peasant (labour councillor), a non-Muslim member in UCs with at least 200 registered non-Muslim voters and a youth member of maximum 25 years of age. A participant of the Punjab committee's meetings that finalised the draft act said the PTI demanded youth representation during the committee meetings and also pressed the PML-N to allow 18 years old to contest election against reserved seat. However, the Act describes "the youth" as a person who is 21 to 25 years old on the last day fixed for filing the nomination papers. Interestingly, the PTI's K-P draft allows a candidate less than 35 years of age to contest elections as youth councillor. The PTI-led K-P government has not finalised legislation on this issue so far and the apex court has given a deadline to the party. During the general elections in May, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) main focus was on youth. The cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan's party secured second position in terms of votes following Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The party's slogan of 'change' attracted the youth of the country that makes up more than 60% of the population.

Voter's Age Limit at LB Polls

The KP Local Government Minister Inayatullah Khan said there was a difference of opinion as to whether the voter's age in the coming LB polls should be 18 years or 21 years. During the May general election, the minimum age of the voter had been set at 18. However Advocate Zafar Joya said provinces could not change the voter's age limit, adding that it was the prerogative of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

The Express Tribune - October 05th, 2013

New district: Divided in two, Thatta makes room for Sujawal

The decision to divide Thatta in two districts by the Pakistan People's Party-led Sindh government has not gone well with the local political opponents of party. A cross-section of the political and civil society representatives, however, have hailed the announcement of making Sujawal a separate district from Thatta. The historical city of Thatta, which was once the capital of Sindh, was carved out from Karachi as a separate city in August 1948. According to the notification issued by the Sindh Revenue Department on Saturday, the right side of River Indus will comprise old Thatta district and the left side will come under the jurisdiction of newly created Sujawal. With the addition of Sujawal, the number of districts in the province has come

up to 28. Around 30 union councils of Mirpur Sakro, Ghorabari, Keti Bunder and Thatta taluka will come under Thatta district while Sujawal district comprises Mirpur Bathoro, Shah Bunder, Kharochan [excluding some dehs], Jati and Sujawal Talukas. Sources in the revenue department said that initially, a proposal had emerged to make Lyari a district, but the decision has been postponed temporarily.

The Express Tribune - October 13th, 2013

Balochistan Cabinet Swells to 14; No Minority, Woman Member

Balochistan Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai administered oath to 11 members of Balochistan Assembly cabinet. The oath-taking ceremony at Governor's House was attended by Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, senior provincial minister Sardar Sanauallah Zehri, Minister Rahim Ziaratwal, Nawab Muhammad Khan Shahwani, the chief secretary Balochistan, FC IG, acting IGP and provincial secretaries. The new cabinet members include Chengaiz Marri, Sarfraz Chakar Domki, Sarfraz Bugti, Izhar Hussain Khosa, Shiekh Jaffar Khan Manokhail, Dr Hamid Achakzai, Sardar Mustafa Khan Tareen, Nawab Ayaz Khan Jomezai, Sardar Aslam Bizenjo, Rehmat Ali Baloch and Mujibur Rehman Muhammad Hassani. After the induction of 11 new ministers, strength of the Balochistan cabinet has risen to 14 with no minority or woman member part of it. Portfolios of members of the cabinet would be announced later. After the oath ceremony, the chief minister said that after the formation of cabinet, people would feel a big change, adding that by the grace of God the formation of cabinet had been accomplished in a "better manner". He said that if comparatively viewed, previous three months of the government have seen much improvement than the last five years. To a question regarding the inclusion of Nawabs and Sardars in the cabinet, he said that the names proposed by PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif, PkMAP chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai and his party's board have been included in the cabinet. Regarding the meeting of separatists in London, he said that he had no contact with anyone. He said that he was optimistic that the federal government would respond positively to a letter written by him for allowing international donor agencies to work in Balochistan for relief activities in the earth-quake hit districts.

Daily Times - October 15th, 2013

Balochistan Gets 11 New Ministers

Eleven new ministers of Balochistan government took oath of their offices, bringing the strength of the provincial cabinet to 14. A notification issued by the provincial government later in the day announced portfolios of 10 ministers. Governor Mohammad Khan Achakzai administered the oath to new ministers in a simple but impressive ceremony in the Governor's House. Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, Balochistan Assembly Speaker Mir Jan Mohammad Jamali, Deputy Speaker Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo, MNAs, MPAs, Provincial Chief Secretary Babar Yaqoob Fateh Mohammad, Inspector General of Frontier Corps Major General Ejaz Shahid and some tribal elders attended the ceremony. The 14-member provincial cabinet has representation from all important tribes of the province, except the Magsis and Jamalis. Following are the names of ministers and their portfolios: Sardar Sanauallah Zehri (Communication and works, Mineral Development and Industry), Mir Izhar Hussain Khosa (Food and Women Development), Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti (Home, Tribal Affairs, Persons, Provincial Disaster Management Authority), Nawabzada Jangez Khan Marri (Irrigation and Energy), Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhel (Revenue, Excise & Taxation Transport), Sardar Sarfaraz Khan Chakar Domki (Labour and Manpower, Social Welfare & Non-Formal Education), Nawab

Mohammad Khan Shahwani (Services & General Administration), Sardar Aslam Bizenjo (Agriculture and Cooperative), Mir Rehmat Saleh Baloch (Health) and Mujeebur Rehman Mohammad Hasni (Minorities, Human Rights, Sports, Culture, Archives, Population Welfare, Youth Affairs, Libraries, Museums and Tourism).

Sardar Aslam Bizenjo was a minister for irrigation in the coalition government of former chief minister Nawab Aslam Raisani. Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhel of PML-Q was part of three previous governments, holding portfolios of finance, education and planning and development. Three provincial ministers - Sardar Sanaullah Zehri of PML-N, Nawab Mohammad Khan Shahwani of National Party (NP) and Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal of Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) - took oath of their offices in June. In reply to questions about the induction of tribal chieftains and influential people in his cabinet and ignoring women and members of minority, Dr Baloch said the new ministers had not been chosen by him. The names had been sent by parliamentary parties of the three coalition partners and that he was bound to accept coalition partners' nominations. The chief minister rejected rumours about a London mission, saying he went to the British capital only to attend a conference on Faiz Ahmed Faiz. The government had distributed over 31,000 tents and three months of rations to affected people.

Dawn - October 15th, 2013

Under Pressure: KP Makes Haste in Passing Legislation for Local Government

The local government department briefed the select committee on the draft of the Local Government Bill, 2013 following the Supreme Court's orders to hold local body elections. The committee meeting was chaired by Minister for Local Government Inayatullah Khan. He said the committee will present the bill in the assembly through an ordinance, adding the provincial government is keen on consulting all political parties on the matter. He also said members of the select committee discussed the draft bill and agreed to speed up the process in order to present the bill in the ongoing assembly session. "The PTI government initially said in court it was ready to hold elections, but they were proved wrong," ANP leader Mian Iftikhar Hussain told during questioning the ruling coalition's resolve. He said the PTI government should have held local government elections under the previous act, adding PTI leaders were still in disagreement over the bill and the select committee is yet to approve it. The former information minister said the bill was prepared by one party, whereas it was previously formulated by the government. ANP parliamentary leader Sardar Hussain Babak also said they were not satisfied with the new village council setup, non-party based elections and powers of the chief minister. He claimed the bill empowers the chief minister to remove nazims arbitrarily. Babak, a member of the select committee, alleged the ruling government was not interested in holding local government elections. During a hearing on local government elections, Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry earlier said the provincial government will have to face legal action if the polls in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) are not held on time. The provincial government, however, sought more time from the Supreme Court in order to make necessary arrangements for the elections.

On offer

The draft of the LG bill for 2013 was introduced in the K-P Assembly earlier this month. It was then referred to the select committee for further discussion and changes. Under the new bill, village and neighbourhood councils will replace union councils. The grass-roots level of local government will comprise 5 to 10 members, determined on the basis of population and elected seats. Two seats have been reserved for women and one seat each for peasants/workers, non-

Muslims and youth. A reserved seat for youth on village and neighbourhood councils was non-existent in previous laws. The proposed bill envisages a total of 1,540 seats, including seats for women, non-Muslims, peasants/workers and youth across 25 districts of the province. Peshawar will have the largest district council, comprising about 138 members, including 92 general seats, 31 seats for women and five each for minorities, peasants/workers and youth, laid down in the second schedule of the proposed legislation. Similarly, the newly-carved Torghar district will have the smallest district assembly comprising a total of 23 councillors, including 15 general seats, five seats for women, and one seat each for non-Muslims, youths and peasants/workers.

The Express Tribune - October 25th, 2013

Preferential Treatment: Women Legislators Sidelined In Development Fund Allocation

Women lawmakers of the Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa (KP) Assembly criticized the government for not allocating development funds for them, drawing attention to money which had been released for their male counterparts. As a result, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) will chalk out a strategy to deal with the issue during the ongoing assembly session. The caucus comprising 22 women MPAs, including treasury lawmakers, have adopted a united stance for the immediate release of funds. Women from both opposition and treasury benches walked out from the last assembly session because the government had not yet released development funds to them. During the last assembly session, women lawmakers from the treasury benches held a meeting with Chief Minister Pervez Khattak and informed him of the matter, explained Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) MPA and parliamentary labor secretary Meraj Humayun Khan. According to the procedure, Humayan explained, treasury lawmakers were required to submit their proposals for various development projects in their constituencies aimed at women's empowerment to the social welfare department. The K-P government initially released Rs10 million for each male legislator and Rs20 million more was also announced for them, added Humayan. However, the CM had announced funds for all women MPAs as well, said the QWP MPA. Pakistan People's Party MPA Nighat Orakzai also confirmed the WPC had taken up the issue with the CM. If any woman legislator was left out in the allocation of funds, they would approach the court, maintained Orakzai. Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency chief Ahmed Bilal Mehboob disagreed with the government's decision to allocate funds directly to lawmakers in the absence of local government officials. Every year, Rs20 million in development funds are allocated to each member of the assembly. The amount is supposed to be to launch development schemes in the respective MPA's constituency based on his or her recommendation.

The Express Tribune - October 28th, 2013

Local Governance

Guide to Peace: Life Safety Made an Official Goal

The government fine-tuned its anti-terrorism legislation by declaring all peace-disrupting elements as 'enemies of the state' and making the protection of the life and property of citizens the primary goal of all state functionaries. Pakistan Protection Ordinance 2013 - promulgated by President Mamnoon Hussain on the advice of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif - strengthens the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2013 introduced less than two weeks ago. The new ordinance deems the "security of life, property and dignified living of our people the prime goal

for all functionaries of state,” according to a press release issued by the president’s office. No effort will be spared to eliminate or frustrate ‘any attempt to create disorder’ in society, it said, adding that every possible state instrument and resource would be deployed for the purpose. “The writ of the state shall be restored with the full might of the law; those pursuing the fruit of terror and fear ... shall be treated as enemy aliens and dealt with strictly without any compunction ... regardless of nationality, colour, creed or religion,” it stated.

The new piece of legislation guarantees all military and civil armed forces the full protection of law to discharge their mission to restore peace in the country within the parameters of Part V of the Constitution - which deals with the relations between the federation and the provinces. It added that organised crime syndicates, ‘in all forms and manifestations’, would be dealt with the proportionate use of force under the law. In all areas where civilian forces are invited to aid civil power, it said, “Joint investigation teams shall be constituted to conduct investigations into all heinous crimes”. From now on, separate police stations and special federal courts will be designated to deal with crime syndicates. “Separate police stations will be designated for professional and expeditious investigations of specified crime, prosecuted through federal prosecutors. Special federal courts shall be designated to render inexpensive justice with promptitude as mandated by Article 37.”

Trial Transfers to Be Allowed

Under the new ordinance, those involved in organised crime syndicates could also be transferred to another part of the country for trial to ensure transparency and fairness in proceedings. State organs will be allowed to take suspects involved in crime syndicates into preventive custody. Special jails will also be designated for detaining hardened criminals and the minimum term of the imprisoned has now been set at 10 years.

Action against Foreign Miscreants

The new ordinance also introduces measures to deal with refugees and foreign residents involved in terrorism, crime and other anti-state activities, according to the release. “The millions of non-Pakistanis on our soil for any reason including distressful conditions in their parent country, especially those since 1979, shall not be allowed to abuse the temporary liberty to commit depredation,” it said. “Their local collaborators, handlers, facilitators and landlords providing unreported accommodation and protection shall not be spared,” it added.

The Express Tribune - October 21st, 2013

Sindh Ready to Hold LG Elections, Says Qaim

Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah has said the provincial government wants to hold local bodies’ elections as early as possible and all arrangements in this regard are being finalised in accordance with the directives of the Supreme Court. Presiding over a meeting on the issue of LG elections at the Chief Minister House, he said that under Article 140-A of the constitution, provincial governments were responsible for carrying out delimitation and making law for the local bodies. Mr Shah said Sindh was the first province to pass the Local Government Act 2013, fulfilling all conditions required for holding elections as per the apex court’s directives. Now it was the responsibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct the elections at the earliest, he said, adding that the Sindh government was ready for the task and would provide full assistance to the ECP in this regard. According to a statement, the meeting expressed satisfaction over arrangements for elections made by the Sindh government. The chief minister

directed officials of the local government and revenue departments to complete the process of delimitation in accordance with the commitment made before the apex court. He asked the secretary local government to launch a pilot project at the district level for delimitation and said there should be no difficulty in conducting elections after the completion of delimitation. The chief minister directed the administrators concerned to provide full assistance to the public. The meeting was attended by Minister for Local Government Syed Owais Muzaffar, Information Minister Sharjeel Memon, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Sikandar Mendhro, Chief Secretary Mohammad Aijaz Chaudhry, Secretary Local Government Ali Ahmed Lund, Advocate General Khalid Javaid Khan and the law secretary.

Dawn - October 21st, 2013

Parliament

Membership of 70 Lawmakers to Be Suspended

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is set to suspend the membership of 70 legislators, including 23 members of the National Assembly and Senate, for their failure to submit statements of their assets and liabilities as required under the law. Sources in the ECP said a notification in this regard was likely to be issued. After issuance of the notification, copies of which would be sent to speakers of the provincial and national assemblies and chairman of the Senate, the suspended members will not be able to participate in the proceedings of their legislatures. The sources said that some 70 lawmakers had not submitted the details of their assets till Oct 14, the last working day before Eid holidays. They said the members still had a chance to get their names removed from the dreaded list by submitting the statements before issuance of the notification. They were required to submit the statements of assets and liabilities of their own, their spouse and dependents by Sept 30 as required under the Representation of the People's Act, 1976. Then they were given an unofficial "grace period" of 15 days which ended on Oct 15. Of the 70 lawmakers, 19 are MNAs, four senators, nine MPAs from Punjab, 11 from Sindh, 22 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and five from Balochistan. The four senators who are yet to meet the legal requirement are former interior minister Rehman Malik, former Karachi nazim Syed Mustafa Kamal, Islamuddin Shaikh and firebrand PPP leader Faisal Raza Abidi. Other legislators whose membership can be suspended include Dr Azra Fazal, the sister of former president Asif Ali Zardari, Sindh Minister for Local Government Awais Muzaffar and MNA Nauman Islam Sheikh, Usman Khan Tarrakai, Shehryar Afridi, Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju and Moulvi Agha Mohammad. Under the law, the ECP is bound to suspend the membership of those who fail to meet the mandatory requirement "within the specified period" which ended on Sept 30. But, according to legal experts, the ECP has violated the provision by not issuing the notification so far. Over the years, it has become a convention to take the issuance of the notification to the last date of submission of the statements and even beyond that and using the intervening period as an undeclared grace period. Over 450 lawmakers --- including Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, two chief ministers and several federal and provincial ministers --- had missed the Sept 30 deadline, but the number came down to 70 by Oct 14 --- thanks to the 'grace period'.

Dawn - October 21st, 2013

ECP Suspends Membership of 26 Lawmakers

Finally, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) notified the names of 26 lawmakers who had failed to file statements of their assets and liabilities even by October 22. Now they will not be able to function as members of respective legislatures until the related documents are submitted to the electoral body. Copies of the notification have been sent to the Senate chairman, the National Assembly speaker and speakers of the four provincial assemblies, who will bar the non-filers from attending the respective legislatures' proceedings. The Election Commission was supposed to issue a notification in this connection on October 15, but it was not done on account of Eidul Azha holidays. However, since the law calls for issuance of the notification by October 15, it can be issued before this date. But it is widely felt the electoral body showed considerable leniency towards the non-filers, whose number was 70 on October 14, the last working day. Under the Representation of the People Act, the Election Commission is bound to annually notify names of those legislators, who fail to file their statement of assets and liabilities for which September 30 is the deadline. However, the law is silent about the period between October 01-October 16 and hence; scores of lawmakers take advantage of this and rush to do the needful. But every year, some of them even then, can't submit the related documents to the electoral body during the 'grace period' and they are suspended as a formality, as their suspension is lifted on the same day or next day after they fulfil the legal requirement. Among the notified lawmakers are two Senators; Faisal Raza Abdi, Mustafa Kamal, three MNAs Abdur Rehman Kanju, Shah Jahan and Aizeh Iqbal Haider, four members of Punjab Assembly, nine members of Sindh Assembly, seven members of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and one member of Balochistan Assembly. Meanwhile, the Election Commission dismissed a petition filed by Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate for alleged rigging in NA-71 (Mianwali) by-election. PTI had filed a petition with the ECP in September, challenging the victory of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)'s Obaidullah Shadi Khel and alleged massive rigging in NA-71.

The News - October 23rd, 2013

Differences among Ministers Causing Delay

Differences among some ministers are causing unnecessary delay in the appointment of chairpersons for the National Assembly standing committees, according to sources in the ruling Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N). Without the appointment of the chairpersons the committees cannot function. This in turn is the reason why not a single bill has so far been moved in the house. Going by the book, it is the responsibility of the minister for parliamentary affairs to make nominations for the top slots of the NA committees. Initially, a senior party leader told Dawn, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab was asked by the party leadership to make recommendations for committee heads in consultation with other colleagues in the cabinet, which he did. Out of the 28 NA standing committees, the PML-N will retain top posts of 17, whereas the PPP, PTI and MQM will have leadership role in four, three, and two committees, respectively. The JUI-F as a coalition partner will be given chairmanship of two committees. Names of the members of NA committees have already been announced. But, due to delay in the selection of chairpersons their meetings could not be held. Earlier this month a list had been finalised by Mr Aftab and shared with members of the cabinet, but senior members of the government expressed their reservations over the names and sought changes in the list. Notably Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Petroleum Minister Khwaja Asif and Minister for Defence Production Rana Tanvir were not happy with the list, a senior party leader.

For instance, the party leader added, a minister raised objection to the name of Rana Ishaq - a PML-N MNA from Kasur - to head the Committee on Petroleum and Natural Resources. Likewise, Haji Mohammad Akram Ansari - a veteran politician and PML-N's MNA from Faisalabad - had been picked up to lead the NA Committee on Trade, but on the intervention of a minister Mr Ansari had been moved to the NA Committee on Postal Affairs. Mr Ansari, according to the party source, is fighting hard to resist the change. Despite repeated attempts, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab was not available for his comments. During an earlier conversation with Dawn, he confirmed preparation of a list which had to be sent to the prime minister. Confirming internal strife in PML-N over the selection of NA committees' chairpersons, a minister told Dawn that the government was under immense pressure to complete the selection process before the next NA session. According to him, the issue of committee chairpersons' selection would be resolved after the prime minister's return from the US. If the government failed to make NA committees fully functional before the next NA session, it would receive severe criticism from opposition members, he said, adding that "already the delay has caused enough embarrassment for the government". The minister said the NA session had to be convened on Oct 24, but due to delay in the selection of NA committees' chairpersons it had been deferred until the first week of next month. NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq had asked the PML-N leadership to take necessary steps for a smooth running of the house, a source close to the speaker. The minister said a similar struggle was under way for the positions of some two dozen parliamentary secretaries which the government intended to appoint in the near future.

Dawn - October 24th, 2013

Judiciary & Legislation

Benazir Murder Case: Pindi ATC Orders Retrial

Rawalpindi Anti-Terrorism Court ordered retrial of the Benazir Bhutto's murder case so as to re-record the statements of the witnesses in the presence of main accused, the former president Pervez Musharraf. The court turned down pleas of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) not to restart the trial of Benazir Bhutto's murder case following the indictment of main accused. Judge Rehman had reserved the judgment on September 17 on an application filed by PPP senior lawyer Sardar Adul Latif Khosa who had urged the court not to restart the trial. On the last hearing, FIA Special Prosecutor Chaudhry Azhar and PPP's senior lawyer Latif Khosa had pleaded to advance the case proceedings without any further delay as its retrial would be tantamount to wastage of time. FIA prosecutor Azhar also supported Khosa's point of view. He said the witnesses were convinced with much difficulty to appear in the court and rerecording their statements will disappoint them. He opined that witnesses could be summoned for cross-questioning but restarting the trial would be a waste court time for the benefit of the accused. Musharraf's lawyer Ilyas Siddiqui had, on last hearing, urged the court to have the testimonies of the witnesses re-recorded.

The Express Tribune - October 02nd, 2013

21st Amendment to Strengthen Role of MPs' Body

The proposal for tabling the 21st Constitutional Amendment is being considered in order to give greater purpose and meaning to the role of the Parliamentary Committee for Judges Appointment. The political parties having representation in parliament agree at large that the parliamentary committee for appointment of judges of the superior judiciary cannot effectively

work in its present role, therefore, it should either be abolished or its role be made more effective through a constitutional amendment. In a meeting of the committee, the proposals relevant to the amendment were discussed. A sub-committee headed by former federal law minister Farooq H Naek is also working for enhancing the role of the parliamentary committee and its recommendations are being finalised. However, Farooq H Naek wondered whether the parliamentary committee is empowered or it should be abolished altogether. No Member of Parliament is ready to become the permanent head of the committee due to its ineffective role, and no permanent chairman of the committee has been appointed for the last 18 months. In this situation, the members chair its meetings in turns. Moreover, they don't take interest in the affairs of the committee. Senator Haji Adeel holds the stance that the parliamentary committee is not to rubber stamp the recommendations of the Judicial Commission but it should be given the prerogative to finalise the appointment of judges.

The judges appointment committee is also analysing the role of parliaments of different countries in appointment of judges. Sources said that through the 21st Constitutional Amendment, the duration for finalising the committee's decision on the recommendations of the Judicial Commission should be increased from 14 days to one month. Secondly, the lifestyle of the appointed judges should be observed for one year from the date of their appointment. Thirdly, lawyers bodies should be included in the nomination of judges and the process be made more transparent. In the next meeting, the recommendations of the committee headed by Farooq H Naek will be discussed.

The News - October 26th, 2013

Pakistan Protection Ordinance 2013: Nawaz Seeks Consensual Vote for Anti-Terror Law

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif wants all political parties to vote in favour of the Pakistan Protection Ordinance 2013 when it is tabled in parliament for approval. To garner support for the legislation, the prime minister wrote a letter to all parties justifying its significance and stressing the need for the legislation. The federal government, as part of its anti-terror measures, drafted the Pakistan Protection Ordinance (PPO) 2013 that declares "peace-disrupting" elements as "enemies of the state", which President Mamnoon Hussain approved on October 19. Now the prime minister wants the ordinance enacted as law, taking measures to channel politicking in favour of the legislation. "The federal government considered it imperative to put in place a legal mechanism for intervention to protect the right and liberty of the common man, as well as the sovereignty and integrity of the state of Pakistan," the premier wrote in his letter to the parties. Enclosing a copy of the PPO with the letter, he said it is being promulgated with a view to give a strong message to organised crime and anti-state elements regarding "the will and determination of the state." The law is in full consonance with the country's constitution and the current volatile security situation and the potential unfolding events in post-2014 Afghanistan warranted such a law, he explained.

Soon after the president's approval, many questioned the ordinance and criticised the government of resorting to ordinances instead of introducing full-fledged laws. To this, the prime minister responded in the letter by linking the ordinance to his government's efforts to eliminate the twin evils of terrorism and crime from society. Trying to convince parliamentarians, he said the organised mafia is roaming free in the country "due to the legal vacuum created by the constant tampering of legislations over an extended period of time." Consequently, he said, the socio-economic fabric of our society is threatening to come apart. Prime Minister Nawaz voiced hope that all the political parties would support the legislation with the same spirit they exhibited during the all parties' conference (APC). An ordinance

normally has a shelf life of 90 days before it has to be ratified by parliament. While the ordinance is likely to sail through the National Assembly where PML-N holds a majority of seats. However, it would face a challenge in the upper house from PPP and its allied parties who are in the majority. The PPP has already made its intentions clear. Senator Raza Rabbani has said that the ordinance in its present form was unacceptable as it was against people's fundamental rights. Speaking to journalists, the PPP senator said his party would oppose it in parliament.

Taliban Peace Talks

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has also directed Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan to take all parties into confidence about any headway in the peace process with the Taliban. "Representatives of different political parties should feel a part of the process," PM Sharif instructed Nisar. The premier's directives came in reaction to a letter by Leader of the Opposition in National Assembly Khursheed Shah. He asked the government to share with all parties "any and all work done so far in regard to talks with the Taliban since the APC". Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), which proposed holding a jirga, has been carrying out groundwork and has established back-channel contacts with sources in the tribal areas. However, the government has yet to give it a go-ahead. "Maulana Fazlur Rehman's proposal is the best for talks with the Taliban but the federal government has to decide on how to go about it," said Senator Haji Ghulam Ali from JUI-F. Last month, the government insinuated that eminent religious scholars might be given the task to negotiate with the Taliban. "We have not been contacted by the government as yet. We were waiting for the prime minister's return from the US to formally ask us," said Qari Hafiz Jalandhri, the secretary general of Wafaqul Madaris. He, however, clarified that the ceasefire appeal was not made from the platform of Wafaq but it was an individual act of religious scholars.

The Express Tribune - October 27th, 2013

Prime Minister Forms Body to Fill Legal Vacuum after 18th Amendment

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif constituted a three-member committee to formulate necessary recommendations to fill the legal vacuum created after the passage of the 18th Amendment. Nawaz observed that after the passing of 18th Amendment, legislation needed to cope with the new scenario has not been done and this situation has created a legal vacuum. He directed that in order to fill this gap, necessary legislation should be done. The previous government, he claimed, had shown criminal negligence in this respect. The prime minister constituted a three-member committee, headed by Federal Minister Zahid Hamid, to propose measures in this respect while other members of the committee would be Special Assistant to the PM Khawaja Zaheer and Law Secretary Barrister Zafarullah. The committee would recommend new legislation in order to overcome the legal vacuum created after the passing of 18th Amendment. The prime minister passed the directive during a meeting with Law Secretary Barrister Zafarullah who called on him at the Prime Minister's House. Nawaz said that transparency, accountability and rule of law should be their objectives and be followed in all matters. Barrister Zafarullah briefed the prime minister about the working of the ministry.

Daily Times - October 27th, 2013

POLITICAL & ELECTION WATCH**Political Stakeholders & Elections****Foreign donors be given direct access in Balochistan: Hyrbyar**

Expressing support for the Baloch insurgency, self-exiled Baloch leader Nawabzada Hyrbyar Marri urged the international community to pressure Pakistan to allow international humanitarian organisations direct access to Balochistan's earthquake-affected areas. Nawabzada Hyrbyar Marri, who is now known as Balochistan's most influential leader and is the most widely-respected leader among various groups seeking separation from Pakistan, said that military should hand over relief work to non-governmental and international humanitarian organisations, saying that relief operations are not the military's job anyway, especially in Balochistan's case when people have so much hatred for the military. "We want foreign or international human rights organisations to have direct access in Balochistan's quake-stricken areas. All Baloch pro-independence political parties and leaders agree on this point that international humanitarian and non-governmental organisations must be granted direct access to carry out relief work in Balochistan, so why doesn't the military allow other social and civil organisations to carry out relief operations?" Marri asked. Nawabzada Hyrbyar Marri, son of veteran Baloch nationalist leader Nawab Khair Bakhsi Marri, also assured the international humanitarian organisations that his workers together with the locals would cooperate with international donors in carrying out relief operation in the region. About the security of foreign humanitarian organisations, the Baloch nationalist leader said that foreign humanitarian organisations will not be facing security risks from the Baloch people, but he expressed the fear that security forces and intelligence agencies will either not allow them to go to Balochistan or they will try to harm them to defame the Baloch struggle.

Commenting on Pakistan Army's role in the relief operations in the quake-affected areas, Marri said that military personnel are pouring into the quake-affected areas to increase their presence in the name of relief work and they are establishing new checkpoints. He claimed that in the cover of relief operation five Baloch youth were killed and more than 20 have been abducted after army's arrival in Awaran and its surrounding areas. He also said that military's offensives are still continuing in Panjgur and Mashkey in the name of relief operation. About an attack on army men engaged in relief operation in the region by insurgents, the self-exiled Baloch leader said that army and other security agencies have been carrying out military offensives in Balochistan and that several Baloch pro-freedom activists have been target-killed and abducted by the security forces recently, which is why, he said, that military's involvement in relief work is being seen as an insult by the people. The Baloch leader termed military sympathy with the Baloch people a "mere pretence" and said that they are conducting photo sessions to conceal their crimes in Balochistan. "I am glad that Baloch people know their real enemy and in many places people turned away army's help, proving that even at these difficult times Baloch do not accept help from the killers of their children," said Marri. Baloch He appealed to the international donors to immediately extend financial assistance to the people who were hit by a strong earthquake which had affected more than three hundred thousand people in Balochistan, killed over five hundred and injured more than 6,000.

He requested the United Nations, European Union and human rights organisations to immediately send a delegation to Balochistan to view the situation and assess losses. "Baloch women, youngsters, the aged and children are suffering badly. They are spending their days and night under open skies and Pakistani military is engaged in photo sessions in order to cover

their crimes. In such circumstances we will welcome the support of foreign donors," he said. When asked whether he was contacted by Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik during his stay in London, the Baloch leader said that no he was not, and added that "Dr Malik has no power to resolve the issue of Balochistan. His government still does not have a cabinet because he needs permission and green signal from Punjab. How can he resolve other issues," Marri remarked. Commenting on Dr Abdul Malik Baloch's dialogue offer to the nationalists, he said that they have never rejected negotiations, and the only thing he said he would not compromise on is the independence of Balochistan. Setting out his demands, he called for an immediate and unconditional military pullout from Balochistan, saying that all Baloch political prisoners must be released safely and recognised as political prisoners and prisoners of war; independent international bodies must be allowed to investigate Pakistani military's crimes against the Baloch people; personnel of military, ISI and other security agencies must be arrested and punished for their crimes in Balochistan. Marri called on the international community to pay attention towards the human rights violations in Balochistan and hold Pakistani security forces accountable for their "crimes against humanity".

Daily Times - October 05th, 2013

NADRA Finds May 11 Polls Massively Rigged In NA-256

The National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) submitted its report of thumb print verification for National Assembly seat NA-256 (Karachi) to the Election Tribunal, which revealed massive rigging. Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) candidate Iqbal Muhammad Khan had won the seat. According to the report, 84,748 votes were cast in the constituency during the May 11 general elections and 11,343 ballot papers contained invalid Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) numbers which were never issued by the registration authority. Fake voting was observed in three different polling stations and about 791 votes were found not registered in the constituency. Report further said there are 5,839 duplicate votes while a resident of Gulistan-e-Johar Block-13 namely Shakir Zaheer holding CNIC (42201-5796395-3) had cast seven votes. No thumb impressions were found on 314 ballot papers. The report said NADRA was sent 8, 4748 ballots for the verification out of which 6,815 were successfully authenticated and 57,642 carrying poor quality of the thumb impression were not matched by the NADRA system. About 1,950 ballots CNIC numbers did not match with CNIC mentioned on the counterfoils, the report added. Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate refused to accept the results.

The Nation - October 08th, 2013

ECP Unable To Comply With SC Directive on LG Polls

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is unable to comply with the Supreme Court's directive requiring the commission to announce the date for local government elections in all provinces and the federal capital on October 21st, 2013. "The ECP can do it only after provinces carry out delimitation exercise and publish it in the gazette". He pointed out that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad had not yet framed local government laws, an exercise to precede fresh delimitation. The official said an important meeting of the ECP would be held on Oct 22 to discuss the progress made by provinces. All provincial chief secretaries, the chief commissioner of Islamabad and the chairman of Nadra will attend the meeting. Acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani will be in chair. He said committees formed to discuss different aspects of the coming local government elections would also meet in

Islamabad for three days starting from Oct 22 and submit their reports to the ECP by Oct 30. "We can say that a clear picture as to when holding of local government elections will be possible will emerge by the end of this month," he observed.

At the last meeting, held on Oct 3, provinces had assured the Election Commission that they would complete the prerequisites for holding of polls by the end of next month. "But we cannot do anything on assumptions and will be needing requisitions for holding of elections along with the notifications before announcing the election schedule," the official said. He said once provinces would propose dates for LG polls, the ECP would have to see if it was administratively possible and accordingly adjust the dates. He said provinces wanted holding of LG polls on old census blocks while the electoral rolls had been prepared in line with the new census blocks. "We need to see what time would be required by Nadra to prepare the electoral rolls," he added. The official said various other technical aspects were required to be thoroughly deliberated upon. The implications of holding non-party based election are supposed to be examined. He said different kinds of nomination papers had been prepared by provinces and their criteria for qualification and disqualification had dissimilarities.

Answering a question, the official said the ECP had been writing to provinces since the passage of the 18th Amendment in constitution, asking them to frame local government laws and go for delimitation. The official said governments in Punjab and Sindh could rightly be blamed for slackness as the provinces were ruled by same parties which were in power before the 2013 general elections. It would be unfair to hold governments in the KP and Balochistan responsible for any delay because political parties ruling these provinces had been in power only for around four months, he added. The official pointed out that the KP government was very serious about holding of early local government elections. He said other arrangements, including printing of ballot papers, deployment of security staff, appointment of election tribunals and appellate tribunals, voters' awareness campaign, establishment of polling stations were among the multiple tasks required to be carefully looked into to avert a fiasco in unnecessary haste.s

Dawn - October 20th, 2013

Political Parties

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

PTI Wants New Opposition Leader

Floating the idea of a new leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan accused the incumbent - Syed Khurshid Shah of PPP - of being hand in glove with the ruling PML-N. Speaking at a press conference here, the PTI chief spoke also on other issues, including price hike. Imran Khan said that, as expected, the PPP in its opposition role had failed. Hence, he added, "we will see if a new opposition leader can be brought in the house". PTI leaders are meeting to discuss options about the election of a new leader of the opposition in accordance with the parties' numerical position in the lower house of the parliament. Imran Khan claimed that the PPP leaders were on record having said that they would not disturb the PML-N government until the next elections. He said it clearly meant that "we have had our time in power and now it's your turn". The PTI chairman said that the appointment of a National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman and the apparent consensus between the PPP and the PML-N to pick an agreed-upon chairman of Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly proved that the two parties were working in unison. "If the present trend continues who will hold accountability of former and present rulers," he said,

predicting that the NAB decision to file references against PPP leaders would just be an attempt to clear their names.

In reply to a question about the election of a new leader of the opposition under the current numerical position of parties in the house, Imran Khan said his party was working on the idea. His party's information secretary, Dr Shireen Mazari, agreed with a questioner that the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) could play a crucial role in bringing about a change in the house. If the MQM joined hands with the PPP, it would be difficult to bring intended change in the house, she said. On the NA's opposition benches, PPP leads with 44 members, followed by PTI's 35 and MQM's 24. There is also a group of eight independents. Therefore, the idea of a new opposition leader can materialise only when MQM supports the candidate. As per the assembly rules, any member sitting on opposition benches can claim seat of leader of the opposition by proving the support of the majority of votes. To make this happen, a candidate needs to submit a written application with the signatures of lawmakers to the NA speaker's office, which after confirmation by all signatories notifies the leader of the opposition. Asked if he himself would be a candidate for leader of the opposition, Imran Khan did not rule out the possibility, and said first it had to be determined if the numbers would allow the PTI and like-minded parties to go for the option.

PRICE HIKE: The PTI chairman criticised the government for raising electricity and gas prices and what he called imposing indirect taxes. The government's decisions, he added, had caused an unprecedented wave of inflation and price hike. He called upon the government to review its decisions. The PTI chief accused the PML-N government of benefiting only 'a rich man's club' and said his party would not accept it. He said in Punjab his party would initiate a campaign from Nov 1. He said instead of checking electricity and gas theft, the government was penalising the middle and poor classes. The PTI chairman presented a seven-point formula to improve revenue generation. He asked the government to catch tax evaders, saying that putting millions of people under the tax net would immediately generate about Rs300 billion for the national exchequer. Additionally, he added, there was about 35 per cent sales tax evasion in the country and by plugging that, Rs250 billion could be recovered. Agriculture and real estate sectors should be brought in the tax net. Likewise, taxes on capital gains, property and stock market would help the government to widen the tax net. Stopping gas and electricity theft was part of the PTI's plan to improve revenue generation. Imran Khan called for bringing the looted money back to the country and ending money whitening schemes.

Dawn - October 26th, 2013

Party-Less Politics: PTI to Contest Local Elections as Insaf Group

If the upcoming local bodies' elections are held on a party-less basis, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf will participate as Insaf Group, PTI Punjab president Ejaz Chaudhry told. "We hope that the Lahore High Court will accept PTI's demand for elections on a party basis," he said, "Otherwise, we will approach the Supreme Court for a review of the decision." He said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz wanted to hijack the mandate of the electorate by holding party-less polls because it had become unpopular due to its anti-people policies during the past five months. "We have been working hard for these elections and will not allow rigging - before or after polling- this time," he said. Chaudhry said that the party had constituted committees at the district and tehsil/town levels to recommend suitable candidates. "The committees will ensure that only competent and loyal candidates contest under the Insaf Group's banner," he said. Chaudhry said if elections were held on party basis, the PTI would issue tickets and campaign for its candidates. In case of elections on a party-less basis, the PTI will provide a list of its

candidates from all union councils and tehsil and district councils to the media to prevent confusion among voters, Chaudhry said. "If the government tries to use state machinery to harass our candidates and voters, as it did in the by-elections, we will respond forcefully," he said. The PTI leader said that the committees were in the process of interviewing potential candidates. These will be completed soon so the candidates have sufficient time to campaign. "We will plan a door-to-door campaign to motivate the voters," he said. "The youth will be given priority while picking the candidates." Omer Zahir Mir, a PTI office bearer, said the PML-N wanted to hold elections on a partyless basis because it had a habit of "buying the loyalties of winning candidates". "The PTI will allow them no such chance," said Mir. "We will strongly protest against any attempts to that effect."

The Express Tribune - October 27th, 2013

Pakistan People's Party (PPP)

PPP Yet To Compile Report on Election Defeat

Five months have passed since elections were held in the country but the PPP is yet to come up with a report on the causes of its defeat in the polls, it is learnt. It is interesting to note that the leadership of the party, which suffered a humiliating defeat in the elections held after completion of PPP's five-year term in office, has not convened a meeting of its central executive committee or other forum to discuss the poll results. Sources in the party said that soon after the elections, former president and PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari had assigned PPP Senator Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan the task of compiling a report on causes of the party's defeat. Mr Ahsan, the sources said, had prepared a questionnaire containing more than 50 questions and sent it to all PPP candidates to seek their replies. Through the questionnaire, the candidates have been asked to give reasons for their defeat and describe the role of local and provincial office-bearers of the party during the elections and the conduct of returning officers and other election staff. The sources said the party had received a poor response from the candidates as only a few had submitted the questionnaire to the PPP's secretariat. A PPP candidate for a National Assembly seat, who requested not to be identified, he had informed the party leadership that he would not submit the form because he believed that it was not necessary.

"If I fill in the questionnaire, it will suggest as if I am submitting a complaint against my comrades and this will not go down well within the party," he said. He said such issues were discussed in closed-door meetings and should not be brought in writing. When contacted, PPP Secretary General Sardar Latif Khosa claimed that the party had so far received a sufficient number of forms and the process of compilation of a report would start soon. But, he said, the PPP had suffered the defeat because of massive rigging and added that Mr Ahsan had highlighted the instances of rigging at a recent press conference. Mr Khosa said the party leadership would soon convene a meeting to review the outcome of the elections. Mr Ahsan had said at the news conference that the PPP had accepted a "fake mandate" after the polls only because it wanted to prevent derailment of democracy. However, instead of directly targeting the PML-N, he focused on the "dubious role" of returning officers. He mentioned the alleged casting of (134,000) bogus votes only in one NA constituency (NA-139) and said the PPP would submit an application to the Kasur police station to get a criminal case registered against the returning officer and his assistant allegedly for resorting to "corrupt practices". Mr Ahsan could not be contacted for comments despite efforts.

Dawn - October 20th, 2013

Nadia Gabol Jumps Ship to Join PPP

Former legislator of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Nadia Gabol jumped ship to join Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) simply because her cousin Nabeel Gabol had joined the MQM. Nadia Gabol told the media she, along with her father, left MQM because of her personal and political rivalry with her cousin Nabeel Gabol who had quit PPP to join MQM. There was festivity at Nine Zero a few months ago when Nabeel left PPP to join MQM and the same spirit was evident at the house of Owais Muzaffar when Nadia joined PPP. Nadia Gabol was nominated by MQM as MPA on reserved seat in the 2008 election and served as human rights minister in the Sindh government. Responding to a question she, however, refuted the reports of differences with MQM. "I have nothing personal against MQM," she said, adding that her family was affiliated with the PPP since 1976.

MQM Reaction

MQM Coordination Committee member Aminul Haque said Nadia's decision would not affect the party. "She was not active for several months in the party."

Bilawal Meets Thatta Leaders

PPP's chief patron Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met PPP leaders from Thatta at the house of Sindh Local Bodies Minister Owais Muzaffar. The minister had hosted an Eid Milan party for the party's leadership from Thatta district.

The Express Tribune - October 20th, 2013

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

Rangers' Team Seizes 'Indian Weapons' From MQM Office

The paramilitary force raided the MQM Landhi office and seized an Indian-made light machine gun (LMG), submachine guns (SMGs) and rifles, reported by Rangers spokesperson. They also found CCTV cameras, which the criminals had installed to monitor law-enforcement agencies. MQM denied that any Indian-made weapon was recovered from its office. In a press statement, the party demanded the president and the prime minister take notice of the matter. The Rangers spokesperson also said that two target killers, Shamim alias Goli and Sajid Hussain were also arrested along with 12 others from Landhi. He lashed out at the MQM for an earlier press conference where the party leader condemned the raids. Responding to accusations made in the MQM press conference, the spokesperson explained that they would never loot office equipment and write abusive wall chalking. He alleged that some party members must have done that. Earlier, leaders of MQM had slammed the Rangers for raiding their party office and demanded a halt to what they called 'illegal raids'. Ahmed declared that the MQM had been targeted ever since the operation began.

The Express Tribune - October 02nd, 2013

Notices Issued On MQM Plea against Vote Verification

The Sindh High Court directed the Election Commission of Pakistan, National Database and Registration Authority and others to submit their respective replies in the petition of a Muttahida Qaumi Movement lawmaker against the verification of thumbprints of voters on

ballots in a provincial assembly constituency (PS-128) in Quaidabad, Karachi. Petitioner MPA Waqar Hussain Shah, who emerged victorious in PS-128 by securing 23,496 votes, challenged through a constitutional petition the order of the Election Tribunal, Karachi regarding verification of thumb impressions on the ballots. The tribunal, headed by former judge of the Sindh High Court Zafar Ahmed Sherwani, had on Sept 17 directed Nadra to verify thumb impressions of voters in an election petition filed by Sultan Khan Johri, a defeated candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), who had bagged 5,507 votes. The runner-up candidate was Maulana Aurangzeb Farooqui of the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat who had contested the May 11 general election from the platform of the Muttahida Deeni Mahaz, an alliance of some religious parties. A two-judge bench headed by Justice Sajjad Ali Shah issued notices to the parliamentary affairs secretary, ECP, election tribunal, and others. The federal and provincial law officers were also put on notice for Oct 24 when the court would take up the matter.

MPA Shah and another MNA of the MQM had on Oct 10 filed separate petitions against the ECP, election tribunal and Nadra for the verification of thumbprints on ballots and voters lists in their respective constituencies. A Nadra report regarding the verification of thumbprints in PS-128 is expected to be submitted in the tribunal shortly. Mr Shah's counsel, Advocate Abrar Hussain, contended in the petition that the election tribunal had acted in a biased and partial manner without considering the objection raised by his client on the application of the runner-up candidate, who sought verification of thumb impressions. The counsel submitted in the petition that it would not be constitutional to rely on the Nadra report, as nothing could be made out from it either in favour of the petitioner or the respondents. He said that calling for such a report that in fact failed to determine anything judiciously about the alleged malpractice in the general elections could not be relied upon by the election tribunal without support of any cogent evidence. The counsel stated that Nadra did not have the expertise to accurately check all the thumb impressions, as the magnetic ink had not been used in the voting process. Even otherwise, Nadra's expertise in this regard could hardly lead to accurate results or verification, he added.

Dawn - October 15th, 2013

By-Elections & Local Government Elections 2013

Grass Root Governance: Top Court Orders Provinces to Submit LG Polls Schedule

The Supreme Court has asked all provincial governments to announce the schedule of the local body's elections and submit it to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) by October 7. A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry heard the case and directed all the provincial governments to enforce the Article 140A of the Constitution by holding local bodies elections. PTI Chairman Imran Khan had earlier announced that his party's government would hold local bodies' elections within 90 days to devolve power to the grassroots level. But all the provincial governments except that of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) have handed over relevant documents to ECP for holding local bodies elections. ECP Director General Sher Afgan said that no request was received from any of the provinces to hold local body elections despite repeated requests since the year 2010. Balochistan, on its part, had carried out demarcations of union councils on the basis of the old census on which elections cannot be held. The Sindh advocate-general stated that the demarcations of the province would be completed on November 4. Meanwhile, Punjab has also completed its demarcations, the province's advocate general stated. The court was informed that administrators have been appointed and soon the local government elections would be held. The chief justice said the election commission should have no issues in administering the local bodies' polls as every

institution is at its disposal. The court also warned of consequences in case of failure. The case has been adjourned till October 7.

The Express Tribune - October 03rd, 2013

Procedural Snags: ECP Hints That LB Polls Not Possible In 2013

The Supreme Court had directed the provinces to hold local bodies (LB) polls at the earliest but the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) dropped the hint that it would not be possible to hold the elections in 2013. The sources said a province required 90 days for legislation, delimitation and completion of rules, adding that no province had taken necessary measures to hold LB polls, while the provincial governments had also failed to inform the ECP about their intentions and preparations. The ECP secretary said Punjab was the only province which did not want to hold the LB elections on party basis. Explaining the K-P plan, he said the province would hold elections on non-party basis at the village-level whereas elections at the tehsil and district levels would be held on party basis. Talking about the tasks to be performed by the ECP, the secretary said the commission had printed 200 million ballot papers for the general elections but for local government elections the number would rise three times to 600 million.

The Express Tribune - October 04th, 2013

LG polls to be held in phases: ECP official

The much-delayed local government elections will be held in a phased manner, according to a senior officer of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Conducting the election in all the provinces simultaneously would be a huge exercise, three times larger than the general elections held this year, he said. "It (phased polls) will be inevitable in the wake of quantum of administrative and logistic arrangements required for the gigantic task." He told that the proposal had been discussed at a meeting of the inter-provincial committee. Basic local bodies' institutions -- union, village and neighbourhood councils and wards -- are multimember constituencies and categories of seats in each council would require ballot papers in different colours. Security arrangements at polling stations, he said, would have to be made while keeping in view availability of security personnel in each province. "What we can do is to hold polls in 18 of the 36 districts in Punjab first and in remaining districts later. The same model can be followed in other provinces," he said. He said electoral rolls prepared for this year's general elections would be updated for use in LG polls. The National Database Registration Authority will have to change the format of the rolls for newly-demarcated union councils and wards.

The commission's officials concerned are being asked to move a reference to the Ministry of Finance for allocation of funds for LG elections, ascertain the requirement of the copies of updated electoral rolls to be supplied to field officers and returning officers and ask Nadra to initiate necessary action. He said printing requirements of the ECP would be conveyed to the Printing Corporation of Pakistan (PCP) and the Security Printing Corporation (SPC). He recalled that a difficult situation had arisen on the eve of May 11 general polls because of inability of the PCP to timely print ballot papers. The ECP will soon hold meetings with the PCP and SPC to discuss the modalities for printing of ballot papers and other election material. He said instructions for district returning officers and returning officers would be prepared for conducting elections in a free, fair and efficient manner and in the light of new local government laws to be introduced by the provinces. The official said the law should be clear about people to be appointed as appellate tribunals to hear appeals against decisions of returning officers.

Likewise, it should be clear about appointment of election tribunals to hear and dispose of election petitions.

Dawn - October 05th, 2013

KP to Hold LG Polls On both Party and Non-Party Basis

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet approved the proposed local government and Ehtesab Commission laws for tabling in the provincial assembly next week for consent. It also decided that local government elections would be held on non-party basis at the village council level and on party basis at the tehsil and district council levels. However, the date for holding these elections has yet not been fixed. Chief Minister Pervez Khattak chaired the cabinet meeting at the CM Secretariat here. Later, Information Minister Shah Farman and Local Government Minister Inayatullah Khan told a joint news conference that the assembly session would be convened shortly and drafts of the two proposed laws would be tabled there. The information minister said the coalition government was fulfilling its agenda of change in the province by approving drafts of the proposed laws. He said Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and its coalition partners in the government had made commitment to constitute an independent and powerful Ehtesab Commission at the provincial level to ensure transparency and eradicate corruption from the society.

Mr Farman said the Right to Information Ordinance, 2013 had already been put up before the select committee of the assembly. He said for the first time, an elected government was going to hold local government elections and that in the past, only dictators had held local government polls in the country. The information minister said every public officeholder, minister and even chief minister would be made answerable to the proposed Ehtesab Commission and it would be fully autonomous. "There will be no chance of political victimisation and there will be no plea bargaining at all," he said. According the draft law, the proposed commission can conduct investigation against any person holding a legislative, executive, or administrative position in the province whether appointed or elected, permanent or temporary, paid or unpaid and irrespective of that person's seniority. Judges, military and district judiciary have been excluded. There will be one Chief Ehtesab Commissioner and four Ehtesab Commissioners. One director general would be appointed who would function under the Ehtesab Commission, besides one prosecutor general and one director internal monitoring and public complaints.

Minister Inayatullah Khan said the draft of the proposed local government law was very close to the Local Government Ordinance, 2001. He said all four provinces had held consultations with the Election Commission of Pakistan and the draft prepared by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was appreciated. The minister said the new local government law would devolve financial, political and administrative powers. He said the union council had been abolished in the proposed system and around 4,000 village councils would be introduced across the province. Mr Inayatullah said around 50,000 councilors would be elected in the elections and they would get administrative and financial powers. He said according to the proposed draft, each village council would cover 2,000-10,000 population. He said there would be five general seats and five reserve seats, which included two for women, one for youth, one minority and one peasant.

Dawn - October 05th, 2013

Local Government Elections: Redrawing Boundaries Puzzles Officials

After the Sindh government gave the go-ahead to start delimitation from the union councils, the deputy commissioners of Karachi have started the process by undoing the changes to the boundaries made during 2001-2002. The delimitation of constituencies, which was supposed to start from September 26 following the Supreme Court's directives to hold the local government election, started on September 30 as the local government issued the notification two days late. An official of district Central, however, appeared confused as to the purpose of the delimitation since they have been told not to touch the existing census blocks or alter the population.

The Express Tribune - October 09th, 2013

Punjab Ready for LG Polls in December

Provincial Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Rana Sanaullah says the delimitation of constituencies for local body elections has been completed. He explained at the Punjab Assembly cafeteria that the delimited constituencies had been put on display at the offices of the delimitation offices in districts for inviting objections from the general public. He claimed no political consideration was undertaken during the fresh delimitations and these would be notified in the first week of November, and the Election Commission would be asked to hold polls in the first week of December.

Dawn - October 11th, 2013

Grassroots Governance: Fix Date for LB Elections or Face Consequences Says SC

Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry said the government functionaries would have to face the consequences if court's orders to hold local bodies (LB) polls were not carried out. He was heading a three-judge bench hearing a constitutional petition in Supreme Court Lahore Branch Registry against non-holding of local governments' election by the provincial governments. The bench ordered all the four provincial governments to come up with a clear-cut date for holding LB election and sought progress report on the court's different orders pertaining to Local Bodies' elections. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmed, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) advocate general and Punjab Additional Advocate General Hanif Khatana appeared before the court. The ECP informed the bench that three provinces -Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan- had laid down the relevant law and rules for holding LB elections. "But the K-P has neither outlined the relevant laws nor has done delimitation exercise," the bench was told. The CJ said the political parties were violating their party manifestos by not holding the LB elections, adding that during general elections, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had promised to hold Local Bodies' election within 90 days.

During the course of hearing, the CJ showed annoyance over inordinate delay on the part of provincial governments and said no one would be allowed to violate constitution and law. "It seems that no one is ready to follow the constitution and law," the CJP remarked. Justice Khawaja, also a member of the bench, said courts or judges had no personal interest in holding the LB polls. "We only want the enforcement of law," he said. Justice Shaikh Azmat Saeed - the third member of the bench - said it was hard to delegate powers to others. "But the provincial governments should show openheartedness in this regard." On ECP's request to grant more time to complete homework for elections, Justice Khawaja showed his annoyance and said no effort had been made in one and half year to hold the polls. The court was adjourned till October 21. In a related development, a division bench of the Lahore High Court sought reply from

Punjab government on the objections over delimitation of constituencies for LB election in province. As hearing started, the PTI counsel told the court that the Punjab government was conducting delimitation which was the job of ECP. He said Punjab government is doing delimitation with mala fide intention just to give undue favour to its favourites. The court will resume hearing by October 18.

SC Disposes Of Plea for LG Election in Sindh

The Sindh government assured the Supreme Court that it was committed to conducting the much demanded LB election in the province. Sindh Advocate General Khalid Jawed Khan made this submission before a two-judge bench, during hearing a petition seeking direction for the Sindh government to hold LB elections in the province. Rana Faizul Hasan, general secretary of the United Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, had gone to the court against delays in the LB polls.

The Express Tribune - October 15th, 2013

Supreme Court Slams Governments over Delay in LG Polls

The Supreme Court expressed annoyance over failure of the federal and provincial governments to come up with clear replies about holding the local bodies elections and ordered them to submit in one week reports on steps being taken to enforce Article 140-A of the Constitution and the court's directions in this regard. The directive was issued by a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry which had taken up a case relating to local government elections at the Lahore registry of the Supreme Court. The next hearing will be held in Islamabad on Oct 21. The chief justice regretted that the governments had hoodwinked the nation on the issue of local government elections. He also came down hard on the Election Commission of Pakistan and said it should have written letters to the provincial governments every week about holding the elections. Justice Jawad S. Khwaja, a member of the bench, said the governments might think that there was some benefit for the judges in the holding of the polls. "The only thing we want is implementation of the constitution," he said. Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed said it appeared that the provincial governments were reluctant to transfer powers to the local administration but the constitution did not allow it.

Justice Khwaja said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had promised to hold the elections in 90 days, but failed to do so. He said political parties were violating their manifestos and wanted courts to do their (parties) job. The chief justice remarked that the apex court had been exercising maximum restraint on the matter. "We want the governments to fulfil their constitutional obligations. Otherwise, they will be in trouble," he warned. ECP Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmad said it was the job of the provinces to complete election-relation formalities, including legislation and delimitation. He informed the court that the commission had not received any request from any of the provinces. The additional attorney general and law officers of the provinces sought two weeks to submit replies, but the court gave them one week and asked them to come up with clear replies on Oct 21. When the ECP secretary insisted that the commission should be given more time because of Eidul Azha, Justice Khwaja asked him to work on holidays because the constitution was being violated in the case.

Dawn - October 15th, 2013

LG polls: another SC-ECP clash in the making?

Another clash may be in the making between the Supreme Court and the Election Commission of Pakistan regarding the holding of local government elections as the ECP has raised objections over the polling dates given by the provincial governments. The ECP has also made it clear that in view of delimitation conducted by old census blocks it would be impossible to hold local government elections this year. It must be noted that presently, senior-most judge Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani is working as acting chief election commissioner. A three-member bench comprising Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Justice Jawwad S Khawaja and Justice Gulzar Ahmed is hearing a constitutional petition against non-holding of local governments' elections throughout the country. The court was informed that Balochistan and Punjab have completed all the formalities regarding holding of the LG polls and are ready to hold elections on December 7 this year. Sindh has taken lead and wants the elections in the province on November 27, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad Capital Territory are still without the required law for holding of LG polls. During the hearing, counsel for ECP, Akram Sheikh, while submitting concise statement regarding the holding of LG polls, contended that the provincial governments had given polling dates just to please the Supreme Court as they had no preparations in this regard.

The chief justice snubbed Akram Sheikh, saying that he should be careful in the selection of words as it was the duty of the ECP to hold LG elections, otherwise the commission should be aware of the consequence regarding non-compliance of the constitution. The chief justice looked annoyed over the ECP's concise statement and summoned Attorney General of Pakistan Muneer A Malik to assist the bench in prevailing situation. Since the AGP was not available, Additional Attorney General of Pakistan Shah Khawar came to the rostrum and suggested the bench show restraint in this matter. Justice Jawwad Khawaja observed that it had happened in the past that the constitution was not enforced in the name of judicial restraint but they had made clear on November 3, 2007 that this policy would not be continued further. On the other hand, the counsel for ECP asked whether the commission should hold LG elections without ballot papers, further asking how the commission could deprive 60 million people from voting in the local government elections. Akram Sheikh submitted the details of the letters which had been sent by the commission to the provincial governments in different times after the insertion of 140-A in April 2010. According to the statement after the 18th Amendment, several letters were written to the provinces even after the general elections 2013.

In spite of all the efforts no provincial government was able to fulfil the pre-requisites, it said. The ECP's statement further stated that the provinces have done the delimitation on the basis of old blocks, while the existing electoral rolls have been prepared on the basis of new census blocks, conducted by Statistic Division in 2011. The housing census had increased the number of census blocks from 102,000 to 140,000. If the provinces delimit the local council/wards on the old census blocks then it will not be possible for NADRA to prepare fresh electoral rolls for the conduct of local government elections unless once again a door-to-door verification exercise is carried out to reconcile the electoral rolls with the delimitation carried out by the provinces. To resolve the issues the ECP has constituted four committees at provincial level to carry out pilot exercise in one district of each province to see the compatibility of the electoral rolls with the delimitation carried out by the provincial governments. If any irreconcilable incompatibility of electoral rolls with the delimitation is found the ECP will have to prepare the electoral rolls afresh, which will require at least 2-3 months.

Daily Times - October 24th, 2013

LB Polls Not Possible This Year: ECP Officials

The long-delayed local polls are quite unlikely to be held during the current year and on the dates given by the provinces, as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is unable to organise the grand exercise for at least five major legal, logistical and technical reasons. "The local bodies' law made by the Punjab is under litigation while the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is yet to formulate its own legislation," an ECP official told, citing one reason, on condition of anonymity. "Reservations have been expressed by some political circles against the Sindh law. Balochistan will follow the law framed in 2010." Another reason behind the ECP's inability to organise the local polls at an early date, according to the official, is the lack of fresh delimitation of constituencies, which is a marathon exercise requiring at least a couple of months to be completed only after it would be undertaken. The third reason is the considerably long time required for updating the electoral rolls, the official said, adding that yet another is the training of the election staff. The fifth reason, he said, is the time needed for printing of the ballot papers. Elaborating, he said, the provinces have done or would do delimitations as per the 102,000 census blocs, prepared by the 1998 population census. One bloc comprises 300 households. These blocs were used in the 2001 and 2005 local elections.

The official said that the ECP has been informed by the census authorities that the tentative number of blocs has now gone up to 140,000 due to the increase in population. Therefore, he said, the delimitations will have to be done as per the inflated number of blocs, and not according to the old data. He said that the ECP has prepared the electoral rolls keeping in view the 140,000 blocs. The provinces, he stated, argue that if they opt for the new number of housing blocs, they will have to do fresh delimitations, an exercise that will consume at least a couple of months. On the other hand, the official said; if the ECP accepts the old 102,000 blocs as valid, it will also need a similar length of time to update the voters' list accordingly. Thus, in any case, some two months will be required to complete this exercise alone. But the countdown would begin only after the actual work would be started, which is yet to kick off, he said. The official said that some 60 million ballot papers would have to be printed for the local polls as against the 20 million ballots for the May general elections. He said that although the printing of ballots for the parliamentary elections was done on war footing, it consumed 19 days and it was completed with a lot of difficulty.

The urgency can be assessed well from the fact that even C-130 planes and helicopters were used to transport the ballots to different places as the printing presses ran their full capacity, he said. While printing 60 million ballots, he added, at least two months would be required if the same speed was maintained. The official said that the local polls process was extremely complicated compared to that of the general elections. The ECP would first understand the local laws and then would be in a position to implement them. He said that some 600,000 people were trained to conduct the parliamentary elections whereas more than double these personnel would be required for the local polls. The voters' awareness will be another big issue as they will have to be educated through a concerted campaign. The official said that the hurried procurement of election material will be another principal challenge. He said that the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules will have to be followed for provision of papers for the ballots after floating tenders inviting bids. This is a time consuming process.

The special paper for the ballots, he said, will have to be procured from abroad. The winning firm will start manufacturing of the paper only after it will be through with all the formalities. Then, it will be required to be transported to Pakistan. Even initial work on this aspect has not been started by now. The official said that the ECP spent approximately Rs5 billion on the general elections. An amount of Rs10 billion would have to be allocated for the local polls. Despite being pressed hard by the Supreme Court again and again for months, some provinces

have finally agreed to hold local elections, and the Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan governments conveyed to it the dates. But in spite of the court pressure, the KP government being run by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had claimed to take lead over the other ruling parties in holding the local elections, has not yet even prepared the requisite law that has irked the court. Now when three provinces have expressed their firm willingness and fixed dates, the ECP's incapacitation is going to turn out to be the major hurdle in holding the elections at an early date. The court resumes hearing on the plea and is unexpected to give weight to the ECP arguments on the ground that delay was a violation of the Constitution, which can't be allowed.

The News - October 25th, 2013

SC Orders ECP to Hold LG Polls On Given Dates

Despite Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) several reservations, the Supreme Court ordered the ECP to hold the local government elections in Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab on the dates announced by these provinces. Sindh wants local government elections in the provinces on November 27, while Punjab and Balochistan have given December 7 date. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad Capital Territory have still not completed the pre-requisites for the elections. A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, pointed out that under Article 140A(2) of the constitution, the ECP is duty-bound to hold the local government elections, therefore, the court is not in a position to allow any relaxation to the commission. ECP, through Advocate Akram Sheikh, had filed a concise statement, expressing some reservations on holding local government elections this year. Sheikh requested the bench to consider ECP's oral statement, saying he would file a written reply on the hearing of the case. Meanwhile, a high official of the ECP told our sources that a meeting of ECP's senior officers was held and it had been decided that the local government elections would be held in view of the Supreme Court order. He also said that the commission would face many legal and administrative issues due to the shortage of time.

Shiekh Akram apprised the bench that the commission was facing some difficulties in holding the elections as time was short. The chief justice remarked that now the ball was in the ECP's court, and added that it must be kept in mind that the courts would not allow anyone to violate the constitution. Advocates general of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan apprised the bench that formal request for holding elections were sent to the election commission. All law officers of the provinces reiterated that they were prepared to conduct the elections on the given dates. The ECP official also said that two high-level meetings regarding the local government elections would be held on October 28 and 29. It is worth mentioning that the incumbent chief justice of Pakistan, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry is retiring on December 12 this year. The legal experts believe that if the local government elections are not held before his retirement then the provincial governments might back out from their commitments. During the hearing, Attorney General of Pakistan Munir A. Malik, who was directed to address the court about the consequences if the court's decision was not implemented, stated: "The past baggage should not be carried on the shoulders of the present governments, in the Centre and provinces, as they were installed four months back."

The attorney general said the governments in the provinces and the Centre is conscious of their duty to safeguard the constitutional provisions. He noted that many times when the executive functionaries did not work in accordance with the constitution the apex court had taken cognisance and issued contempt of court notices. The chief justice said the court had to protect the commands of the constitution. Addressing the AGP, Justice Iftikhar said that according to Article 140A of the constitution the government should hold the local government elections. The

court told the attorney general that despite several hearings the ICT and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government have failed to frame the necessary laws, and asked what should be the consequences for not adhering to the constitution and fulfilling its commands. The AGP said that he would address this issue on November 4. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Attorney General Latif Yousafzai informed the court that the relevant bill has been tabled in the provincial assembly and it would be passed in two to three days. Meanwhile, Additional Attorney General Shah Khawar said that the ICT draft is ready and on the prime minister's table. Justice Jawwad S Khawaja remarked. The hearing of the case has been adjourned until November 4.

Daily Times - October 26th, 2013

ECP Prepares Tentative Schedule

The Election Commission of Pakistan has prepared a tentative schedule for local government elections across the country but is not sure if it will be possible to hold the polls in accordance with the schedule. Hours after a Supreme Court bench, headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, directed the ECP to hold the elections on the dates proposed by the provinces, a senior official of the commission told that a tentative schedule had been prepared and it would soon be placed before the commission for approval. He said weekly holidays of the employees had been cancelled and ECP's offices would remain open on Saturdays and Sundays. He said a meeting of the commission had been convened on Oct 28 to review the situation. The meeting will be presided over by acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani and attended by the ECP's four members and the provincial election commissioners. Another important meeting of the commission will be held on the following day, to be attended by provincial chief secretaries, chairman of the National Database Registration Authority, managing directors of Printing Corporation of Pakistan and Pakistan Security Printing Corporation and representatives of other departments concerned, including statistics and finance divisions and interior ministry. He said the commission would try to accomplish the task but there were huge gaps which required to be bridged by the provinces. Besides, preparatory work was yet to be undertaken by several organisations. "We will not be responsible if anything goes wrong", the ECP official said.

Deficiencies in local government laws enacted by three provinces were bound to create problems at the operational stage and needed to be removed through amendments, he said. He said that no province had provided head of account for the deposit of nomination fee to be paid by candidates. Provisions for submission of declaration of assets were also vague in almost all the laws. The official said there was no provision for appointment of district returning officers in the laws enacted by Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. And Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's draft law fails to mention appointment of district returning officers, returning officers, assistant returning officers and presiding officers. He said some provinces had proposed that the names of local councils should be printed on ballot papers. Because of thousands of councils in each province, printing of separate ballot papers for each council will be a challenging task. Under the Sindh Local Government law each political party has to propose a panel of candidates for four general seats in each local council. But no provision has been made either in the law or the rules about action to be taken if nomination papers of one of the candidates on a panel are rejected, leaving the panel incomplete. He said the provinces were carrying out the delimitation exercise on the basis of 1998 census and census blocks mentioned in it.

He said after the 2011 housing census conducted by the statistics division, the number of census blocks had increased from 102,000 to 140,000. But the existing electoral rolls prepared on the basis of new census blocks will be incompatible with the delimitation carried out on the basis of

old census blocks. The delimitation of local councils and wards carried out on the basis of old census blocks will require a fresh door to door verification to reconcile the rolls. The official said that the procurement, printing and transportation of 600 million ballot papers in different colours involved a lengthy process of placement of order, invitation of tenders, assessment of bids, release order in favour of successful party, taking the material to the press, its printing and sending it to returning officers which was estimated to require not less than three months. "We have started work at the highest possible pace under the judicial pressure but I am not sure how we will manage," he said.

Dawn - October 26th, 2013

ECP to Bear More Expenses As Voters May Be Confused In LB Polls

It will be the first time that local bodies elections will be held on different dates in the provinces, which will, however, mean increased expenses for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "In many cases, we will have to spend funds on the same heads again and again due to different polling dates in the provinces. Usually, we use the money for such purposes only once," an ECP official told. For example, he said, the voters' education campaign would have to be carried out many times, which was always conducted only once. This will obviously involve more money. Rejecting all the pleas of the ECP to delay the local elections for some time to make proper preparations, the Supreme Court has ordered it to hold the electoral exercise on the dates appointed by the provinces. The Punjab and Balochistan have fixed December 7 as the date for polling while Sindh set November 27. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is yet to inform the ECP about the polling date that it will do only after the passage of the new local law in the provincial assembly.

The official said there would be a lot of confusion for the voters because of lack of proper education. He said there would be chaos and muddle in the provinces where the non-party polls will be held. There, he said, every candidate will have to be allotted an election symbol whereas in the event of party-based polls the ticket holders of political parties would be allocated one symbol, which would facilitate the electorate. This factor, the official said, be all the more important in the rural areas where a large number of voters are still not educated enough about the process. Votes will be cast for the candidates contesting for the general seats and special seats for women, labour and peasants. The illiterate electorate will have to identify their candidates, and not the symbols, from amongst long lists of contestants, which will be quite difficult for them. The official said that there would also be confusion about the polling stations for the voters as most of them were unaware of fresh delimitation. He conceded that the ECP would have to hurry up to meet different deadlines to hold polling on various dates. But he admitted that polling on different dates has enabled the ECP to engage its attention on making arrangements for the exercise where the polling date comes first. This has spread its work to some extent.

In the case of Punjab and Balochistan, where the polling would be held on the same date after Sindh, a huge work would be required by the ECP because of the colossal number of voters concentrated in the majority province. There have been instances when polling was held at different dates in different districts of more than one province, but it is unique that different polling dates have been fixed for the provinces. The provincial governments would not have come out with firm election dates had the Supreme Court not consistently pressurized them to meet the constitutional requirement. They prefer to run local councils without the elected representatives, and have been delaying the process for the past four years.

However, the ECP is hard-pressed to organize the marathon exercise and agreed to do so only after the court leave no other option for it. It will also be the first time that different modes of elections will be followed by the provinces. The Punjab is organizing non-party polls. The Balochistan is expected to follow the suit. The Sindh has announced that it would arrange party-based polls. The KP government being led by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lags behind all others as it is still to frame the local law, but it will also hold party-based polls and has been critical of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for going for party-less elections in Punjab. Imran Khan said that a new system will be introduced devolving powers at the lowest levels.

The News - October 28th, 2013

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Human Rights Related Issues

Pakistan Tells UN, 400 Civilians Killed By Drone Strikes

Pakistan has confirmed that of some 2,200 people killed by drone strikes in the past decade, at least 400 were civilians and an additional 200 victims were deemed "probable non-combatants," a UN human rights investigator said. Ben Emmerson, UN special rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism, also urged the United States to release its own data on the number of civilian casualties caused by its drone strikes. Emmerson said Pakistan's Foreign Ministry told him it had recorded at least 330 drone strikes in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Pakistan's largely lawless region bordering Afghanistan, since 2004. Clearing out militant border sanctuaries is seen by Washington as crucial to bringing stability to Afghanistan, particularly as the US-led combat mission ends in 2014. Most, but not all, attacks with unmanned aerial vehicles have been by the United States. Britain and Israel have also used them. In an interim report to UN General Assembly released, Emmerson said Pakistani government records showed that drone strikes had killed at least 2,200 people and seriously wounded at least 600 since 2004. He said Pakistan had confirmed that "at least 400 civilians had been killed as a result of remotely piloted aircraft strikes and a further 200 individuals were regarded as probable non-combatants." "Officials indicated that, owing to underreporting and obstacles to effective investigation, those figures were likely to be an underestimate" of civilian deaths, Emmerson said.

Emmerson, who visited Pakistan in March, noted that principal media monitoring organisations had recorded a "marked drop" in reported civilians casualties from drone strikes in the tribal areas during 2012 and the first half of 2013. The tribal areas have never been fully integrated into Pakistan's administrative, economic or judicial system. They are dominated by ethnic Pashtun tribes, some of which have sheltered and supported militants over decades of conflict in Afghanistan. "The involvement of CIA in lethal counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan and Yemen has created an almost insurmountable obstacle to transparency," Emmerson said. "One consequence is that the United States has to date failed to reveal its own data on the level of civilian casualties inflicted through the use of remotely piloted aircraft in classified operations conducted in Pakistan and elsewhere." During his Senate confirmation process in February, CIA director John Brennan said the closely guarded number of civilian casualties from drone strikes should be made public. The US government, without releasing numbers, has sought to portray civilian deaths from these strikes as minimal. Senator Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat who chairs the Senate Intelligence Committee, said at the time that she had been trying to speak publicly about the "very low number of civilian casualties" and to verify that number each year has "typically been in the single digits." However, she said she was told she could not divulge the actual numbers because they were classified.

In May, US President Barack Obama signed a document that he said codified guidelines for the use of force against terrorists. He said before drone strikes were taken, there must be near-certainty that no civilians would be killed or wounded. Emmerson urged the United States to declassify to the maximum extent possible information "relevant to its lethal extraterritorial counter-terrorism operations; and to release its own data on the level of civilian casualties inflicted through the use of remotely piloted aircraft, together with information on the evaluation methodology used." He reported that in Afghanistan, the UN mission said while casualties were likely underestimated, it had assessed that in recent years drones strikes

appeared to have inflicted lower levels of civilian casualties than other air strikes. Emerson said "the United States appears to have succeeded in avoiding the infliction of large-scale loss of civilian life in Yemen" when carrying out drone strikes. "Nonetheless, there have been a number of incidents in which civilians have reportedly been killed or injured," he said. "The most serious single incident to date was a remotely piloted aircraft attack on 2 September 2012 in which 12 civilians were reportedly killed in the vicinity of Rada'a," Emerson said.

The Nation - October 20th, 2013

Deprivation of Childhood: Underage Labourers on the Rise

Unprecedented rise in inflation as well as a lack of awareness about the repercussions of engaging children into bonded labour is largely contributing to an increase in the menace of child labour in Pakistan, particularly prevalent in urban towns and cities. Throughout Karachi, a large number of children are working as domestic labourers in homes, shops and factories on daily wages. And they are among the most vulnerable sections of the society. According to the Child Rights Movement, approximately 9.86 million children and adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 are an active part of labour force in Pakistan - with 2.58 million of them under the age of 14. Gul Sher, a 14-year-old-boy, who is working since two years on a roadside tandoor in Gulistan-e-Jauhar, says that he wants to get educated but works for his family. "It is difficult to work in scorching heat, but since my father is also here, I work to support him," he said. He has six family members who live in Quetta, and is the eldest among all. He wants all of them to get educated. "I work here such that my other siblings can go to school," he added. Because prices of commodities are rising by the day, children are forced to work - to support their family just like the elder members. The majority of children work on daily wages ranging from Rs 100 to Rs 200 - enough to bear their simple meals for themselves - instead of depending on their parents.

Riaz Ahmed is a 13-year-old motorbike mechanic at a local pump in Dalmia. He works as a helper to his ustad and gets Rs 50 each day. He has five siblings and lives in Shanti Nagar in a two-room rented house. "I am happy with my job, as my support reduces the burden on my family." Since long, in Pakistan, hundreds of organisations, both from the government and the private sector are working to address the issue; however, have failed in eliminating it completely. This is primarily because of the ever-increasing poverty within the country. Numerous legislations in the form of child protection acts and bills have also been introduced, but have never been implemented to make a visible effect. For Nazra Khanum, a 66-year-old senior citizen of Karachi, who has seen all the ups and downs in the country, this is primarily because of unprecedented rise in inflation, which is a recent phenomenon. She said, "Earlier, only one family member used to work, and it was enough to feed the entire family. But now, you cannot even think of such pleasures. Everyone has to have a job to make the ends meet." "We were seven siblings and only our elder brother used to work. His income was enough to meet the expenses of our entire household," said Khanum, adding that the issue could only be resolved if the government gave heed to the problems faced by the poor.

"If a person's income is not sufficient to feed his family, what other option does he have other than forcing his child to work and earn some livelihood," she wondered. Besides, the extravagant lifestyle of today has also forced every member of the family to work and meet their luxurious expenses. "In our times people were simple with no wasteful demands. But now, the situation is otherwise," she said. "They spend much on irrelevant luxuries. Even children want mobile phones nowadays." These children are often subjected to verbal as well as sexual abuse, and cases of violence against underage labourers are countless. "I am working since seven months and many times the customers have used abusive language over minor mistakes," said

15-year-old Abdullah, who works at a local teashop. He hails from Peshawar and is working to support his family back home. "I cannot even speak Urdu properly but my father has sent me here to work due to financial problems," he said. "We are nine siblings and my father and an elder brother also work to feed them all."

Daily times - October 21st, 2013

Minority Rights

Education for All: Transgenders Dare to Dream

The entrance to this old structure situated close to the historic Chuburji is discreet. A hallway opens into a classroom lined with mirrors and beautician chairs, with a whiteboard on one wall and chairs all over. This may be an average classroom, but some of the students who come here are not. For Kajal Bano, 6 months of being a student here is just not enough. "I want to learn more. I know if I am given more time I can learn to speak English," she says and turns to the whiteboard and writes her name and address: "Kajal Bano, Thokar Niaz Baig". "What awaits us out on the streets is people hurling abuses and throwing eggs, rotten tomatoes and garbage at us. Now they have started throwing water balloons," says Parri, adding "but here, we are respected, feel secure; here, our dreams, no matter how outlandish, seem real." Parri is one of the 30 students enrolled in a six month literacy and vocational training program being conducted under the Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education (LNFBE) department for transgenders in the city. For Parri, who is a mentor for 10 eunuchs, the training centre offers refuge from what she describes as social injustice. "What's so wrong with us? I don't know why people feel so disgusted by us. We are just like them, only somewhat disadvantaged."

The LNFBE department piloted the project earlier this year under which two such training centres were made for transgenders in Rawalpindi and Lahore and holds classes for these students at the Vocational Training Institute (VTI) in Samanabad. While the centre runs regular classes during the day, it holds special classes for transgenders from 3pm to 6pm. Students are taught basic literacy skills in Urdu and English, and basic mathematics according to the LNFBE adult literacy curriculum for two hours. One hour is dedicated to vocational training. Books are offered by the department. Beautician courses are highly sought after by Parri and her classmates. "You cannot begin to imagine how excited they were when they heard that we will be offering beauty courses," says principal of the VTI Rana Razaqat Ali. Though the excitement level was not as high for the literacy part of the programme, the aim is to offer learning opportunities for this community it hardly ever gets. A coordinator at the centre, Mohammad Shafiq, is responsible for bringing in students every day. Popular amongst the students, it takes Shafiq couple of hours just to gather the students. "Sometimes they are in no mood to come to the centre," he says. "But now they realise it's for their own good."

Despite these efforts, out of a class with a total strength of 30, only 20 make it to their class 5 times a week on an average. This worries the Project Director at the LNFBE, Mohammad Usman. "What needs to be understood is that this is a very difficult segment of society to handle," he says. "While some of them are very bright and ambitious, they are often not motivated enough." Usman believes the greatest challenge is conveying to them the importance of literacy. "This is why we modelled our programme so as to impart vocational training alongside literacy," he explains. Every student is paid a monthly stipend of Rs. 500. The centre largely tries to provide transport and also provides a free basic medical checkup during their monthly visits to the Fountain House, where they sing and dance at functions and earn a monthly stipend. Parri brings in 3 chailay (followers) from her group named Chocolate, Sawera and Munnii. Regarding the reluctance in her community to get education, Sawera claims it is often the Guru's choice.

“We are here because our Guru was into learning. Mostly Gurus just want you to sing, dance and bring money.” One of the students is 35-year-old Tipu, who says “I wish there was something of this sort when I was younger.” The batch is due to pass out this month. The centre is already working on providing these students with job opportunities as trainees.

The Express Tribune - October 19th, 2013

GENDER WATCH**Women Empowerment****Women Empowerment in Saudi Arabia - Dawn of a New Era**

Until now, in Saudi Arabia, women who graduated from law schools were allowed to work as “legal consultants” at law firms, commercial companies and banks, but could not officially represent clients in court. They were permitted to act as “representatives” but were not considered lawyers. By not holding a law licence women could not open law firms in their names. History will be made early next week when Saudi female lawyers will be issued formal licences to practice law in Saudi courts. The Ministry of Justice will officially start granting the licences on October 6. Female lawyers, across the Kingdom, are excited to play their new role once they receive their licences to practice advocacy. Bayan Zahran, a Saudi female legal consultant, wholeheartedly applauded this pioneering step. She said the presence of Saudi female lawyers in courts would contribute to disseminating legal culture among Saudi families. Meanwhile, official spokesman of the Ministry of Justice Fahd Al-Bakran said the number of Saudi lawyers is increasing rapidly. Over 200 lawyers have been registered during the current year. The number of licenced practicing lawyers stood at 2,115 last October and this will increase with the addition of female lawyers.

Al-Bakran appreciated the lawyers’ role in serving justice. He said that the Ministry of Justice is continuing its efforts to complete applications submitted to them, as well as granting female lawyers’ licences for practicing the profession - provided the prescribed conditions are fulfilled by the applicants. Calls for granting female law graduates practice licences intensified last summer with the campaign called “I am a female lawyer”, launched in the social media. Organisers of the campaign objected to spending years studying law at both local and international universities, then not being formally allowed to practice law in their home country. Many of them positively commented that in a conservative society like Saudi, women do not feel comfortable hiring male lawyers, especially in personal status lawsuits that might involve private details. Women empowerment in Saudi Arabia is being taken up seriously. The recent new step by the Saudi government assures the “dawn of a new era”.

Daily Times - October 05th, 2013

Malala ‘Hot Favourite’ For Nobel Peace Prize

Malala Yousafzai and a Japanese author who writes about hostility and a fractured modern world are tipped as Nobel Prize winners ahead of the annual awards that start on Monday. She gave a speech at the United Nations in July, articulating that she would not bow to “terrorists” who thought they could silence her. Though favorite for the peace prize among experts and betting agencies, there is still one obstacle and that is her age. Tawakkol Karman, a Yemeni human rights activist and youngest winner to date, was 32 when she received the prize and some experts argue the prize would overburden such a young woman.

Daily Times - October 07th, 2013

Winning Hearts, Not Awards: 'Malala Herself Is a Nobel Prize for Us'

When Malala Yousafzai didn't win the Nobel Peace Prize, thousands of crest-fallen Pakistanis joined a nationwide debate that questioned the snub at Oslo. But those close to her believe that both Malala and her noble cause are far above any award. Although a majority of people in Mingora believed her win was inevitable, they were not disappointed when she did not. According to former students of Khushal School, who were seniors of Malala, the brave teenage girl raised her voice globally for education and if she did not win the Nobel Prize, it does not mark the end of her cause. Until Friday morning, all the students of Khushal School were fully confident that she would win the prize. "All the girls were sure that Malala would be awarded the Nobel Prize and they wanted to hold a celebration at the school," said Iqbal Hussain, the school administrator.

The Express Tribune - October 12th, 2013

SECTARIAN CRISES & CONFLICT WATCH

Conflict & Sectarian Crisis Incidents

Security Briefs for the Month of October

Date	Incidents	Killed				Injured
		C	SFs	T	Total	
Wednesday, October 02, 2013	At least 15 militants were killed and several others were injured when a suicide bomber ran a vehicle full of explosives into the headquarters of Mullah Nabi Hanfi group of the TTP in the Spin Tall area of Hangu District in KP.	0	0	15	15	NS
	A suicide bomber killed eight people and wounded 16 others at the Chaman border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan in Qilla Abdullah District of Balochistan.	8	0	1	9	16
	At least four militants were killed in an encounter with Police on Hub River Road in Baldia Town of Karachi in Sindh.	0	0	4	4	0
	The six militants reported to be killed in an encounter carried out on a tip-off, by the CID belonged to Mohmand group of TTP near Lucky Pahari on Hub River Road in Karachi of Sindh.	0	0	6	6	0
Sunday, October 06, 2013	A roadside bomb killed three soldiers and injured at least seven others when their vehicle was struck with an IED alongside Bannu-Miranshah road in the Bannu District of KP.	0	3	0	3	7
Monday, October 07, 2013	At least seven persons including four Policemen were killed and eight others injured as a bomb ripped through a function called to distribute anti polio material among the anti polio teams in Suleman Khel area of Union Council Bazidkhel of Badhabar area of Peshawar in KP.	3	4	0	7	8
Tuesday, October 08, 2013	Three unidentified dead bodies were found near Rangers Headquarters on Super Highway within the limits of Gadap City Police Station in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Town of Karachi.	3	0	0	3	0
Wednesday, October 09, 2013	Three unidentified dead bodies of blindfolded men were found on a river bed near Haji Abdul Karim Goth area in Gadap Town of Karachi in Sindh.	3	0	0	3	0

Date	Incidents	Killed				Injured
		C	SFs	T	Total	
	Three kidnappers were killed in an encounter in Ashrafabad area of Mardan District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	3	0	0	3	0
Thursday, October 10, 2013	At least seven people, including children, were killed and 35 others were injured in a blast in Liaquat Bazaar area of Quetta in Balochistan.	7	0	0	7	35
	Three alleged terrorists were killed while planting explosive material on Manghopir Road in Orangi Town of Karachi in Sindh.	0	0	3	3	0
Friday, October 11, 2013	A suicide bomber drove a car filled with explosives into a military convoy, killing at least two soldiers in the Wana town of South Waziristan Agency in FATA.	0	2	1	3	2
Wednesday, October 16, 2013	At least 10 people, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Law Minister Israrullah Gandapur, were killed and over 30 others were injured when a suicide bomber struck a festive gathering at the residence of Gandapur in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan District.	10	0	1	11	30
Sunday, October 20, 2013	Four Police officials were killed in a drive-by shooting on a checkpoint on Ring Road located under the jurisdiction of Paharipura Police Station in Peshawar, the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the evening.	0	4	0	4	0
Monday, October 21, 2013	At least seven persons, including two women, were killed and 16 others were injured when a Jaffar Express was struck by a bomb explosion in Notal area of Naseerabad District in Balochistan.	6	1	0	7	16
Wednesday, October 23, 2013	Two Policemen and an assailant were killed in a firing incident in SITE Town of Karachi in Sindh	0	2	1	3	0
Thursday, October 24, 2013	Three people were killed and five others were wounded when two gangster groups in Market area of Gulshan-e-Bihar area in Lyari Town of Karachi fought each other.	0	0	3	3	5

Compiled from different dialies

Analyses, Reports & News

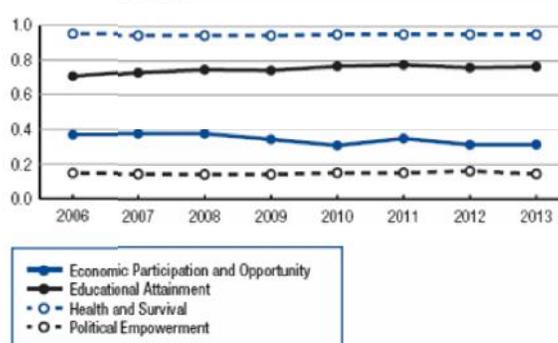
Pakistan Worst Country in Gender Parity: World Economic Forum Report

The World Economic Forum (WEF), an international non-profit foundation working independently from Switzerland, released its annual Global Gender Gap Report for 2013, claiming Pakistan to be worst country in terms of an equitable division of resources between men and women, after Yemen. Pakistan was ranked 135 among 136 countries, in a continuing tradition of being awarded the lowest positions since 2006.

Pakistan

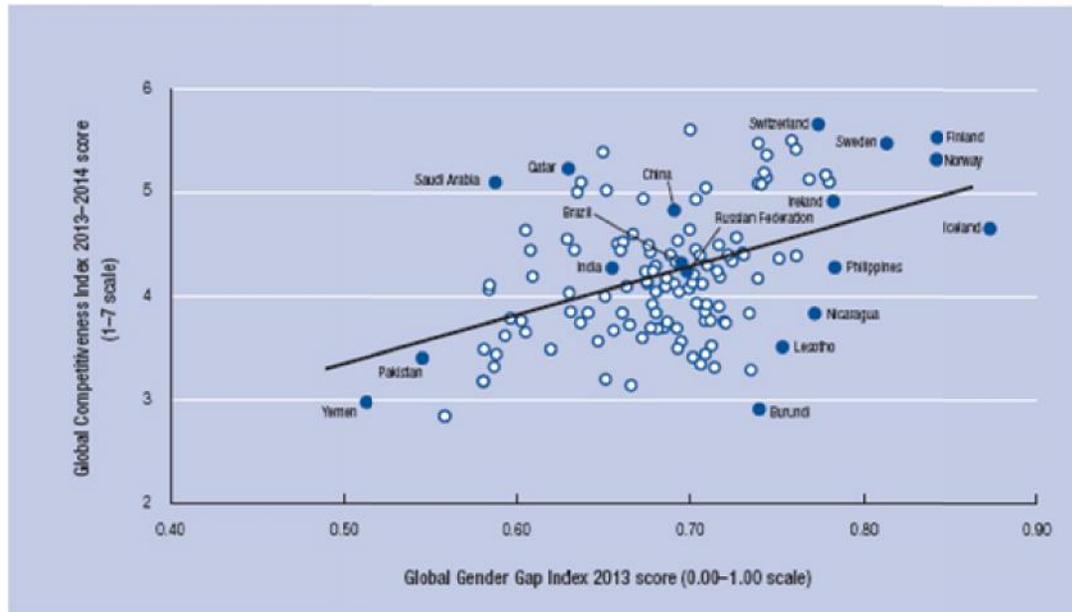
	OVERALL	
	Rank	Score
Gender Gap Index 2013 (out of 136 countries)	135	0.546
Gender Gap Index 2012 (out of 135 countries)	134	0.548
Gender Gap Index 2011 (out of 135 countries)	133	0.558
Gender Gap Index 2010 (out of 134 countries)	132	0.546
Gender Gap Index 2009 (out of 134 countries)	132	0.546
Gender Gap Index 2008 (out of 130 countries)	127	0.555
Gender Gap Index 2007 (out of 128 countries)	126	0.551
Gender Gap Index 2006 (out of 115 countries)	112	0.543

Evolution 2006–2013



Neighbouring India was ranked 101. Among countries with Muslim majority, Bangladesh was ranked 75, Saudi Arabia 127, Iran 130, Turkey 120, Malaysia 102 and Indonesia 95 whereas Iraq and Afghanistan were not included in the report. WEF states their Gender Gap Index is “a framework for capturing the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress.” The 136 countries assessed by the report represent more than 93% of the world’s population, ranking them on how well resources and opportunities are divided among male and female populations. “The Index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, educational and health-based criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, and over time.”

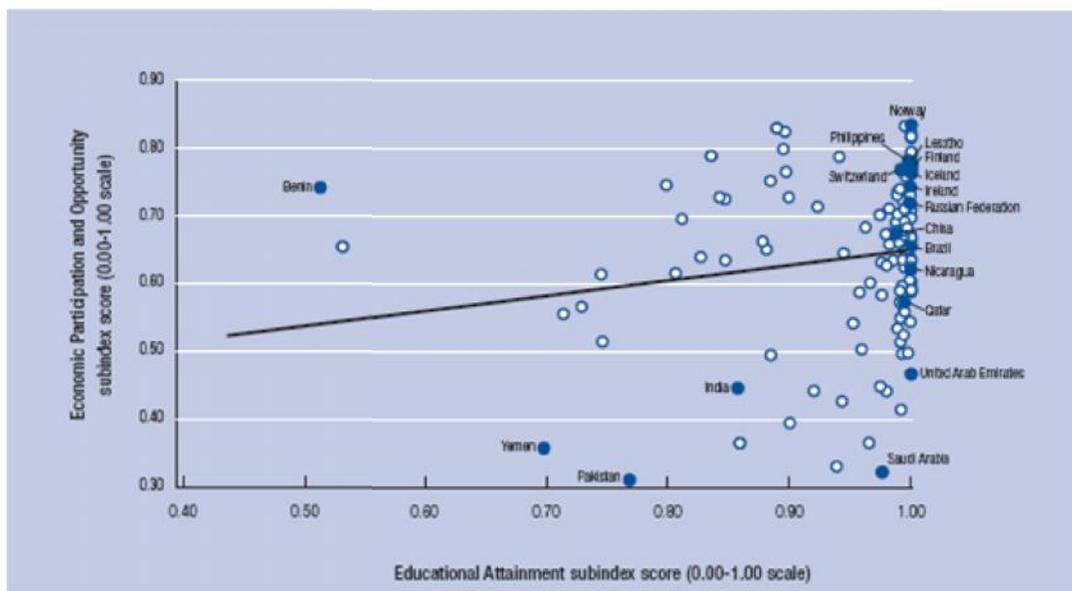
Figure 7: Relationship between the Global Competitiveness Index 2013-2014 and the Global Gender Gap Index 2013



WEF also emphasises that since the Index is concerned only with gender-based gaps, the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities in the countries does not matter. “Thus the Index penalizes or rewards countries based on the size of the gap between male and female enrollment rates, but not for the overall levels of education in the country.”

Pakistan’s Ranking in Sub-Indexes

Figure 10: Relationship between Economic Participation and Opportunity and Educational Attainment subindex scores



The Report measures the size of the gender inequality gap in four areas or sub-indexes:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (135)

In terms of salaries, participation and highly skilled employment, Pakistan received an overall rank of 135. Breaking this down further, the country was deemed most unequal in its employment of men and women for labour force and the relative incomes earned by the two groups. In terms of wage equality between men and women for the same job, the country fared a little better with a rank of 113.

2. Educational attainment (129)

Women in Pakistan were ascertained as having better access to education once they moved from basic to higher studies. While a comparison between the overall literacy rates of men and women put Pakistan at an unimpressive 131, the country fared better in equality between males and females in terms of enrolment in tertiary education, getting the 95th position. Unequality was higher in primary and secondary education though.

3. Health and survival (124)

While Pakistan was awarded the top position in terms of giving birth to an equal number of males and females, WEF again found the country's women to be among the worst ones in terms of having a healthy life expectancy similar to men in the country.

4. Political empowerment (64)

Pakistan did have a lot to be proud of in the area of conferring politically empowering positions on women. Women in the country enjoy a representation in decision-making structures of the country which is better than 72 other countries in the report though trailing behind 63 others.

There may be more women in ministerial positions in other countries than Pakistan (which ranks 97), but there are more women in the parliament here than many other nations (rank 69). Lastly, thanks to Benazir Bhutto's two terms (or five years) in office as Prime Minister, Pakistan has spent more time with a female head of state in the last 50 years than 20 other countries (rank 21).

Countries with Best Gender-Parity Stats

According to the report, the following countries have been most successful in offering equal opportunities for men and women.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Iceland | 6. Ireland |
| 2. Finland | 7. New Zealand |
| 3. Norway | 8. Denmark |
| 4. Sweden | 9. Switzerland |
| 5. Philippines | 10. Nicaragua |

The Express Tribune – October 25th, 2013

ECONOMIC WATCH**Facts & Figures****100 'Ghost Schools' Causing Huge Loss to Exchequer**

The presence of 100 'ghost schools' in the capital and its suburbs has inflicted losses of millions of rupees to the national exchequer. Millions of rupees are being extracted from the national exchequer for the buildings, teachers, salaries and other expenditures of the 100 schools registered in the capital and its suburbs under the Basic Educational Community Schools (BECS) project of the National Education Foundation. When the authorities concerned visited the areas where the schools had been reportedly set up, they found no educational institution as mentioned in the official record. The reports revealed that under this project, millions of rupees were also looted by showing schools in Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) confiscated the records of the National Education Foundation, though further developments could not happen in the case. The reports quoted a NAB investigation officer as saying that the bureau had completed all the investigations but any action had not been taken against the responsible due to the non- appointment of the NAB chairman.

Daily Times - October 07th, 2013

Production Falls: Energy Import Critical for Pakistan's Economy; a Study by ADB

For achieving even a low growth rate of 3.4% over the next two decades, securing foreign energy supplies will be critical for Pakistan amid a volatile security situation in Afghanistan, as the country's domestic supplies gradually dry up, according to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) study. In its Energy Outlook for Asia and Pacific report, the Manila-based lending agency has urged Pakistani authorities to double its efforts for addressing energy sector bottlenecks that have hit economic growth, resulting in increasing unemployment in the country. The ADB released its findings the day when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif described his strategy on energy as "energy emergency". The premier approved immediate start of work on two coal-fired power plants at Gadani and Port Qasim. The ADB said Pakistan is faced with domestic supply shortages of coal, oil, and natural gas, as well as shortage of hydroelectric generation capacities. These fuel constraints have severely affected the power sector, leading to a significant decline in power production. "At its peak, the gap between electricity demand and supply was as high as 40%," according to the ADB report. Until 2035, Pakistan's annual economic growth would be rather moderate at 3.4% unless infrastructure development is sufficient to facilitate economic activity, it added. It said in the same period, energy demand is projected to grow 2.2% annually. However, if the country applies some energy saving methodologies it could restrict the growth to 1.8% per annum. Natural gas will still meet the largest share, reaching 43.8% by 2035, followed by oil at about a fourth. The ADB said that with continued demand growth, it will be increasingly difficult for Pakistan to meet its demand with domestic sources.

The country is not only facing domestic energy supply constraints but also problems of outdated and obsolete supply infrastructure. It said securing energy supply sources of natural gas, oil, hydro and coal will be critical for economic growth. It projected that domestic production of natural gas will decline from the current 38.4 billion cubic metres (bcm) to 13 bcm in 2035 and the country will have to start importing natural gas sometime after 2015. Pakistan is already

working on the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, which is facing delays due to US sanctions against Iran and inability of Pakistani authorities to arrange funds for construction of its side of the pipeline. Petroleum and Natural Resources Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi recently stated that Islamabad had requested Tehran to provide finances for constructing the pipeline. The country is also pursuing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline aimed at importing 90 million cubic metres of natural gas. Inter State Gas Systems signed gas sales and purchase agreements with Turkmenistan in May 2012. However, the ADB struck a note of caution saying some care needs to be taken so that the TAPI pipeline does not collide with the planned trans-boundary pipeline from Iran to Pakistan. It warned that political situation in Afghanistan may also affect progress on the TAPI project. The lending agency reiterated that the country's power sector was badly affected by circular debt, as its Central Power Purchasing Agency often remains short of funds to meet its obligations towards power suppliers. It added the issue of technical and non-technical (theft) transmission and distribution losses also remained a major obstacle.

The Express Tribune - October 15th, 2013

IMF Team Arriving: Pakistan Lags Far Behind In Foreign Reserves Target

As an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission is arriving in Islamabad next week to assess the country's performance against agreed targets before releasing the second loan tranche of \$550 million, Pakistan has missed the target by about \$800 million on the indicator of building foreign currency reserves. Renowned economist and former finance minister Dr Hafiz Pasha said balance of payments position was worsening compared to what had been projected by the IMF for the first quarter of the current fiscal year. Against the requirement of increasing gross foreign currency reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan to \$5.64 billion by the end of September, the reserves actually stood at \$4.824 billion, showing a gap of \$816 million, he said. IMF documents also confirm that the Fund would like to see gross reserves at \$5.64 billion by September-end. Since September, the gross reserves position has worsened and by October 11 the reserves came down to slightly over \$4.1 billion, according to the SBP. "The worrisome aspect is that hemorrhaging is going on despite the country being in the IMF programme," said Pasha. He predicted that November would be a terrible month as the country was going to return \$700 million to the IMF in five tranches and there would be no new release of loan from the lender to Pakistan. "I suspect the reserves will be at \$3.3 billion by the end of November, much less than the one-month import bill," he added, saying the big question was whether the country was entering a financial crisis despite an IMF programme, like Greece. Pasha said net foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank had become negative at \$3 billion. The IMF requirement is to keep net reserves (excluding forward contract liabilities and IMF liabilities) at \$2.499 billion, according to the IMF documents.

An IMF review mission is arriving on October 28 for holding first review meetings, according to sources in the Ministry of Finance. The mission will review progress on targets, both quantitative and performance criteria, before sending a request to its executive board to release the second tranche of \$550 million in December, they say. Overall, Pakistan has met almost all performance criteria, qualifying for the next loan tranche, they add. Building the reserves is a quantitative target, having no adverse impact on the next tranche. However, the SBP will have to give a plausible explanation to the IMF. If the IMF did not agree with the argument, it has the authority to upgrade the condition to a performance criterion for the next review meeting. The adverse implication is that the SBP may have to increase market intervention in an attempt to mop up dollars for building the reserves, which is likely to put the rupee under further pressure. In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, the rupee shed 7% of its value against the US dollar

and experts forecast that it would depreciate at least 7% more by June 2014, taking the parity to Rs113 to a dollar. Pasha suggested that the government should seek upfront release of IMF tranches to avert balance of payments crisis. Unlike the previous programme when the IMF gave \$3.1 billion upfront, this time the lender has divided the \$6.7 billion programme into 12 equal tranches.

Pasha differed with the IMF projection that the current account deficit would widen to only 0.6% of gross domestic product in the current fiscal year. His assessment was that the deficit would widen to 1.7% as reducing CNG consumption would increase the oil import bill by \$500 million. He said unlike the balance of payments position, public finances were largely on track and the government achieved the first-quarter budget deficit target. He, however, was the view that the country could miss the full-year target of 5.8% of GDP and the gap could widen to 7%. He claimed that the government had placed Rs158 billion worth of deficit outside the books that would have to be taken into account at the end of the year.

The Express Tribune - October 23rd, 2013

DEVELOPMENT WATCH**Education Projects****950 Destroyed Schools Yet To Be Reconstructed**

Contractors from the Hazara division have decided to stage a sit-in opposite the Parliament House in Islamabad on October 8 against the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) which reportedly failed to pay their Rs3 billion for the last many years. President of the Mansehra Contractors Association Shahzada Qamarzeb told this scribe that preparations for protest had been finalized and contractors from Mansehra, Battagram, Kohistan, Torghar and Abbottabad would take part in the sit-in. He explained that the reconstruction work on 600 educational institutions was suspended in Mansehra alone. In Abbottabad where work on 350 educational institutions and 5 hospitals in the doldrums because of the delay in the payment to contractors. Hundreds of reconstruction projects being completed through government funds in other departments including livestock, forest and agriculture departments were also suspended. Qamar explained that if the government wanted to dissolve the ERRA, it should go for it but their liabilities should be paid or transferred to any other department. The contractor said the ERRA had also failed to complete many projects, particularly in health and education sectors, in Hazara during the last many years.

The News - October 01st, 2013

25 Million Children Out Of School in Pakistan

Almost 25 million children, of whom seven million are aged between three to five years, and adolescents are out of school in Pakistan, a report said. The poor state of education in the country is evident from Pakistan's position on the Education Development Index, as the country is ranked at 113 of 120 countries on the index. The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) in its annual report, The State of Pakistan's Children, reveals that children in Pakistan have to cope with a lack of educational opportunities, poor health conditions, a near absence of protection for poor and vulnerable children. Miserable conditions in juvenile jails and continued employment of children in hazardous occupations are other issues being faced by the children in the country. Almost 225,000 annual newborn deaths are reported in Pakistan, the report pointed out. Violence against children remains culturally entrenched as children in Pakistan have to cope with physical violence, abuse, trafficking, recruitment in armed conflict and acid attacks. It says that there were 3,861 cases of child sexual abuse, reported from different parts of the country in 2012, and 5,659 cases of violence against children were reported from January to October 2012. The report also highlights the ineffectiveness of the current legislation on child and bonded labour and also emphasises the lack of concrete measures towards enacting comprehensive child labour legislation. According to the report, Pakistan lacks adequate facilities to deal with children who come in conflict with the law.

Pakistan Today - October 05th, 2013

Possible changes in KP textbooks trigger controversy

Though the authorities have expressed unawareness about any such step, the reported decision of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led provincial government to remove chapters about

Pakhtun nationalist leaders - Bacha Khan and Ghani Khan - from the course books has triggered controversy and the Awami National Party (ANP) has vowed to resist the move with full might. "No such decision has been taken. I don't know wherefrom they have taken the information. There is no truth in it at all," said provincial Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Mohammad Atif Khan. He said things might have been discussed in certain meetings and some people might have made some comments about textbooks, but no formal decision has been taken with regard to these specific chapters. "We don't have any plan to take such a decision," he added. On the other hand, ANP's parliamentary leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Sardar Hussain Babak, who was the education minister during the previous government, said that directives have been issued to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board (KPTB) through a formal notification that the chapters about Pakhtun leaders should be deleted from the course books. "Nothing of the sort has been received from the education department," was the reply of KPTB chairman Himayatullah Khan to a cell-phone message of this reporter. He was having severe throat infection and was unable to talk.

The issue secured headlines in national dailies when a senior leader of ANP Bashir Khan Matta issued a press release to the media expressing concern about the reported decision of the provincial government and making the pledge to resist it. Despite denial by the two top officials, Sardar Hussain Babak insisted that the PTI-led coalition government has issued the reported directives. "The justification they gave for removal of chapters on Bacha Khan and Ghani Khan in the Pashto books was that they were not undisputed leaders," he said. Terming the decision as a conspiracy against the Pakhtuns, the former minister said that Bacha Khan was no doubt a great leader of all the Pakhtuns. "He rendered great services for the uplift of the Pakhtuns. His Khudai Khidmatgar movement and his services for promotion of education were matchless," Babak stressed. Regarding Ghani Khan, the ANP leader said that he was a poet of international repute. "Nobody can deny his great contribution to Pashto poetry," he maintained. The four-page lesson about the life and services of Abdul Ghafar Khan, popularly known as Bacha Khan, was included in the Pashto book for Class-VII during the rule of ANP-led coalition government. Another chapter regarding Abdul Ghani Khan, the son of Bacha Khan and a renowned Pashto poet, had been included in Pashto book for Class-VIII. Some poems of Ajmal Khattak and Ghani Khan have also been included in the course books.

Babak said the provincial government should focus attention on improving the law and order situation instead of wasting time and energies on hurting the sentiments of the people by making such decisions. "We will go till the end to resist this decision and the provincial government, particularly Jamaat-e-Islami, would be responsible for it. It is a matter of life and death for the whole Pakhtun nation," he stressed. He was of the opinion that the decision had been taken at the behest of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), which is a coalition partner of the PTI in the provincial government. A delegation of JI comprising of provincial senior minister and central deputy chief of the party Sirajul Haq, minister for religious affairs Habibur Rahman and others held meetings with the Education Minister Mohammad Atif Khan to convince him on the decision, he alleged. Sirajul Haq could not be reached on his phone for his comments on the issue despite several attempts. Habibur Rahman, when contacted, said that it was not such a big deal for which they held special meetings with those at the helm of affairs. "We have held several meetings at all the levels up to PTI chairman Imran Khan regarding the curriculum, but this petty issue has never been discussed. We only wanted the government to revisit the curriculum to do away with all the un-Islamic changes made in it by the previous government. The chapters about Bacha Khan and Ghani Khan have never been discussed in any meeting," he added.

The News - October 21st, 2013

Stipends for Girl Students of Primary Schools Soon

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government will soon start paying monthly stipends to girl students of primary schools in seven districts, having low enrolment, to reduce gender and regional imbalances, according to officials. They said that each girl would be paid Rs200 per month for getting education at government primary school in the respective district. They said that government had already been paying such stipends to girl students of grade-VI and onwards across the province for the last few years to promote female education. The seven districts, selected for paying stipends on the basis of low net enrollment ratio include Peshawar, Hangu, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Dera Ismail Khan, Shangla and Nowshera. According to the data of the elementary and secondary education department, Hangu has been placed on top in the low net enrollment ratio with 21 per cent followed by Peshawar with 28 per cent. Similarly, the net enrollment ratio in Bannu is 31 per cent, Lakki Marwat 34 per cent, D.I. Khan 34, Shangla 36 and Nowshera 36 per cent. The provincial government has reflected Rs100 million in the budget for 2013-14 for the implementation of this new initiative titled "Provision of stipends for girl students at primary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa".

Officials said that financial support in the shape of monthly stipends would encourage maximum girls to take admissions in the government primary schools as well as develop their interest in getting education. It would also help to reduce the dropout rate, increase enrollment and remove the gender disparity in the selected districts, officials said. They added that the amount would be provided for academic year (nine months). Officials said that girl students with at least 80 per cent attendance in a month would be eligible for the stipends. Indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the initiative included decreasing the absenteeism of students, reducing dropout rate, increasing enrolment and retention improving, they said. Asked about the implementation mechanism, officials said that the project would be executed through the existing arrangement of Provision of Free Textbooks Project (PFTP) of elementary and secondary education department. The data of the enrolled students from the girls primary schools would be collected through assistant sub-divisional education officers (female) of the selected seven districts, they said.

The monitoring assistants of the independent data collection unit, which is in pipeline, would monitor, verify and validate the project. For this purpose, the provincial coordinator of PFTP would open a joint account for disbursement of stipends to the students. The funds will be disbursed through district education offices and parent teacher councils, established at school level. The concept was already approved, officials said, adding that education department was doing correspondence with the finance department in that regard and hopefully the fund would be released soon. The district education offices have been tasked to collect data of the enrolled students and their consolidation by mid of November. Presently the number of girl students enrolled in the government primary schools in Hangu is 12,304, in Peshawar 102,705, in Bannu 34,628, in Lakki Marwat 29,139, in D.I. Khan 50,170, in Shangla 24,432 and in Nowshera 52,881.

Dawn - October 25th, 2013

ENERGY CRISIS

Government's Role in Oil and Gas & Energy Crisis

Massive Hike in POL, Power Rates

The government gave a shock to the already burdened public by announcing an increase in the prices of petroleum products and electricity. The government notified a significant hike in power prices, ranging between Rs 2.93 and Rs 5.89 per unit for domestic consumers. The increased prices will be effective from October 1. An official of the Water and Power Ministry stated that the raise in the power tariff would help the government generate revenue from consumers, a move that will reduce the power subsidy, in accordance with IMF loan conditions. The domestic consumers using more than 200 units will now pay Rs 14 per unit against the old rate of Rs 8.15 per unit, an increase of Rs 5.89 per unit. Consumers using more than 700 units would face a hike of Rs 2.93 per unit in the tariff. Bulk consumers will now pay Rs 18 per unit, instead of Rs 15.07 per unit. The consumers of the Peshawar Electrical Supply Company and those who use less than 200 units per month would be exempted from the hike in prices. Meanwhile, contrary to the proposals of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) and Petroleum Ministry, the government went ahead with the increase in prices. The price of supreme petroleum has gone up from Rs 109.50 to Rs 113.25. Whereas, after an increase of Rs 4.69 a litre, the new price of diesel would be Rs 116.95 against the old price of Rs 112.26. The price of light diesel (LDO) has been increased by Rs 2.81, taking it to Rs 101.24 per litre from Rs 98.43. Likewise, the price of HOBC has been increased from Rs 138.33 to Rs 143.9. The price of kerosene oil, mostly used as fuel in remote areas where LPG is not available, has also gone up from Rs 105.99 to Rs 108.14 after an increase of Rs 2.14 litre. According to an official, OGRA had advised the government not to pass on the price differential to the consumers and maintain the September prices for the month of October.

The News - October 01st, 2013

Judiciary steps in: SC asks govt to explain power, fuel price hikes

A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, has asked the attorney general to explain how the government can increase energy prices, as apparently it is not the authorized body to do so. The court, while hearing a case on load-shedding, sought the copies of two separate notifications announcing increase in electricity prices. The first notification was issued by National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on August 5 and the other by the government. The chief justice observed that the government actually has no right to regulate petroleum prices. The Supreme Court wanted to know why the tariffs on domestic use of power were increased as circular debt had reportedly been cleared. The chief justice asked the federation's lawyer to submit a break-up of the influential people who had kept billions of rupees in their pockets as recovery was not made by the government. Electricity production is still 2,000 megawatts less than the desired figure, the bench added. In a separate case, the court reprimanded Minister Khawaja Asif for advising the apex court to hear Jamshoro Joint Venture Limited (JJVL) agreement case expeditiously.

The Express Tribune - October 02nd, 2013

Government Agrees To 'Defuse' Electricity Tariff Bomb

The government has shown its willingness before the Supreme Court to review the recent increase in power tariff. On the other hand, the Supreme Court has warned the government that it must review the notification for increasing power tariff otherwise it would intervene. A three member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, has made it clear to the government that it must rescind the notification, which it termed illegal, before the court intervenes. It directed Minister for Water and Power Khawaja Muhammad Asif to review the notification and submit a written reply on the review. The chief justice observed that NEPRA had recommended a decrease in power tariff but the government went for an increase instead. Responding to the chief justice, the power minister said that the government could review the notification for increase in power rates. The court also told Asif that strict investigation should be conducted against the people involved in power theft. Khawaja Asif informed the bench about issues being faced by his ministry, such as non-payment of bills, and gave the example of Peshawar where, according to him, only 3 percent of consumers pay their bills. The chief justice said that the federation should help the provinces collect revenue. Consumers using more than 700 units would face a hike of Rs 2.93 per unit in the tariff. Bulk consumers will have to pay Rs 18 per unit, instead of Rs 15.07 per unit. The consumers of the Peshawar Electrical Supply Company and those who use less than 200 units per month are to be exempt from the hike in prices

Daily Times - October 03rd, 2013

Power Import: ADB Pulls Out of Project, WB and IDB to Provide \$1b

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has decided to pull out of the CASA-1000 power import project, but at the same time the World Bank and Islamic Development Bank (IDB) have agreed to provide \$1 billion for the project that will bring over 1,000 megawatts of electricity from central Asian states. The ADB, which was expected to provide 40% of financing, did not give any concrete reasons for backing out, sources say. ADB officials told Pakistan authorities that the bank's board of directors was required to approve financing for every project, but it was not willing to commit any funds for the power import programme. According to government officials, the World Bank and IDB have given assurances that they will provide \$1 billion in finances and the remaining funds will be contributed by countries that are part of the power supply plan. CASA-1000 is a strategic project for the United States (US), like the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline. The US has been trying to promote these projects, which experts describe as unfeasible because of precarious security conditions in Afghanistan. A senior official of the Ministry of Water and Power said the the cost of power import was initially assessed at \$966 million, of which the ADB had to contribute 40%.

Now, officials say the cost has risen past the initial projection due to delay in implementation of the project. CASA-1000 will transmit 1,300 megawatts of surplus electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan through Afghanistan, which will consume 300 megawatts, to Pakistan. The four governments had already signed a memorandum of understanding on November 16, 2007 in Kabul. In the final feasibility study conducted in February 2011, the surplus power capacity of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan had been reassessed. About 3,700 gigawatt hours (GWh) is expected to flow by 2016. However, the catch is that under the "No generation expansion scenario", the volume of power export will come down each year in view of a rise in domestic demand in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the energy flow will not be available throughout the year; instead it will be available only for the April-September period every year. The cost of transmission has been estimated at 3.37 cents per unit, which will go up to 7.26 cents by 2030.

However, cost of energy - the price at which electricity is generated from a specific source to break even over lifetime of the project - will be 5.38 cents per unit for 15 years and 4.94 cents for 30 years.

The Express Tribune - October 15th, 2013

Nepra Raises Power Tariff by Rs 0.32/Unit

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has issued a notification to jack up the power tariff by Rs 0.32 on account of fuel price adjustment (FPA) for September this year. Since no relief is in sight, the 32-paisa tariff hike with effect from the date of this notification of the regulatory authority will be applicable to all consumer categories of power distribution companies, except for lifeline consumers using up to 50 units per month as well as consumers of Karachi Electric Supply Company (KESC) and Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO). According to the Nepra notification, Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) sold 9.9 billion electricity units to the power distribution companies (Discos) during September. The Nepra fixed the reference fuel cost (RFC) for power generation at Rs 6.2493 per unit, while actual cost stood at Rs 6.57 per unit. And Discos would collect this hike in power tariff in the monthly bills of November. Earlier, the tariff revision was made during a public hearing conducted by the Nepra at its headquarters and chaired by its Acting Chairman Khawaja Naeem in October. In its petition, the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) said the Nepra had fixed the reference fuel cost for power generation at Rs 6.2493 per unit for September though actual cost stood at Rs 6.57 per unit. The CPPA sold more than 9.9 billion electricity units to the power distribution companies in September and fuel cost was calculated at Rs 59.84 billion. The CPPA, in its petition, said during transmission of electricity more than 203 million units were lost, constituting 2.5 percent of the total supply for the month. In reply, the Nepra officials expressed concern over the transmission losses and called for taking measures to control it. At the end of the hearing, the Nepra allowed an increase of Rs 0.32 per unit in the power tariff. The regulator, however, clarified that the tariff revision would not be applicable to consumers of KESC, PESCO and those using up to 50 units per month. In total power generation, the share of hydroelectric power was 44.16 percent, coal-based electricity 0.07 percent, high-speed diesel-based power 1.24 percent, the power produced through residual fuel oil 33.35 percent, gas-fired power 15.01 percent, nuclear power 4.6 percent, the power imported from Iran 0.41 percent and wind power 0.25 percent. The cost of coal-based power was estimated at Rs 3.6118 per kilowatt-hour, diesel Rs 23.01 per kWh, fuel oil Rs 15.57 per kwh, gas Rs 4.83 per kwh, nuclear Rs 1.322 per kwh, imported power Rs 10.55 per kwh and hydropower less than a rupee.

The Nation - October 24th, 2013

Energy Matters: SDPI Advises Government to Nix Iran Gas Project

A Pakistani advocacy group has said the plan to import natural gas by pipeline from Iran will be an economic 'death sentence' for the country, the Associated Press and Kyodo reported. Citing a report released by the Islamabad-based Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), the reports state that under the deal struck with Iran, the gas sold to Pakistan would likely be several times more expensive than domestic gas. SDPI experts recommended the government renegotiate the natural gas import price with Iran under the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project due for commissioning by the end of next year. "It is imperative for Pakistan to renegotiate the import price of natural gas at earliest," Arshad Abbasi, who heads the energy team at SDPI, said. The gas purchase agreement links the gas price from Iran to the 'Japan Crude Cocktail' which is

determined by the price of crude oil when cleared by Japan Customs. But Abbasi said that formula does not take into consideration the global trend of delinking gas prices from oil prices. "In Asia, Japan has already asked Qatar to consider a pricing mechanism different from oil-linked contracts," Abbasi said. "The energy landscape has transformed and gas prices have fallen during 2007 to 2011 in all gas hubs. In the current scenario, the liquefied natural gas import price after incurring the shipping and re-gasification cost for 2012 show that the price of the pipeline's gas might be even costlier than LNG import prices," Abbasi said. SDPI President Shafqat Kakakhel said the report's purpose was not to find fault with those who negotiated the gas prices, but he added the skills of the Pakistani negotiators "were not up to the mark." A member of the study team said that by linking the gas price with the Japan Crude Cocktail, the Pakistani negotiators had inflated prices by \$2 per barrel. He said the price should have been linked to the import price of crude oil at the factory gate in Pakistan.

The Express Tribune - October 25th, 2013

REGIONAL WATCH

Pakistan & United States

Protests against Hike in Power Tariff, POL Prices Go On

Protests and sit-ins continued on the fifth consecutive day across the country against the hike in electricity tariff and prices of petroleum products. Activists of different political parties, business and trade organisations, members of the civil society and people from all walks of life staged demonstrations in different cities across the country, including Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Multan, Muzzafargarh, Faisalabad, Nawabshah, Larkana, Mardan, Charsadda, Mingora, Dalbandin, Shiekhupura, Okara, Sahiwal and others. In Lahore, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) staged a huge demonstration outside the press club to condemn the recent raise in electricity tariff and petrol prices. The PPP and JI termed the raise akin to committing terrorism against the poor masses and demanded that the PML-N rulers should be booked under terrorism charges. The demonstration was the first significant political activity by the PPP in several months which brought back to life the party which was otherwise being termed a dead horse. Workers from adjoining districts, including Kasur, Sheikhpura and Okara, were brought in buses and vans to put up a decent show of strength.

Presided over by PPP Punjab President Mian Manzoor Wattoo, the demonstration was addressed by Senator Atizaz Ahsan, PPP Punjab General Secretary Tanvir Ashraf Kaira, Ghulam Mohiuddin Diwan and Lahore President Samina Khalid Ghurki, among others. Aitzaz Ahsan warned the government against the callous increase in the prices of power and fuel to please the IMF, saying that the move amounted to committing terrorism against the poor masses, since the price hike generated terrorism. He demanded booking rulers under the terrorism act. Aitzaz said the PPP had accepted the election results despite massive rigging but now it was committed to fight against the electoral rigging since the PML-N government had started committing terrorism against the masses soon after coming to power. He warned that the PML-N government was committing a big robbery in Nandipur, of more than Rs58 billion, and expressed sorrow that the Supreme Court was not taking notice though the proofs were already provided to the apex court. He said the PPP government had appointed the NAB chairman on Chaudhry Nisar's choice, asking why the PML-N government was not appointing the NAB chairman on PPP's choice now.

Manzoor Wattoo said the PPP wanted the government to shun the anti-people policies. He said it was shameful that within 100 days, the people had begun saying that the government was about to be removed. He said the PPP did not want to derail the system. He demanded of the rulers to hold local bodies' polls on party basis and if the PML-N wanted to rule the country, why it was running away from holding the elections. He warned that the PPP would never allow the government departments to become private properties. He said the PPP not only provided jobs but also increased salaries. The PML-N government wanted to fire the government employees, he said. Tanvir Ashraf Kaira said demonstrations would be staged in every district against the price hike. Samina Khalid Ghurki said the PML-N leadership had accused the Zardari regime of extending the beggar's bowl during its rule, but after coming into power the PML-N had extended a much bigger beggar's bowl before the whole world.

The News - October 05th, 2013

Resumption of Assistance: As PM Flies Out, US Frees Up \$1.6 Billion in Aid

Far from the media glare and with as little fanfare as possible, Washington announced that it would release more than \$1.6 billion in military and economic aid to Pakistan. The move comes on the day Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left Islamabad for the United States where he is scheduled to meet President Barack Obama and senior officials of his administration. The assistance was suspended when relations between the two countries disintegrated over the Abbottabad raid that killed Osama bin Laden and deadly US airstrikes on a Pakistani border posts in Salala, Mohmand Agency. Over three weeks in July and August, the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) informed Congress that it planned to restart a wide range of assistance, mostly dedicated to helping Pakistan fight terrorism. The US sees that effort as essential as it withdraws troops from Afghanistan next year and tries to leave a stable government behind. Other funds focus on a range of items, including help for Pakistani law enforcement and the multibillion-dollar Diamer-Bhasha dam in a disputed territory.

The State Department told Congress that the US had not conducted any significant military financing for Pakistan since the “challenging and rapidly changing period of US-Pakistan relations” in 2011 and 2012. The department stressed the importance now of enhancing Pakistan’s anti-terrorism capabilities through better communications, night-vision capabilities, maritime security and precision striking with F16 fighter jets. The department told Congress on July 25 that it would spend \$295 million to help Pakistan’s military. Twelve days later it announced \$386 million more. The administration had until the end of September to provide Congress with ‘reprogramming’ plans at the risk of forfeiting some of the money, which spans federal budgets from 2009-2013. State Department officials said the renewal of aid was not determined by any single event. But they noted a confluence of signs of greater cooperation, from Pakistan’s improved commitment to stamping out explosives manufacturing to its recent counter-terror offensive in tribal regions that have served as a primary sanctuary for the Taliban.

In Islamabad, Premier Nawaz said in a statement before his departure for Washington that he would discuss enhancing bilateral trade and investment ties and regional matters during his meetings with US officials. This will be the first highest level official Pakistani visit to the United States in several years. Over in Washington, State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki said Secretary of State John Kerry will hold talks with Premier Nawaz at the start of his trip. The two men would meet before Kerry heads on a visit to Europe. Nawaz is also due to meet President Obama for the highest level White House talks between the two countries since the start of the US administration in 2009, another US official said. Topping the agenda is likely to be counter-terrorism efforts, as well as Pakistan’s concerns over its economy and energy shortfall. Besides a trouble-free exit of foreign forces from Afghanistan next year, the United States also wants Islamabad to do more to crack down on militant havens. Pakistan, meanwhile, is chafing at continued US drone strikes against militants on its territory. Drones are “part of a very comprehensive conversation we have on security across the board”, the US official said. “As we talk about all these security issues that will be a key theme, not drones necessarily, but the security situation writ large.”

The Express Tribune - October 20th, 2013

Sharif Asks Obama to Rethink Drone Policy

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urged US President Barack Obama to end drone strikes in Pakistan’s tribal areas. Sitting next to President Obama in the Oval Office, Mr Sharif said he “brought up the issues of drones during our meeting, emphasising the need for an end to such

strikes". He said the two leaders also discussed building a constructive relationship with India, including on Kashmir. Mr Obama did not mention drones when addressing reporters after the meeting. But in a joint statement, the two leaders said their partnership was "based on the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity". Mr Obama also tried to reassure Pakistan on the status of Afghanistan, from where US combat forces plan to withdraw next year. He said he was "confident" of a solution "that is good for Afghanistan, but also helps to protect Pakistan over the long term". He hailed Pakistan's sacrifices in the fight against extremism. More than 40,000 Pakistanis have died in terrorist attacks over the past decade. "I know the prime minister is very much committed to try to reduce this incidence of terrorism inside Pakistan and also wants to stop its export," the president said. He added that he wanted to prevent security cooperation from being a source of tension between the US and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the mere fact that Mr Obama and Mr Sharif met was seen as a sign of progress. Tensions between the two countries peaked in 2011 following the US raid inside Pakistan that killed Osama bin Laden and the killing of two dozen Pakistani troops in an American air strike along the Afghan border that same year. Since then, there have been signs of progress. Pakistan, which closed off some US supply lines out of Afghanistan in retaliation for the deaths of its troops, reopened the routes last year. And ahead of Mr Sharif's visit, the US quietly decided to release more than \$1.6 billion in military and economic aid that was suspended in 2011. Mr Obama acknowledged that there would always be some tension between the US and Pakistan. "It's a challenge. It's not easy," he said. "We are committed to working together and making sure that rather than this being a source of tension between our two countries; it can be a source of strength." Mr Sharif invited Mr Obama to visit Pakistan, but the US president did not publicly accept the offer. During his first term, Mr Obama had told Pakistani officials that he wanted to visit the country, but those plans were halted by the increased tensions that followed the raid on Osama bin Laden's compound.

Dawn - October 24th, 2013

Behind the Scenes: Drone Strikes Will End Soon, Obama Assures Nawaz

While any mention of the drone issue was conspicuously missing in their joint statement, US President Barack Obama has privately assured Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that the controversial programme will end soon, according to a senior Pakistani official. The official, who was accompanying the prime minister on his just-concluded visit to Washington, told that 'significant progress' has been made on the drone issue. Speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter, he said Washington was considering ending the drone campaign once the "few remaining targets" had been eliminated from Pakistan's tribal belt. According to the official, President Obama told Prime Minister Nawaz that the CIA had already eliminated most of the high-value targets (HVTs) from the region. Although the American president did not give a timeline for halting the drone campaign, Islamabad expects the unilateral strikes will end in a matter of months, he said.

Another source, meanwhile, pointed out that, unlike previous assessments, the Obama administration informed the new government that the drone programme would not continue beyond 2014. Nawaz Sharif, who was on a first bilateral trip to US since his party swept to power following the May 11 elections, raised the issue of drone strikes in his meeting with Obama. But the US president remained silent on the matter at the joint news conference at the Oval Office in the White House. Behind closed doors, however, Obama assured Premier Nawaz that drone strikes would only be used as a last option, claimed the senior official. He said the US president also said that he had directed the CIA to ensure greater transparency in conducting

the strikes and avoiding collateral damage while eliminating the remaining HVTs. The US may temporarily suspend drone strikes in the tribal areas in an effort to allow the government to conduct peace talks with the Taliban.

Prime Minister Nawaz himself hinted that the drone issue would “settle down somehow.” “Hopefully, the drone issue will be resolved according to the wishes of the Pakistani people soon... There was definitely some progress on the matter [during the meetings] and I think this issue will now settle down somehow,” he said while talking to reporters during a brief stopover in London on his return to Pakistan. Earlier, Prime Minister’s Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz had also hinted at a possible end to drone attacks. In an interview with Al Jazeera, Aziz claimed that the US administration had given assurances to consider Islamabad’s request on drone attacks behind the scenes. He did not give further details, however. The US considers the drone programme as crucial to eradicate high value targets associated with al Qaeda and the Taliban from the tribal areas. Pakistan has publicly condemned such strikes and in recent years has been more vocal against the CIA-led campaign.

The Express Tribune - October 25th, 2013

KP CM Threatens To Halt NATO Supplies

Urging the Taliban to announce a ceasefire, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervaiz Khattak said that the provincial government would block NATO supplies to Afghanistan if the US did not stop drone strikes in Pakistan. The chief minister said the drone attacks should be stopped immediately. Pervaiz Khattak said his government had asked the Centre to hold fruitful talks with the militants for the restoration of peace. He said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led provincial government supported the jirga of Ulema for holding talks with the militants. The chief minister alleged that the federal government’s slackness in holding talks with the Taliban was bringing a bad name to the KP government. He said political parties had given a mandate to the government for holding talks but it was showing laziness in moving forward to implement the all parties’ conference’s recommendations. The chief minister maintained that dialogue with the Taliban was the only way to resolve the issue of terrorism. He said the KP government had made arrangements for holding the local bodies’ elections. “We will take our coalition partners into confidence and consult the Election Commission for holding the LB polls as soon as the bill is passed by the provincial assembly,” he said. Khattak said the LB system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be different from the ones being introduced in the other three federating units.

Talking about his recent visits to Sindh and Balochistan, he said Balochistan and KP faced similar problems of law and order. He said his provincial government had announced a financial package for the victims of the earthquake in Balochistan. Regarding the performance of his government, the chief minister contended that though the change was visible but it was still not 100 percent. He added that reforms were being introduced in education, health and other sectors. Khattak said the proposed local bodies system in the province would be the strongest in the world, wherein powers would be devolved to the grass roots level in real terms and 37 percent of development funds would be transferred to the local governments. To a question, the chief minister conceded there had been a delay in the introduction of the local government system in the province but insisted that his party would bring an entirely different system. “If we were to bring a system like that being introduced by other provinces, we would have done so much earlier,” he maintained.

The chief minister said that practical measures were being taken to combat corruption, bribery and the culture of sifarish. He claimed that from the next academic year, his government would

enforce a uniform education system for the poor and rich and the English medium of instruction would be introduced in the government educational institutions. Khattak held out an assurance that the heroes of the Awami National Party were not being deleted from the syllabus. Our Peshawar bureau adds: The chief minister asked the PTI workers and office-bearers to serve the people sincerely and help the government enforce its agenda of change. He was talking to a delegation of office-bearers and workers of the PTI Charsadda chapter. He also urged the PTI workers to shun their differences, said a handout. The PTI workers led by MPA Mohammad Arif and PTI district president called on the CM to apprise him of the problems being faced by the people of Charsadda, Tangi and Shabqadar tehsils. He said the PTI had been voted to power with the aim to change the traditional politics and status quo.

The News - October 27th, 2013

Pakistan & India

India Points Finger at Pakistan Army over IHK Clash

An Indian army commander said that Pakistani troops might be involved in an ongoing gun battle near the Line of Control in Kashmir, just days after the prime ministers of both countries agreed to soothe tensions. The fighting began in Kupwara area on the Indian side of the Line of Control on September 23, when militants tried to cross over from Pakistan into India in one of several recent infiltration attempts. Singh denied reports that the infiltrators had overtaken a village. Both Pakistan and India agreed to task senior military officers to “find effective means to restore the ceasefire” in Kashmir, where regular clashes between the two armies have taken place this year, resulting in casualties on both sides.

Daily Times - October 03rd, 2013

Pakistan Wants Friendly Ties with India: Salman

Pakistan’s High Commissioner to India Salman Bashir explained that Pakistan wants friendly ties with India, as it is in the best interest of the peoples of the two countries. He stressed on the fact that good neighborly relations between the two countries are vital for peace, progress and prosperity in the region. Salman Bashir described as baseless Indian media reports on infiltrations and called for both neighbors to address their respective concerns through dialogue instead of whipping up frenzy. He maintained that Pakistan wanted peace at the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir and was ready for dialogue on all difficult issues. He said India should desist from blame game and hurling baseless allegations on Pakistan, as they harm bilateral relations and add to tensions between the two countries. Salman Bashir arrived in India on a two-day visit. On the visit he will visit the CII Green Business Centre and address an interactive session organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Andhra Pradesh chapter.

The News - October 07th, 2013

Pakistan-India Tensions: Top Military Officials to Meet Face-To-Face

Amidst soaring tensions, senior military officials from Pakistan and India are expected to meet next month to come up with a clear plan to restore ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC). The decision to lower the ongoing tensions at the LoC was taken during a meeting between Prime

Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York last month. The two premiers instructed their respective Directors general military operations (DGMOs) to evolve a mechanism to avoid a repeat of ceasefire violations at the LoC. A senior government official said that under the existing mechanism, the DGMOs talked to each other through a hotline every Tuesday. When contacted, a military official said it was not yet clear whether the talks would take place at the level of DGMOs or as part of the overall dialogue. A foreign ministry official separately said the situation was still uncertain because New Delhi was not receptive to Islamabad's peace overtures for now. Indian External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid on Saturday painted a grim picture about the prospects of resuming stalled peace talks with Pakistan. He said the two nuclear-armed neighbors still had not reached a stage where they could resume the process. Tensions along the LoC have flared in recent months. The Indian military has accused Pakistani forces of helping militants infiltrate Indian-administered Kashmir. The ongoing tensions prompted army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani to break his silence and term the Indian allegations as 'unfortunate, unfounded and provocative'. He insisted that the Pakistan Army was exercising restraint but the same should in no way be used as a pretext for leveling such "baseless allegations that vitiate prospects of regional peace."

The Express Tribune - October 14th, 2013

India Won't Accept Any Mediation on Kashmir

India has said that it will not accept any intervention in the dispute with Pakistan on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Indian Minister for External Affairs Salman Khurshid said that it must be clear to the world that India will in no way accept any intervention. "Kashmir is a part of India, not something that should be questioned," he said, adding that any query in this regard will be a waste of time. He said it is important that "Pakistan show good conduct and compliance to the 2003 ceasefire act". He said that it is not right to say that the ceasefire has collapsed. "There have been minor violations, but those too are not acceptable," Khurshid added. The Indian minister's statement came after media reports quoted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as saying that he had sought intervention from the US in 1999 on Kashmir. Khurshid said that the Indian army knows its standard operating procedures. He said that the area and the situation is best left to the army and "I express my gratitude to our soldiers". The Indian minister for external affairs said that whatever aid the US gives to Pakistan must not be of a nature that is detrimental to our strategy and interests. "We also understand that in connection with Afghanistan, US needs Pakistan's cooperation."

Meanwhile, reacting to Prime Minister Nawaz's statement on seeking US intervention for the resolution of the Kashmir issue, senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Murli Manohar Joshi said that no third party has the right to interfere in the issue, and appealed to US President Barack Obama to reject this proposal. "India has already made it very clear that not just the Kashmir issue, but any issue between India and Pakistan would be solved only by the two countries, and no third party has the right to get involved. Nawaz Sharif's statement on US intervention is not accepted," he said. "I want to tell the UPA government that not only BJP, but the whole nation is against US intervention. I appeal to Mr Obama not to interfere in this matter, and he should reject Pakistan's proposal of US intervention," he added. According to a foreign news agency, Nawaz Sharif, who is on a three-day official visit to Washington, said that the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan could be resolved through US intervention.

Daily Times - October 21st, 2013

Elections in India

India Announces Warm-Up for World's Biggest Election

India will hold five state elections in November and December, kicking off a contest that is expected to boost the profile of Hindu nationalist opposition leader Narendra Modi ahead of a general election next year. The polls, set to begin on November 11, are seen as a warm-up for the national elections, which will be the world's biggest democratic exercise. Both polls will test the popularity of Modi's promise of economic growth and clean governance at a time India is suffering its worst slowdown in a decade. His party is trying to unseat the ruling Congress party, which has been weakened by a string of corruption scandals, high inflation and stuttering growth after nine years in power. However, it is counting on its record of support for the rural population, which makes up two-thirds of India's population. Modi is now using elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Mizoram to build a presence among voters unfamiliar with his promises of efficient governance and probity. He has drawn large crowds across the country, and regularly polls as India's most popular politician.

In several states he has been campaigning against the Congress party's Rahul Gandhi, the fourth generation of the Gandhi-Nehru dynasty that has dominated Indian politics since independence from the British in 1947. In the November polls, voters will choose members to sit in state assemblies. But there is a larger prize at stake: history suggests the results are likely to indicate the outcome of the general elections in those states, which together account for 73 of the 543 elected seats in the lower house of parliament. Modi is a divisive figure. Critics see him as a dangerous right-wing autocrat they say failed to stop deadly religious riots in the state he governs, Gujarat, in 2002. But his growing fan base sees an incorruptible leader capable of turning the economy around and making India a global super power. Modi denies any wrong during the riots that killed at least 1,000, mostly Muslim, people. A Supreme Court investigation failed to find evidence that he had fanned the violence.

Until now, Modi, who was popular enough to win three straight terms to govern Gujarat, has been untested outside his home turf. Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is expected to retain control of two of the states being polled in November, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, both headed by popular BJP leaders contesting for a third term. It is also expected to snatch Rajasthan from Congress. That would add to the momentum he built at crowded rallies up and down the country since he was anointed the party's candidate for prime minister on September 13. The outcome of state elections in India usually hinge on local leaders and issues, but analysts say Modi will try to capitalise on any victories for momentum in the run-up to next year's national poll. In New Delhi, thousands of supporters were bussed to a BJP rally along roads draped with campaign posters of Modi. The mostly male crowd, some wearing masks of Modi's face, applauded enthusiastically as he lambasted the leaders of the Congress party, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. "In 2014, India needs a dream team, not a dirty team," said Modi, promising not to break the trust of his supporters, who cheered lustily in response. He finished his speech by punching his hands in the air, chanting "Vande Mataram", a salute to the motherland, which the crowd repeated.

Daily Times - October 05th, 2013

Bomb Blasts Kill 6 at BJP Rally In Patna

A series of crude bombs killed six people and injured dozens in an eastern Indian city, shortly before opposition candidate Narendra Modi was due to hold a campaign rally. Seven small

bombs exploded near the venue in Patna where tens of thousands were gathering to hear Hindu hardliner Modi, a popular but divisive leader, launch the opposition's campaign in Bihar state for upcoming general elections. The first explosion occurred in a public toilet at a railway station in Patna, before more bombs exploded near and just outside the Gandhi Maidan ground where the large rally was held, police said. Five people were killed and 83 others injured, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar told a press conference in Patna. Police said two people have been arrested and several others detained for questioning, while the national government deployed anti-terrorism forces to Patna to investigate. Television footage showed people running from several explosions at the venue, with smoke rising above them. Police helped carry the injured to hospitals, where mostly men with bloodied bandages were seen lying on beds and connected to intravenous drips. Modi, a polarising figure particularly among religious minorities, later took to the stage and urged Hindus and Muslims to unite to overcome poverty in Bihar, a key battleground in the general election due next May. In a statement, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh condemned the blasts, appealed for calm and "called for urgent steps to identify and take action against those responsible". Modi and his political rival Rahul Gandhi from the Congress party are holding a series of mass rallies across the country in a battle to win five key state elections later this year. Those elections are seen as a crucial test of popularity, with both parties hoping to capitalize on any momentum from the results for next year's general election.

The Nation - October 28th, 2013

Pakistan & Bangladesh

Elections in Bangladesh

Sheikh Hasina, Khaleda Zia in Rare Talk

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed invited opposition leader Khaleda Zia to dinner as they held rare talks in a bid to defuse a mounting crisis over forthcoming parliamentary elections. But Khaleda Zia, who has demanded that Sheikh Hasina quit and make way for a caretaker government to supervise the polls due in January 2014, spurned the premier's appeal to call off a three-day general strike. The 40-minute phone conversation - part of which was aired by television stations - was believed to be the first time in at least a decade that the two leaders, both of whom have served twice as premier, have spoken, observers say. The premier's invitation came a day after tensions spiked as supporters of Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its Islamist allies clashed with the ruling party and police in cities and towns across the nation, leaving at least seven people dead and hundreds injured. "I am inviting you to the prime minister's residence on October 28," Sheikh Hasina said to Khaleda Zia by telephone, appealing for her rival to withdraw her strike call.

"The prime minister invited the leader of the opposition to a dinner at her residence. She urged her to withdraw the strike [call] for the sake of the people. She urged her to end violence and invited her for talks," the premier's aide Mahbubul Haque Shakil said. But Khaleda Zia dismissed Sheikh Hasina's request to call off the strike, her spokesman Maruf Kamal Khan said. "She is ready to hold talks after the end of the strike on October 29," Mr Khan said. Bangladesh's politics have been held hostage for two decades by bitter rivalry between Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, who are known as the "battling begums". Paramilitaries and police fired at thousands of rampaging opposition supporters after they hit the streets, defying a government ban on rallies. Police said opposition supporters attacked them with small bombs, firearms and sticks, prompting them to open fire. Khaleda Zia, who addressed a rally of over 100,000 supporters, had branded the government "illegal" as of that day, citing a legal provision that required a

neutral caretaker government to be set up three months before elections. But Sheikh Hasina's ruling Awami League abolished the provision in 2011, handing the job of overseeing polls to an overhauled election commission.

Dawn - October 27th, 2013

Pakistan & Afghanistan

Elections in Afghanistan

Votes Sell for About \$5 in Afghanistan as Presidential Race Begins

Sayed Gul walked into a small mud brick room in eastern Afghanistan, a bundle wrapped in a shawl on his back. With a flick, he plonked the package onto a threadbare carpet and hundreds of voter cards spilled out. Like many others, Gul left a routine job - in his case, repairing cars in Marco, a small town in the east - to join a thriving industry selling the outcome of next year's presidential elections. Gul, who had a long, black beard and was dressed in the traditional loose salwar kameez, said he was able to buy voter cards for \$1.89 each from villagers and sell them on for \$4.73 to campaign managers, who can use them in connivance with poll officials to cast seemingly legitimate votes. From each card, Gul said, he made enough money to pay for a hearty meal like kebabs with rice, and maybe even a soda. There are months to go until polling day on April 5, but many presidential candidates are already alarmed by the scale of the illicit trade in voter cards and questioning how legitimate the election will be. An election marred by more fraud than the last polls in 2009 will play into the hands of Taliban insurgents and risks a breakdown of government as multinational troops pull out of the war-ravaged nation. "When people buy and sell voter cards for the cost of lunch, it means that Afghan democracy is for sale," said Azizullah Ludin, who was the chairman of the Afghan election watchdog in 2009 and is now himself running for president.

The United States, which has led an international effort to restore democracy in Afghanistan since it helped oust the hardline Taliban regime in 2001, desperately wants the election to be the crowning moment of its presence before Western combat troops withdraw at the end of 2014. The winning candidate will replace President Hamid Karzai, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a third five-year term. Among the candidates are his elder brother Qayum, former foreign minister Zalmay Rassoul, another former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah and a former warlord turned parliamentarian, Abdul Rab Rassoul Sayyaf. Some of the candidates and their supporters were on opposite sides of the Afghan civil war in the 1990s and charges of fraud in the election could set off fresh tensions, strengthening the Taliban. The threat of the insurgents, who oppose the election, was used at the last poll in 2009 to perpetuate widespread rigging, observers said. Thomas Ruttig, the co-founder of the Afghan Analysts Network, described how a group of men claiming to be Taliban fighters stormed a polling booth in an eastern province when the vote was on. "Everyone fled. The ballot boxes were empty beforehand, and full afterwards," he said. The nomination process for the 2014 poll ended only days ago, but the voter card trade is already starting to worry Western diplomats instructed to monitor the election for their governments. While it may be difficult to measure the scale of fraud compared to 2009, security will clearly be a bigger threat to the process next year, according to Davood Moradian, the director of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies. "Last time, there was a degree of certainty about the security situation surrounding the election. This time because of the transition and withdrawing of international troops, the security will be more challenging," Moradian said.

The Trade in Ballot Cards

Last week, a group of diplomats from various European embassies swapped stories over dinner about how easy it was to pick up a voter card. One had first-hand experience, recounting how he had registered as a Panjshiri, or a native of the Panjshir Valley in the north, at a polling station in Kabul. One of his Afghan staff also signed up with false details. Their fingerprints were taken but no one asked for proof of identity and the voter cards were printed out in about five minutes. Government officials are struggling in vain to stem the trade in the cards and people like Gul have even started to sell cards in some of major cities around the country. Women's voter cards are the easiest to trade because men can obtain them on their behalf - without providing a photograph or their fingerprints. This is because in Afghanistan's ultra-conservative culture, it is insulting to ask a woman to show her face and many are not allowed to leave the house without an escort, if at all. Men's cards have photographs and fingerprints, but with the help of election officials who have been enticed or threatened into cooperation, these can be used to vote by anyone who holds them. "Very recently we have sacked a whole team of election officials in Momand Dara district because they were making up fake lists and giving away voter cards," said Akhtar Mohammad Ajmal, the head of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) in the eastern Nangarhar province. "I don't deny there is voter fraud but we are working hard to tackle it." In Kandahar, police were involved in the theft of registration lists from a polling station. The growing strength of the Taliban means that swathes of the country will be beyond the reach of independent observers, leaving the door wide open to manipulation by corrupt officials. In a recent example of the hazards faced by monitors, Taliban gunmen shot and killed the IEC head in the northern province of Kunduz last month, a day after he warned that deteriorating security threatened next year's election.

Voter Cards for Potatoes

Traders like Gul say they are not engaging in criminal behaviour, but merely responding to the demands of rich politicians and poor villagers who choose to trade their votes for a few extra meals. In parts of the northern and lawless province of Kunduz, voter cards have become a form of currency and are being exchanged for bags of rice and potatoes, adding that most of those buying the cards work for candidates as campaigners. Most of Gul's cards came from his home district of Ghani Khil, a Taliban hotspot in Nangarhar where the physical danger of voting is enough to put many villagers off. The Independent Election Commission, which was created to ensure elections are free and fair, has had little to say on the matter of voter card trading so far. "We have heard of this and it is major concern for us," said commission spokesman Noor Mohammad Noor. "But we have certain measures in place to scrutinise the fraud." This week, Noor said the watchdog had expelled the first presidential candidate from the race for failing to provide required documentation, including evidence of support from 100,000 legitimate votes from 20 provinces. "He was missing most of his documents, including his support list," Noor told.

Pakistan Today - October 20th, 2013

Afghan Election Body Disqualifies 16 Presidential Candidates

Afghan officials disqualified more than half of the candidates who registered for the 2014 presidential election, marking a chaotic opening stage in the country's first democratic transfer of power. "Out of the 26 candidates who had officially filed to the IEC, after checking documents, 10 made it to the election," Independent Election Commission chief Yousof Nooristani told reporters. All the major names remained in the April 5 vote, which is seen as a key test of

Afghanistan's progress as the US-led NATO military coalition pulls out after 13 years of fighting the Taliban insurgency. President Hamid Karzai, who must step down after serving two terms, has called for just two or three candidates to avoid the confusion of the fraud-riddled 2009 vote, when 40 names appeared on the ballot paper. But a last-minute rush of candidates signed up in the closing hours of the nomination period on October 6, after weeks of negotiations had failed to form any significant coalitions. Presidential hopefuls must be aged at least 40, have a clean criminal record, provide 100,000 voter cards to prove they have a network of supporters, and lodge a deposit of one million Afghanis (\$18,000). The constitution also decrees that all candidates must be Muslim, born of Afghan parents and not a citizen of another country.

The criteria were tightened after the 2009 election to try to reduce the size of the field. "Those who couldn't make it had several problems, they could not fulfil the requirements set for them in election law, including not having enough voter signatures from all provinces or some of their forms were not complete," Nooristani said. Among the leading candidates still in the race are former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah, the president's low-profile elder Brother Qayum Karzai, and former finance minister Ashraf Ghani. Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf, a former Islamist warlord who had close ties to Al-Qaeda, is also on the list, along with Karzai loyalist Zalmi Rassoul, who recently resigned as foreign minister to run. Rassoul chose a radio as his election symbol, while Qayum Karzai chose a pencil and former Kandahar warlord Gul Agha Sherzai opted for a bulldozer to match his nickname, earned for his pugnacious style and support for building projects.

President Hamid Karzai has vowed not to endorse any one candidate and to oversee a free and fair election as his "legacy" to Afghanistan. But his implicit support could emerge for his older brother Qayum, veteran politician Rassoul -- or any one of several other runners. International donors, led by the US, have repeatedly stressed that the aid money on which Afghanistan relies would be at risk if the elections are not held on time or produce a disputed result. The 2009 vote was undermined by violence, fraud and delays, badly shaking international efforts to support the development of the country after the US-backed ousting of the Taliban regime in 2001. In 2009, Abdullah Abdullah came second with around 30 percent of the vote, triggering a run-off against Karzai. He then pulled out after Karzai supporters were involved in nationwide vote fraud. Many Afghans fear a surge in violence during campaigning and on polling day, but the government has said its security forces will ensure safety. The election next year coincides with the withdrawal of 87,000 NATO combat troops as Afghan soldiers and police take charge of the battle against the Taliban. Disqualified candidates will be able to appeal, with a final list of runners due to be published on November 16.

Daily Times - October 24th, 2013
