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GOVERNANCE
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GOVERNANCE WATCH

Government Working

Government to Strip Judicial Commission of Powers to Select Judges

The PML-N government has made up its mind to amend the Constitution for the purpose of giving supremacy to the Parliamentary Committee over the Judicial Commission for the appointment of judges in superior courts. While a parliamentary body is already working on the proposed amendment, the prime minister is said to have also shown his willingness to amend the Constitution to “improve” the procedure for appointment of judges. What would be the precise shape of the proposed amendment is not yet known but there is a growing desire amongst the parliamentarians, including the government MPs, to give an effective say to the parliamentary committee in the judges’ appointment cases. There are, however, apprehensions amongst different quarters that politicians sitting on both sides of the political divide may join hands to hit at the independence of the judiciary by compromising the appointment procedure.

The last PPP government had openly attacked the independent judiciary during its rule as the judges of the superior judiciary were considered a stumbling block in corruption, nepotism and bad governance of the then rulers. During the same regime, the work for changing the procedure for judges’ appointment had started. The PML-N government, which came into power after the May 11, 2013 elections, also lost its complete love for an independent judiciary as the latter challenged several contentious decisions of the regime. Now like the PPP, the PML-N is also enthusiastically reviewing the procedure for the appointment of judges. Former Supreme Court Bar Association President Yasin Azad had recently claimed in a press statement that during his one-on-one meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the premier showed his willingness to strengthen the role of the parliamentary committee in the judges’ appointment process.

The two bodies were created by amending the Article 175-A of the Constitution through the 18th and 19th amendments. However, later both the parliamentarians and certain factions of the legal fraternity voiced their opposition to this procedure and wanted to give an upper hand to the parliamentary committee instead of the judicial commission. The argument is about the supremacy of parliament, which interestingly, has also been rejected by the apex court. After the passage of the 18th Amendment, the Supreme Court sought certain changes in the Article 175, which deals with the appointment of judges. In its arguments, the Supreme Court had clearly said, “We have considered this argument in detail and find this view to be utterly against the newly-added provisions of the Constitution itself. We cannot comprehend how this Parliamentary Committee, constituted under Article 175A, can even remotely be considered as a part of the legislature or how, for that matter, any question relating to the supremacy of parliament is involved in this case.

The Judicial Commission and the Parliamentary Committee are two limbs of one constitutional mechanism created by the newly-added Article 175A. Both of them owe their existence to Article 175A and not to the provisions relating to the Legislature or the Executive in the Constitution.” The SC further said: “As such, they are entirely new authorities constituted under Article 175A of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973. Any authority created under a constitutional provision is bound to act within its specified mandate as per Article 4 of the Constitution of Pakistan. There is thus no immunity from judicial scrutiny reserved for the Committee under the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973 and Article 69 has no application in the instant case. Indeed,

none was claimed before us by the Federation.” The SC added, “The constitution of the Judicial Commission itself and the members, comprising five sitting judges of the Supreme Court, one former judge of the Supreme Court, the chief justice and the most senior judge of the high court, federal minister for law and attorney general of Pakistan, law minister of the concerned province and two senior advocates/ members of the Bar, give us a clear insight into the reasons for the creation of the Commission.”

The SC, therefore, ruled that the parliamentary committee, on receipt of a nomination from the commission, can either confirm the nominee by a majority of its total membership within 14 days, failing which the nomination shall be deemed to have been confirmed, or reject the nomination on grounds falling within its domain for very strong reasons which shall be justifiable. The SC judgment also noted that the 13 members of the commission are law-knowing and law related persons who can make an objective evaluation of the suitability of a nominee for judicial office. From members of the Parliamentary Committee, it is not expected that they will have the first hand information about a nominee or that they will have the same level of expertise as the commission, to evaluate the suitability of a nominee for appointment to high judicial office.

The News - February 11th, 2014

Negotiations & Peace Talks with Taliban

Confusion Reigns over Talks as Taliban Announce Committee

Statements of political leadership triggered confusion after the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) said that its Shura had agreed to constitute a team which could easily meet the government team for peace talks. “After lengthy deliberations the Shura agreed on constitution of (five-member) team,” TTP spokesman Shahidullah Shahid said in a statement he emailed to newspaper offices. The five members include PTI chief Imran Khan, cleric Abdul Aziz, Maulana Samiul Haq, Mufti Kifayatullah of JUI-F and Prof Muhammad Ibrahim of Jamaat-e-Islami. “TTP’s political shura will completely guide and monitor the team,” the statement quoted the spokesman as saying, adding that his organization would provide complete security in its held areas. Commenting on the TTP’s statement, Imran Khan said the militant group should select its own representatives for the peace talks. He said in a statement that the PTI had full faith in the four-member committee formed by the government for the talks.

“However, we will discuss in our core committee meeting on how the PTI can be of assistance to further the dialogue,” he added. PTI Information Secretary Dr Shireen Mazari said the party had not been contacted by the Taliban to ask its chairman to become member of its committee for peace talks with the government. Ejaz Chaudhry, president of PTI Punjab chapter, said that Imran Khan could not get directly involved in the process of negotiation between the government and Taliban. Chaudhry said that the party wanted to make the talk process result-oriented by remaining within the parameters of the constitution. He further said that all political parties in parliament should be taken into confidence over the talk’s initiative. However, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Sami (JUI-S) leader Maulana Samiul Haq said that he had contacted Imran Khan, urging him to accept the offer and join the team of mediators. In an interview to a private TV channel, he said that the TTP would soon announce its nine-member committee to hold peace dialogue with the government’s representatives.

Maulana Samiul Haq said that his team would facilitate peace talks between the government and the Taliban. He said that if Imran Khan decided not to play his part as a mediator, it would damage his credibility. The Taliban would demand that the government release prisoners so

that they might join the negotiation committee from their side, he said. Meanwhile, Abdul Aziz said that he would be part of the TTP committee on certain conditions, including willingness of the government to implement Islamic laws and enforce Shariah in the country. On the other hand, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that both the Taliban and tribal people have confidence over the jirga system, adding, "Why is tribal jirga system being ignored?" There is need of peace and not war in the country, he told the media in Faisalabad. He said he had summoned a meeting of the party's executive committee to deliberate on affairs pertaining to peace talks. Irfan Siddiqui, a member of government's peace committee, welcomed the committee announced by Taliban and termed it a "goodwill gesture".

In a statement, Siddiqui said, "We welcome the committee and all committee members are respectable for us." However, he added, "We were waiting for a green signal from the Taliban so that a serious dialogue process may start without any delay." Siddiqui said that the nation wants beginning of the dialogue immediately in order to bring about peace and stability in the country. He thanked the clerics who had made hectic efforts to ensure success of the dialogue by adopting "serious and realistic approach". The TTP has demanded that the government include Imran Khan, Samiul Haq, a cleric referred to as "Father of the Taliban", Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Sirajul Haq and Muhammad Ibrahim; Mufti Kifaitullah of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and the Islamabad-based Lal Masjid cleric Abdul Aziz in the committee. The Taliban Shura has also chosen a nine-member panel to represent the Taliban at talks with the government, sources said, adding that Qari Shakeel would head this committee.

Daily Times - February 03rd, 2014

Taliban Won't Accept Talks without Enforcement of Shariah: Negotiator

Negotiators representing Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) said there was no chance of peace in Pakistan until the government embraces Shariah law and US-led forces withdraw completely from Afghanistan. The tough conditions appear to deal a blow to hopes those talks with the government could end the TTP insurgency that has rocked the country since 2007. Initial peace talks failed to get under way when the government delegation refused to meet the militants' negotiators, citing confusion about the make-up of their team. The two sides are expected to try to meet again, though no definite arrangements have yet been made. Washington and Kabul have been deadlocked over a pact known as the Bilateral Security Agreement, which would allow some US troops to stay on in Afghanistan beyond 2014. Afghan President Hamid Karzai is refusing to sign it at present. Its supporters say the pact is crucial to Afghanistan's stability after the bulk of NATO forces pull out. But Maulana Samiul Haq, the head of the TTP's three-man talk's team, told that there could be "no peace" in the region while there were still US troops across the border. His comments were echoed by his fellow TTP negotiator Maulana Abdul Aziz, who also said the TTP's long-held commitment to impose Shariah law across Pakistan was not open to debate.

"Without Shariah law, the Taliban won't accept (the talks) even one percent," he told. "If some factions accept it, then the others won't accept it." The government has insisted that the constitution must remain paramount. Given the gulf between the two sides, there has been skepticism about what the talks could achieve. Local peace deals with the militants in the past have quickly fallen apart. "Their real agenda is Shariah," Aziz said, suggesting that all Pakistan's secular courts based on the common law system be abolished. "I don't think the government will accept this but they should, because war isn't the way forward." Government efforts to start peace talks last year came to an abrupt halt in November with the killing of TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud in a US drone strike. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's announcement last

week that he wanted to give peace talks another try caught many observers by surprise. The start of the year has seen a surge in militant violence, with more than 110 people killed, and many had expected the military to launch an offensive against TTP strongholds in the tribal areas.

Daily Times - February 06th, 2014

Taliban Working to Uphold Constitution: Sami

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Sami (JUI-S) chief Maulana Samiul Haq and head of Taliban's negotiating committee claimed that TTP was fighting a war for the upholding implementation of the Constitution, which has been violated by country's leadership. He appealed to the nation to pray for the success of dialogue process between the government and outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. Maulana Samiul Haq said that the success of dialogue process was necessary for bringing peace to the country. Clarifying that his peace committee neither represented government, nor Taliban, he said that the committee was impartial and would be neutral, seeing interests of both the sides Taliban and the government. The JUI-S chief also responded to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's suggestion that a member of the TTP should be included in the committee. "This is a rather strange request. We are an independent committee. We do not belong to the government or the Taliban," he stated, adding that they would care for the interests of both the sides in the talks. He stressed that their role would be of intermediaries who would go to speak to the TTP and then relay their message to the government.

Maulana Samiul Haq said that solution to the current issue lay in the hands of Taliban and the government. He added the government's committee had not taken any steps and they should initiate talks soon with his committee in order to reach the Taliban. According to Maulana Sami it was everyone's demand that Shariah should be implemented and the real issues were to separate from the US war and deliverance from slavery. He said Taliban were not involved in recent wave of attacks. He criticized former president Musharraf, saying Pakistan was facing the terrorism problems because of him. Addressing to a Kashmir rally Samiul Haq said that the Taliban were fighting for the Constitution of Pakistan. He said he had expected Nawaz Sharif to renounce the foreign war when he became prime minister but he (Nawaz Sharif) failed to live up to this expectation. "The government is powerless in putting an end to the drone strikes and distancing Pakistan from the ongoing war," he said. On Kashmir issue, Maulana Samiul Haq said Kashmiri people had rendered matchless sacrifices in their struggle for right to self-determination, which would not go in waste.

The News - February 06th, 2014

Government, Taliban Teams Move One Step Forward

The government and Taliban committees, in their first meeting, expressed the resolve to continue dialogue and vowed that the violent acts of the recent past would not hamper the peace process. Addressing a joint press conference after a three-hour-long meeting at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House, Irfan Siddiqui and Maulana Samiul Haq said the committees agreed that both sides should stop giving statements against each other and the process of talks should not be long, as the nation is hoping for good news.

The government-nominated committee consists of Irfan Siddiqui, Rahimullah Yousafzai, Rustam Shah Mohmand and Major (r) Amir, while Maulana Samiul Haq, Maulana Abdul Aziz and Prof Ibrahim are members of the committee announced by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. During

the talks, the government committee said it should be conveyed to the Taliban that peace talks should be held within the ambit of the constitution and there should be end to the violent attacks in the country. It said that the talks should be held only on the militancy-hit areas and these should not be about the whole country. It also asked the Taliban committee about its authority in the presence of the nine-member monitoring committee of the Taliban. The committee also said that there should be no activity which is against peace and security and harmful to the talks process. Reading points of a joint press release, Maulana Samiul Haq said the committees condemned the violent attacks that happened in recent days. The government committee referred to the resolve of the prime minister that he sincerely and honestly wanted talks to be successful for peace in the country. Irfan Siddiqui said they were holding talks with an open mind and heart and were hopeful that they would produce good results as the nation was praying and hoping for success of the peace process.

In reply, Samiul Haq said they welcomed the steps taken for establishing peace. He said, "We always made efforts for an end to all sort of bloodshed so that Pakistan becomes a peaceful country according to the Islamic teachings." The Taliban committee demanded a meeting with the prime minister and the chief of army staff. It said that the government's demands and agenda would be conveyed to the leadership of the Taliban. Samiul Haq said the talks were held in a congenial atmosphere. He said that their three-member committee would meet with the nine-member committee of Taliban in South Waziristan. Both sides, he said, were positive about the success of the talks and the meeting was according to the expectations and aspirations of the nation. Irfan Siddiqui thanked the Taliban committee for holding the meeting and said it seemed that not two but only one committee was holding talks. "We are happy that the meeting was held according to our wishes and expectations and in an atmosphere of conciliation and goodwill." The aim of the meeting was to rid the country of its problems and make it peaceful, Irfan said, adding, "There was not even a single moment of tension and the meeting was useful and fruitful. The meeting clearly set the objectives for the future."

Daily Times - February 07th, 2014

Peace Initiative: Maulana Aziz Strikes a Discordant Note

One of the Taliban intermediaries, Maulana Abdul Aziz, has refused to attend future meetings with government negotiators until the implementation of Shariah law is on the agenda. "I'll remain part of this [Taliban intermediary] committee - but, yes, I will not sit for future talks until my demands are met," Aziz told after a meeting of Shura in Lal Masjid. "Peace talks may be delayed because the government wants the talks within the limits of the Constitution but the Taliban believe only in the Holy Quran and Sunnah," he added. The government's four-member negotiating committee met with the TTP intermediaries where the first demand of the former was that the talks would be held within the purview of the Constitution. "Our first demand to the Taliban is submission to the Constitution of Pakistan," Irfan Siddiqui, the coordinator of the government committee, had said after the three-hour session. But Maulana Aziz reiterated that the people the government is trying to have a dialogue with do not believe in the Constitution. "I will not take back my demand for the enforcement of Shariah law. If Maulana Samiul Haq and the Taliban want to kick me out of the committee, they can."

Irfan Siddiqui rejected the idea of implementing Shariah, saying that it cannot happen even in the tribal areas, which has made these talks useless, he said. But Maulana Yousaf and Prof. Muhammad Ibrahim claimed they would convince Maulana Aziz to attend future meetings. "We will keep Maulana Aziz with us at all costs," Prof. Ibrahim told. Echoing Maulana Aziz's views, TTP central spokesman Shahidullah Shahid said the Taliban wouldn't be waging a war against

the government if they followed a law or a Constitution other than Islamic Shariah. He said that a meeting with the Taliban intermediaries was due in next four to five days in which future course of action would be directed to them. The Taliban intermediaries have agreed to recommend a ceasefire to the nine-member Political Shura of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) overseeing the peace talks with the government. "The Taliban committee agreed with this proposal as we all believe that there should be no activity by either side that can potentially harm peace efforts," Rahimullah Yousafzai, a member of the government committee told. "Only with a ceasefire can these talks yield a lasting peace agreement." They also suggested to the Taliban intermediaries to ask the TTP leadership to include a couple of members from their Political Shura for more productive results.

The Express Tribune - February 08th, 2014

Talks Only Under Quran and Sunnah: TTP

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) spokesman Shahidullah Shahid made it clear that the talks will be held only under the Quran and Sunnah, arguing that his organization did not accept any other law. He said they would not have fought had they accepted any law other than the Shariah. Talking to BBC, the TTP spokesman said the talks with the government were meant to enforce the Shariah. "We are battling for the Shariah. The talks we are going to hold are also for the Shariah," he said. Shahidullah said they were pondering over the suggestions made by the government and the TTP committee will take further decisions. Replying to a question about the outcome of the talks, he said: "All issues will be presented to them (TTP committee). It is premature to say anything about it right now." Asked how talks for the enforcement of Shariah can proceed further after the rejection of existing laws and Constitution of the country, Shahidullah said: "It is a very easy thing. First, all the parties in the talks claim to be Muslims. Pakistan was created in the name of Islam so it is not difficult for any Muslim (to accept Shariah). If we demand enforcement of Shariah in the US, then it is a hard thing because Americans are not Muslims. But these people (parties to talk) call themselves Muslims." He said the government suggestions were under consideration but he did not want to comment on them now.

He said two different groups will make different demands in the talks but "we are satisfied that talks for enforcement of Shariah will succeed." He said the meeting between the TTP and their representatives was expected within four-five days. On the refusal of Lal Masjid cleric Abdul Aziz to become a part of the talks, he said Aziz was still their representative and his 'difficulties' will soon be removed. "Maulana Aziz has said nothing wrong," he said. Maulana Aziz had earlier announced separation from the talks until the inclusion of enforcement of Shariah on the agenda. The Lal Masjid cleric told a press conference that he will not join the talks until the Shariah enforcement was included in the agenda for the talks. "We have not gone away from the talks but will not become part of the process until the government promises that talks will be held under the Quran and Sunnah, not the Constitution of Pakistan," he said. Maulana Aziz said he would be a part of the talks if the government promises the enforcement of Shariah. He said he will be a part of the committee as long as the TTP asks him to leave but will not take part in the talks. It is pertinent to mention here that after the first meeting of representatives of the TTP and the government, a statement was issued that talks will be held under the Constitution and their scope will be limited to the affected areas.

The News - February 08th, 2014

Cracks Appear In Taliban Peace Talks Committee

The government's peace efforts suffered a major setback when Maulana Abdul Aziz, a member of the Taliban mediation committee, sought assurance that Shariah would be implemented in the country, as a condition for continuing to be part of the negotiations. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad the cleric stated, "Until an assurance on enforcement of Islamic law, I will neither meet Taliban nor join the dialogue process." The Lal Masjid khateeb said that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) team of negotiators was constituted with the aim to hold negotiations, but the government's demand that the negotiations be held within the limits of 1973 Constitution will delay the process. The maulana said that this condition should be withdrawn and suggested replacing the constitution with the teachings of the holy Quran and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Aziz warned that he would distance himself from the peace process if the clause on implementation of Shariah is not adhered to during the negotiations. "The peace process can move forward only if it is according to the Quran and Sunnah," Aziz said, adding, "I would not be part of peace dialogues till assurance on enforcement of Shariah." He said that if by the word constitution the government committee means Islamic laws then there is no problem.

"We want this constitution as well," he said. To a question about whether the 1973 constitution is Islamic or not the cleric said that people should not be misled into believing that our constitution is Islamic. He told reporters that until the government committee brings the imposition of Shariah on the agenda he wouldn't be part of the negotiations. "I will be part of the three-man peace committee but won't participate in talks until they give assurance to impose Islamic law," he said. Aziz said that the government wants to talk about peace within the limits of the constitution but those who they are negotiating with do not believe in it. He said the government's demand to hold negotiations within the parameters of the constitution would undermine the talks. The government's committee, he said, has already expressed reservations about the composition and authority of the TTP's representatives. On the other hand Information Minister Pervez Rashid told newsmen in Islamabad that every possible help would be extended to the government negotiators and helicopter services would also be provided in case there was a need to send the team to Waziristan for peace talks. He said that the government was awaiting recommendations from its negotiators on the demand put forth by the Taliban committee to meet the prime minister, army chief and director general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

In their first meeting, the government and Taliban committees expressed the resolve to continue dialogue and vowed that the violent acts of the recent past would not hamper the peace process. Addressing a joint press conference after a three-hour-long meeting at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House, Irfan Siddiqui and Maulana Samiul Haq said the committees agreed that both sides should stop giving statements against each other and the process of talks should not be long, as the nation is hoping for good news. During the talks, the government committee said it should be conveyed to the Taliban that peace talks should be held within the ambit of the constitution and there should be end to the violent attacks in the country. It said that the talks should be held only on the militancy-hit areas and these should not be about the whole country. It also asked the Taliban committee about its authority in the presence of the nine-member monitoring committee of the Taliban. The committee also said that there should be no activity which is against peace and security and harmful to the talks process. Reading points of a joint press release, Maulana Samiul Haq said the committees condemned the violent attacks that happened in recent days.

Daily Times - February 08th, 2014

Taliban Peace Talks Will Probably Fail: Imran

The peace negotiations between the government and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) will probably fail and a resulting military operation would lead to more violence, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said. In an interview with the New York-based news website Bloomberg, Imran was quoted as saying: "The most likely result is that the negotiations will start, there will be about three or four big explosions and terrorist attacks and the negotiations will be called off." "There will be people baying for blood and the operation will start," he claimed. Speaking about the US drone campaign, the PTI chief said the talks will only be meaningful if America announces an end to drone strikes. "If the US stops drone attacks, announces stopping the drone attacks during the talks, it would be a big plus point," he stressed. Imran further accused the US of sabotaging an earlier effort at talks with a November 1 drone attack that killed TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud. "The US doesn't want peace talks here or peace in Pakistan while they are leaving Afghanistan," the report quoted Imran. "The thinking is that if they [insurgents] are engaged here, they would not be going across to fight."

Daily Times - February 08th, 2014

Face To Face Contact: Intermediaries Meet TTP Leaders in Waziristan

Two members of the TTP intermediary committee – Jamaat-e-Islami's Prof. Mohammad Ibrahim and Maulana Yousaf Shah presented the government's demands to the TTP Political Shura which has started deliberating on them. The two sides had detailed meeting. The Political Shura members – who have been assigned by the TTP leadership to monitor the dialogue process with the government – apprised the intermediaries of their point of view and sought details of their talks with the government's four-men negotiating committee. The Political Shura will not make demands or set out any conditions at the beginning of the talks to keep the process on track, the Taliban leader said. "We will try to reduce tension and will not make demands that the government cannot accept. And we hope that the government will also not make demands that could harm the peace process." "Lal Masjid prayers leader Maulana Abdul Aziz has not quit the Taliban committee and will remain a member, playing his part," the TTP leader said. A day earlier, Maulana Aziz had refused to take part in the talks unless the enforcement of Shariah law was on the talks agenda.

Constitution Is Islamic: Mufti Kifayatullah

Even though the Taliban leader seemed positive, the JUI-F leader Mufti Kifayatullah said that attempts were being made to sabotage the peace process, paving the way for a military operation in North Waziristan. Addressing a press conference, he defended his decision of excusing himself from the talks after he was initially nominated by the TTP as one of their then five-member committee. "I will obey the orders of my party chief and give my suggestions to the negotiators from outside [the committee]," he said, adding that his party was in favor of talks with the Taliban. "The whole nation has its eyes on the talks and was waiting for some good news." Mufti Kifayatullah said that no law repugnant to the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah could be enacted in an Islamic state. He read out Article 227 of the Constitution: "All existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah and no law shall be enacted which is repugnant to such injunctions."

The Express Tribune - February 09th, 2014

Taliban Comes Up With 15 Demands for Peace Talks

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan's "political shura" and negotiations committee met at an undisclosed location in North Waziristan Agency for the second consecutive day and produced as many as fifteen demands to be put forward to the government's negotiation committee. Media reports said the Taliban shura had been meeting under its deputy ameer, Sheikh Khalid Haqqani. Professor Ibrahim Khan and Maulana Yousuf Shah who are in Waziristan for a meeting with the Taliban shura are likely to convey these points to the committee formed by the government for mediation. The points are as follows: Stop drone attacks; introduce Shariah law in courts; introduce Islamic system of education in both public and private educational institutions; free Pakistani and foreign Taliban held in jails; restoration and remuneration for damage to property during drone attacks; hand over control of tribal areas to local forces; withdrawal of army from tribal areas and close down check posts; all criminal allegations against the Taliban be dropped; prisoners from both sides be released; equal rights for all, poor and rich; families of drone attack victims be offered jobs; end interest-based system; stop supporting the US on the war on terror; replace the democratic system of governance with the Islamic system; end all relations with the US.

During the second round of talks, the political shura of the TTP formally presented these conditions to its representatives. The conditions include holding negotiations within limits of Shariah, withdrawal of forces from conflict areas and release of captured Taliban accomplices from Pakistani prisons. The session also discussed the option of ceasefire along with other key issues. The Taliban-nominated committee is likely to put forward TTP's demands after reaching Islamabad. Earlier, Taliban central shura met at an undisclosed location in North Waziristan under Taliban deputy ameer Sheikh Khalid Haqqani. Professor Ibrahim, Maulana Yousaf and Maulana Haseeb informed the TTP about the demands of the government committee, following which the TTP put forward its own set of demands. According to sources, negotiations between the committee members and Taliban could last two to three phases. The members of the Taliban negotiations committee Professor Ibrahim and Maulana Samiul Haq's special representative Maulana Haseeb had reached Miranshah on a helicopter provided by the government. They were there briefed by the political agent after which the three leaders proceeded ahead. Taliban's political shura assured complete security to the committee members. The session will continue for next two days and Maulana Samiul Haq is also expected to join it.

Sources said that the Taliban had asked Maulana Samiul Haq to join the meeting in North Waziristan. The maulana could leave for North Waziristan to inform the Taliban leadership about the government's demands. He has expressed his hope for success of the dialogue process and also appealed to all countrymen to pray for the success of the peace process. The Taliban commanders and the members of their committee kept changing the venue of their meeting amid continued flights of unmanned US drones in the tribal area, a private TV channel said. The Taliban shura and the committee members had to change the venue many times due to the drone flights. The government's peace efforts suffered a major setback when Maulana Abdul Aziz, a member of the Taliban mediation committee, sought assurance that Shariah would be implemented in the country, as a condition for continuing to be part of the negotiations. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad the cleric stated, "Until an assurance on enforcement of Islamic law, I will neither meet Taliban nor join the dialogue process." The Lal Masjid khateeb said that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) team of negotiators was constituted with the aim to hold negotiations, but the government's demand that the negotiations be held within the limits of 1973 Constitution will delay the process.

Daily Times - February 10th, 2014

Ceasefire Agreed: Headway Claimed In Talks with TTP

Though no formal confirmation came from the Taliban side, the official claimed that the 'breakthrough' was achieved during two-day talks between the Taliban political Shura and their intermediaries at an undisclosed location. One of the proposals put forward by a four-member government negotiating committee was an immediate ceasefire from both sides. "The government will reciprocate if the TTP ceases its activities in the country," he added. The government negotiators are of the view that the peace process cannot move forward without a truce. One of the Taliban intermediaries also confirmed that cessation of hostilities from both sides would be a major confidence-building measure. A member of the government committee, however, cautioned that the issue needed to be handled carefully. "The [ceasefire] issue is delicate as there are groups and elements which may attempt to spoil the dialogue process," he told requesting anonymity. He added that ensuring ceasefire from both sides would determine the future of the dialogue process. Two members of the TTP intermediary committee - Jamaat-e-Islami's Prof. Mohammad Ibrahim and Maulana Yousaf Shah, who is representing JUI-S chief Maulana Samiul Haq - reached Miramshah from where they left for an undisclosed location for the first formal contact with the Taliban political Shura.

A TTP leader clarified that the talks were not held in North Waziristan as part of an understanding with the Taliban and that the intermediaries had to travel from Miramshah for nearly five to six hours to a location in South Waziristan. Sources told that the Taliban intermediaries have left for Islamabad. Later it transpired that they might have to stay at the local political agent's residence in Miramshah overnight as the helicopter could not fly in the dark. Their departure was delayed which prompted Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan to call up Maulana Sami to enquire about the reasons. "They [intermediaries and Taliban Shura members] had to change the [talks] venue several times as drones were hovering overhead," Maulana Sami told Nisar, according to an interior ministry statement. In response, Chaudhry Nisar said, "If the dialogue is sabotaged from outside, it would be considered as an act against the state." Both sides expressed satisfaction over the progress made so far in the dialogue process, the statement added. The Taliban leader, however, attributed the delay to the 'complexity of the issues' involved. "Both sides were discussing very delicate and complex issues. This also shows the Taliban's seriousness to have detailed consultation with their intermediaries," he told by phone from North Waziristan. "Since our intermediaries will have more direct talks with the government's committee, our political Shura members wanted to discuss all matters threadbare," he added.

Media reports claimed that the TTP has spelled out a 15-point charter of demands to their intermediaries. The Taliban leader did not confirm the reports. "I will not officially confirm whatever is being reported in the media, including the demands," he said. "Some of our demands could be similar to what has been reported." TTP central spokesman Shahidullah Shahid refused to offer formal comment on the talks. Shahid, who was also part of the consultation, said that he would speak to the media on the issue. He, however, did not confirm media reports about the talks, including the reported conditions. "These are mere speculations," Shahid said when asked if the Taliban political Shura has set out 15 conditions. The government committee's coordinator, Irfan Siddiqui, said the Taliban intermediaries have not contacted them so far. "We are waiting for a formal reaction from the Taliban on the framework we have laid down for talks: that they should remain within the parameters of the constitution," he told. He added that the two sides would meet up as soon as the Taliban intermediaries got back and had their discussion completed. "We are ready to meet them whenever they want," he said.

The Express Tribune - February 10th, 2014

PPP Leaders Divided Over Government - TTP Talks

A clear division between senior leaders of the Pakistan Peoples' Party over the government's talks with the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is having a trickle-down effect on the lower cadres of the party, with Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Syed Khurshid Shah, bearing the brunt of this stark difference of opinion. Sources in the PPP told Dawn that a majority of the party legislators and leaders were unhappy over the two speeches delivered recently by Mr. Shah in the assembly on the issues of talks with the Taliban and a controversial anti-terror ordinance. According to the sources, during an informal gathering in the chamber of the Senate chairman, the PPP legislators expressed annoyance over the speech made by Mr. Shah soon after the prime minister announced in the National Assembly on Jan 29 the formation of a four-member committee to hold talks with TTP. The members told Mr. Shah that his speech was not a true representative of their sentiments, citing a speech made by Dr Farooq Sattar of the MQM the same day. Mr. Shah, the sources added, told his colleagues that whatever he had said was in line with the party's policy.

Mr. Shah, in his speech in the National Assembly, extended support to the government in its latest endeavor to hold talks with the Taliban through committees. Although Mr. Shah had demanded a timeframe for the talks, he did not raise any question on the formation of the government team and only criticized the prime minister for taking too much time to form the committee. "If you still feel after seven months (of the government) that the dialogue will be a better course, we have no objection," Mr. Shah had said and then added: "We are with you." On the other hand, Dr Sattar of the MQM, which usually supports the government, called the move a "sell-out of the blood of martyrs" that would give time to the militants to reorganize themselves. Last month, during a discussion on political situation in the Senate, when a PML-N legislator drew the attention of the members towards different approaches of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Syed Khurshid Shah towards the present government, Senate Deputy Chairman and Zardari loyalist Sabir Ali Baloch categorically stated that Mr. Shah's statement could not be treated as party policy.

Dawn - February 10th, 2014

Senators Reject TTP Demand, Want Talks Held Under 73 Constitution

Parliamentarians in the Senate strongly reacted to the TTP's stance of not holding peace talks under the constitution of Pakistan. Opposition senators claimed that it was decided that there would be no terrorist activities during peace negotiations but the recent incidents clearly revealed that "third forces" are involved in such acts. Now it is duty of the government to ascertain the third force, they said, and demanded that the government hold talks with TTP under the constitution of Pakistan. Continuing debate over Mian Raza Rabbani's motion regarding discussion on the current law and order situation in the country, PML-N Senator Hamza said Islam does not allow killing of innocent people and Taliban are just misusing the name of religion. He asked the government to take appropriate measures to improve law and order situation in the country as killings in Karachi and Balochistan still continue. PPP Senator Saeed Ghani was of the view that both the government and Taliban members of committees "have same thinking and agenda to promote Taliban's idea".

PPP Senator Saeed Ghani said that majority of people in Pakistan are true followers of Islam, and asked the government to take action against those forces which are sabotaging peace process. The All Parties Conference (APC) of the JUI-F had given mandate to the government to initiate peace talks with insurgents, said Abdul Ghafoor Haideri while taking part in the debate. He also claimed that the 1973 constitution was made on the basis of Islam and it was signed by

Shah Ahmad Noorani, Maulana Abdul Haq, Mufti Mehmood and other prominent clerics. "I can never give this right to anyone to challenge the 1973 constitution," he said, adding, "Let us see the outcome of peace talks and pray for its success." PML-N Senator Najma Hameed was of the view that the law and order situation had deteriorated when a military dictator took over the civilian government. Had the democratic process continued, the situation would have improved as compared to the present situation, he added. PPP legislator Mukhtar Ahmad Dhamrah said the Taliban's demand of releasing their prisoners is totally illogical as they were involved in the killing of innocent people.

Daily Times - February 11th, 2014

Attacks in KP Since September 09th APC Talks With Taliban

A total of 313 people have died and over 400 suffered injuries in over a dozen acts of terrorism in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province since Sept 9, – the day when a government-sponsored 'all-party conference' in Islamabad decided to hold talks with militants to bring peace to the country. Following is a chronology of the incidents:

- Sept 15: Maj-Gen Sanaullah Niazi and three others are killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Upper Dir.
- Sept 22: A twin suicide attack at a church in Peshawar kills 98 and injures 130.
- Sept 27: A time-bomb rips through a bus on Charsadda road, leaving 19 people dead and at least 21 others wounded.
- Sept 29: A car bomb attack in Peshawar's Qissa Khwani bazaar kills 41 and injures 45.
- Jan 12, 2014: Mian Mushtaq, a leader of the Awami National Party, and two others are gunned down on the outskirts of the provincial capital.
- Jan 12: The motorcade of Amir Muqam, a leader of the ruling PML-N, is hit by two IED blasts in the Shangla district, leaving five people dead.
- Jan 16: Ten people are killed and 60 wounded in a bomb blast at a Tablighi Markaz in Peshawar.
- Jan 19: An explosion in the Bannu garrison kills 24 and injures 24.
- Jan 21: Seven people are killed and nine injured in a blast at Serdheri Bazaar in Charsadda.
- Jan 23: Six people die and eight suffer injuries in a blast in an auto workshop at Peshawar.
- Jan 25: A toy bomb explosion in Hangu kills six.
- Feb 2: Five people lose their lives and 30 are wounded in a grenade attack in Peshawar's Picture House cinema.
- Feb 4: A blast in Kocha Risaldar area of Peshawar claims 10 lives and injures 45.
- Feb 9: A leader of the Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafria is murdered in Peshawar.
- Feb 10: A suicide attack at Esa Garhi in Peshawar leaves four people dead and eight wounded.
- Feb 11: A triple grenade attack in Peshawar's Shama Cinema claims 13 lives and injures 23.
- Feb 12: Militants attack a house in Mashokhel area of Peshawar, kill nine people.

Dawn - February 13th, 2014

TTP: Threat Came From Across the Border

The Supreme Court was informed that threats to Kalash tribe and Ismailis for embracing Islam was not internal, but had come from across the border. A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, heard a suo motu notice which the CJP took on the media report about Pakistani Taliban's threat to Ismailis and the Kalash tribe in the picturesque Chitral Valley. The court had summoned the attorney general and the KPK advocate general. In a 50-minute-long video released on February 2 on the TTP media wing's website, the Pakistani Taliban had announced an "armed struggle" against the Kalash and Ismaili Muslims. The narrator warned the Kalash who are thought to be only 3,500 to convert to Islam or face death. Appearing on the court notice, KPK Advocate General Abdul Latif Yousafzai said Nuristan province of Afghanistan border extended to Dir and Chitral. He said he had been told by the KPK home secretary that the news about the militants' threats to Kalash and Ismaili communities of Chitral was correct, but it was from across the border and not internal.

Abdul Latif Yousafzai, however, submitted the provincial government had taken up the matter with the federal government, adding preventive measures had been taken by the Chitral deputy commissioner in this regard. The court directed the KPK advocate general to submit a report within a week, explaining as to what further preventive measures had been taken in the matter after holding meetings with the federal government. The court also directed the KPK advocate general to collect reports from the district police and the Chitral commissioner and submit a comprehensive report on February 24. The chief justice observed that Ismailis had received threats from the Taliban as per the news report. The Taliban had threatened them to convert to Islam or face death which, he said, was against articles 9, 20 and 36 of the Constitution. The chief justice further remarked that Islam was a religion that preached peace and tolerance. Meanwhile, during the hearing of the Peshawar church blast case, the Punjab and Sindh governments submitted reports before the court pertaining to the security measures taken for the protection of worship places of minority communities.

The court clubbed the cases of conversion in Chitral and Kalash and the security of worship places in all the provinces. Punjab Advocate General Mustafa Ramday told the court that there was no security problem regarding worship places in the province as they were fully protected. He added there were 97 worship places in Gunjrawala, 24 in Bahawalpur and nine each in Multan and Rawalpindi and all were fully protected. KPK Advocate General Abdul Latif Yousafzai said the provincial government had already submitted a report about the security of worship places in the province. A representative of Tando Adam-based organization from Sindh told the court that they were fully protected and could go to their worship places freely. Similarly, Ramesh Kumar, a representative of Pakistan Hindu Council, told the court that they were fully protected and their temples had no security problem. The court adjourned the hearing in Peshawar church blast case till February 24, besides directing the KPK advocate general to submit a report on the Chitral-Kalash threat within a week.

The Nation - February 21st, 2014

Miramshah Attack: TTP Ex-Interim Chief Killed In Ambush

Former interim chief of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the group's senior commander Asmatullah Shaheen Bhattani was killed along with his driver and two guards in an ambush in the North Waziristan tribal agency. An official of the political administration said that Asmatullah Shaheen, the head of the TTP's FR Tank chapter, was killed by gunmen in the Darga Mandi area of Miramshah, the headquarters of North Waziristan Agency. He was travelling to Miramshah Bazaar from Ghulam Khan Tehsil in his car along with his driver and three guards

when gunmen ambushed his vehicle, the official said. Asmatullah, his driver Toufan Bhattani and two guards were killed on the spot, while a third guard was wounded, the official added. "The attackers, who had come in a vehicle from the Miramshah side, fled after the attack unseen and unchallenged." The area where the attack took place is four kilometres away from Miramshah Bazaar and near the Pak-Afghan border. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. There was no immediate reaction from the TTP, but security analyst Imtiaz Gul said the killing was likely the result of Asmatullah's several enmities. "Militant groups have fought against each other in the past and the killing of Asmatullah Shaheen is apparently because of those internal differences," he told. Observers do not believe his death will have a major impact on the future of stalled peace talks between the government and the TTP that began this month.

The Express Tribune - February 25th, 2014

National Assembly & Senate

Government Slammed For 'Failing' To Protect Life, Property

Senators slammed the federal government for its "failure to protect human lives" while insurgency was on the rise in the country. Federal and provincial governments are unable to deal with the law and order situation across the country, they said, adding, "Even bread is costly than a human life and the government is just playing the role of a spectator." Provincial and federal governments were going in opposite directions having no consensus, they said. PML-N Senator Nisar Muhammad Khan, on a motion, asked the House about the role of federation in pursuance of Article 148 of the constitution of the country. He said there are some forces which could not accept government's rules and law and are violating the constitution and killing innocent people but the federation has failed to fulfil its responsibility. "There is insurgency, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but the federal government is not moving." He regretted that there is no mechanism to stop insurgency in the country. MQM leader Tahir Hussain Mashhadi was of the view that there is sectarian violence and people across the country are being killed but neither the provincial nor federal government has a proper policy to handle the situation.

"Armed forces, mosques, churches, schools and infrastructure are being targeted regularly but the government doesn't move from its place," he said. ANP Senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour said a large number of international terrorists were in FATA and no action was being taken against them. If the KP government could not take action, it should take support from the federal government, he said, and regretted that the federal government also could not play its due role. Senator Zahid Khan said the ANP opposes drone attacks but at the same time it also opposes foreign militants in FATA. Leader of the House Raja Zafarul Haq said that negotiations with the Taliban have just begun and requested the senators to restrict their debate to the law and order situation only. Later, PPP leader Mian Raza Rabbani presented another motion to discuss the country's political and law and order situation in light of recent terrorism activities. The motion was adopted and it would be discussed in details. The Senate also passed Tahir Hussain Mashhadi's resolution in which he said the House should recommend the government take effective steps for narcotics control in the country. He also termed drug mafia a serious issue of the country.

State Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Balighur Rehman agreed to this, as the house passed the resolution unanimously. The House deferred Senator Karim Ahmad Khawaja's resolution regarding establishment of Constitutional Court with equal number of judges from all the provinces. The establishment of such a court is already mentioned in the Charter of Democracy, signed between Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. The Senate also passed Tahir Hussain Mashhadi's resolution related to carrying out a forensic audit of PIA to improve its

financial affairs. Minister for SAFRON Abdul Qadir Baloch said the government is already taking appropriate measures to improve PIA's affairs, adding that there is no objection if a forensic audit is carried out. The Senate also passed Senator Talha's resolution that urged the government to take appropriate measures to overcome unemployment in the country.

Daily Times - February 04th, 2014

NA Session: Government Defers PPO under Mounting Opposition

Opposition groups forced the government to defer three bills, including Protection of Pakistan Ordinance (PPO), reading the small print in several contentious clauses of the proposed legislation. At the outset, Muttahidda Qaumi Movement's (MQM) Asif Hussnain asked National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq to allow a debate on the controversial anti-terrorism laws that were placed on agenda. The speaker, however, turned down the request. However, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman - whose party is a coalition partner of the government - termed the PPO against basic human rights. "This is a principle of international jurisprudence that the accused is given the benefit of doubt but through this legislation a person can be murdered on the basis of doubt," said Maulana Fazl. He also severely criticized the clause of the PPO that said a person could be held for 90 days. This is an effort to impose a permanent state of emergency in the country. Surely this law can be misused at ease. Don't give blanket immunity to the forces. "We opposed such a move for last ten years and you are going to legitimize it from this duly elected house," Maulana said in his furious tone. He said Musharraf was held responsible for his one day call to impose emergency in the country and he was facing the consequences. "But you are going to suspend the operations of the courts in settled areas permanently.

If it is not martial law then sure it is a plan to impose emergency," he added. This strong worded intervention by the JUI-F chief forced the government to drop the PPO bill immediately from the agenda. "In light of Maulana Fazlur Rehman's suggestion, we defer the PPO bill from the agenda," announced Minister for Science and Technology Zahid Hamid, adding that the government would take up a bill related to anti-money laundering. Hamid's remark flared the opposition parties and after a flurry of speeches by the opposition members, the government also deferred the scheduled legislation for further consultation. Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party's (PkMAP) chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai suggested the government to further hold consultation on the proposed legislation. Opposition leader from Pakistan People Party (PPP) Syed Khursheed Shah said government would be responsible for failure, as the upper house could block such legislation in the absence of consensus. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi said this draconian law was not much different from the black law which was imposed by India on Kashmir. "I wonder how a party (PML-N) that was once a victim of a military ruler is now going to pass such legislation in the name of political expediency," he said. After hours' long consultation with legal experts, the PTI penned down a five-page dissenting note against the PPO, the PTI leader said. "The main theme of legislation is welfare of the people but this legislation will land them in trouble," he added.

The Express Tribune - February 04th, 2014

NA Grants Extension to PPO, Two Other Ordinances

The National Assembly approved a 120-day extension in two anti-terrorism ordinances and Protection of Pakistan Ordinance (PPO) with majority vote amidst a strong protest by the opposition parties, particularly PTI, MQM, and Jamaat-e-Islami. All the three ordinances were

moved by Federal Minister of Science and Technology Zahid Hamid for extension of another 120 days after their lapse. Although the government faced no problem in getting passed the resolutions seeking the 120-day extension because of a heavy presence of treasury members, the opposition parties, particularly MQM and PTI, spoke out loudly against what they called draconian ordinances meant to usurp the fundamental rights of the citizens. The opposition accused the government of resorting to “ordinances of culture” rather than carrying out legislation for anti-terror measures. “We have no problem with the aims of the ordinances to counter terrorism. But the procedure adopted for bringing in the ordinances and later their extension from the assembly is not democratic at all,” PTI deputy parliamentary leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi remarked. Fierce opposition was also put up by the MQM whose legislators were more vocal in their opposition to these ordinances and their extension. “The government is itself admitting its failure by getting extended these ordinances from the assembly,” MQM’s Nabeel Gabol while terming this practice of the government as “breaching the sanctity of the elected assembly. Meanwhile, PPP lawmakers were conspicuous by their silence until leader of opposition Khurshid Shah turned up in the House and protested mildly, objecting only to the procedure adopted for extending the ordinances.

“The government should not await the lapse of an ordinance to carry out legislation and should start work immediately for turning these ordinances into proper law,” Shah suggested. Aftab Khan Sherpao admitted that extension in the ordinances did not mean they were to be turned into law. However, he was skeptical about the government’s use of such method instead of legislating. Jamaat-e-Islami’s parliamentary leader Sahibzada Tariqullah condemned the ordinances and called them a “direct attack” on the prerogative of parliament to legislate. He noted that such ordinances would turn the country into a police state by giving unprecedented powers to law enforcing agencies. PTI’s Javed Hashmi said that extension in the ordinances would deprive the Upper House of parliament of its right of legislation. He reminded the government that such ordinances and legislations were even used against Nawaz Sharif when his government was toppled by a dictator, a reference to Pervez Musharraf. The House approved two resolutions, with majority vote, seeking 120-day extension in Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2013 (VII) and Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance 2013 (VIII/2013). MQM and PTI both voted against the ordinance VII but on ordinance VIII, PTI did not protest. Through a separate resolution, the House also passed the resolution to grant a 120-day extension in Protection of Pakistan Ordinance 2013 (IX of 2013), which received a strong protest from opposition benches, with shouts of “no, no”.

Daily Times - February 07th, 2014

Provincial Assemblies

Caught In the Act: KP to Fight Corruption with Ehtesab Courts

Officials beware; the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government is going to set up Ehtesab courts on district levels to weed out those guilty of corruption. The Ehtesab or accountability court can disqualify anyone convicted under the Ehtesab Commission Act of 2013 from contesting in elections or for public office. The individual would also not be eligible to apply for a loan for five years after the conviction. The accountability act was approved by the provincial assembly and the government is expecting to make the commission functional by the first week of March. Once that is out of the way, the court will be set up according to the area’s needs and number of cases reported. The court’s key feature is that it will solve cases filed within three months from the date of reference. The accused will have seven days to respond to the charges. According to the chief minister’s spokesperson, Sheraz Paracha, this process for justice will be the first of its

kind in the province. He said that the main purpose behind it was good governance, transparency and public efficiency. The spokesperson added that the commission would be centralized for the province. Responding to a question about the number of accountability courts they planned to have, Paracha said that they would have courts wherever needed and the exact number would be known after the commission becomes functional.

The Express Tribune - February 06th, 2014

One, Two, Three and You're Out

Article 41 of the Act says that within 30 days of its approval, the government will take necessary steps to establish Ehtesab courts as need be, while Peshawar High Court (PHC) will designate a judge. "Where the number of references filed or cases pending before a court exceeds 50, the government shall immediately establish a new court and provide it with all related facilities to ensure dispensation of justice within prescribed time schedules," read Section 4 of Article 41. According to Article 42, which deals with the procedure of trials, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, each matter brought before the court under this Act shall be disposed of no later than three months from the date of reference being filed. It further read that within seven days of the accused filing a response, the reference shall be fixed for hearing so the court can acquit the accused or frame charges. Under no circumstance, however, will the court grant adjournment of more than seven days. In Article 44 of the Act, any person convicted or the prosecutor general, if so directed by the director general, aggrieved by the final judgment of and order of the court under this Act may, within 20 days of the final judgment and order of the court prefer an appeal to the PHC. The article which deals with the disqualification to contest election or hold public office is Article 34. Section 1 of the article reads, "Where an accused is convicted of an offence under Section 25, he shall forthwith cease to hold public office, if any, held by him and shall be deemed to have committed the offence of moral turpitude for purpose of Article 63 of the Constitution of Pakistan." In Section 2, it reads that any person convicted of an offence under Section 23 should not be allowed to apply for or be granted any financial facilities in the form of loan or advances or other financial accommodation by a bank or financial institution owned or controlled by the government for a period of five years from the date of his conviction for such offences.

The Express Tribune - February 06th, 2014

KP Assembly Leads in Number of Tax Defaulters

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly tops in terms of tax defaulters whereas Balochistan Assembly is ranked first by having a majority of the lawmakers who filed tax returns but failed to pay a penny showing zero taxable income. An analysis of data compiled from the FBR Tax Directory of 1,072 lawmakers has found that majority of tax defaulters are in KP followed by Senate, Sindh Assembly, National Assembly, Balochistan Assembly and Punjab Assembly respectively. Balochistan Assembly leads with majority of zero tax-filers closely followed by KP Assembly, Punjab Assembly, Sindh Assembly, National Assembly and Senate respectively. There are 100 tax defaulters and 450 zero taxpayers in Senate and assemblies. Any citizen who is registered with tax authorities but fail to file tax return is declared tax defaulter. As FBR issued tax directory, names of defaulters have been withheld and granted extension till February 28 for filing returns that they are most likely not to do so given past track record as they refused to do despite repeated extensions in deadline only given to them.

Starting from Senate that has 104 members, as many as 15 Senators (14.42%) have turned to be non-filers. There are three senators who filed return but paid zero tax declaring that did not have taxable income for the purpose, notwithstanding the fact they regularly claim salary from Senate. Sardar Yaqoob Nasir and Col (R) Tahir Hussain Mashhadi and Gul Muhammad Lot are zero return filers in the Senate, according to the tax directory. National Assembly houses 342 lawmakers and 23 (6.72%) of them are tax defaulters whereas 108 (33.85%) members declared no taxable income hence filed zero tax returns.

- Prominent among zero taxpayers are former prime minister Zafarullah Jamali, former chief minister KP Amir Haider Hoti, PTI President Makhdoom Javaid Hashmi, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Yousaf, Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Sadaruddin Shah, State Minister for Religious Affairs Sahibzada Amin-ul-Hasnat, State Minister for Railways Abdul Hakeem Baloch, Ch Asad-ur-Rehman, Ch Jaafar Iqbal, former minister Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiyar, Ghulam Rasool Sahi, Shehryar Afridi, Murad Saeed, Nafeesa Khattak, Aaisha Gulalai, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and others.
- Punjab Assembly has 369 members. Two seats are vacant. As many as 16 (4.33%) MPAs have turned out to be tax defaulters. Another 176 (49.85%) members have been identified as zero taxpayers thus declaring no taxable income. Ch Iqbal, Akmal Saif Chattha, Arshad Lodhi, Naseem Lodhi, Uzma Zahid Bokhari are among them, to name a few.
- There are 168 members of Sindh Assembly and 15 (8.92%) of them are tax defaulters. Another 58 (37.90%) MPAs declared no income and thus filed zero tax. Prominent among them are Syed Ali Mardan Shah, Pir Mujeeb-ul-Haq, Syed Ghulam Shah Jeelani, Syed Amir Hyder Shah Sheerazi and Rehman Leghari.
- KP Assembly houses 124 members. As many as 27 (21.77%) lawmakers are tax defaulters. Another 61 (62.88%) MPAs were too 'poor' to pay a penny in income tax. Information Minister Shah Farman, former senior minister Sikandar Hayat Sherpao, KP Assembly speaker Asad Qaisar, CM KP's Special Assistant Sooran Singh, Maulana Fazal-ul-Rehman's brother Lutf-ur-Rehman and Nighat Orakzai are prominent zero taxpayers.
- In Balochistan Assembly, there are 65 MPAs and four (6.15%) of them are tax defaulters whereas 44 (72.13%) members have filed zero tax. Chief Minister Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik, senior minister Sanaullah Zehri, Speaker Jan Muhammad Khan Jamali, Ayaz Khan Jogezi, Tariq Magsi and others are among them.

The News - February 21st, 2014

Judiciary

New Draft Law for NGOs Drops a Cat among Pigeons

The Nawaz Sharif government has put finishing touches to a draft law which will be introduced to regulate the utilization of foreign contributions by local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Act will be called Foreign Contributors Act 2014, which includes sentences in jail for violating the terms and conditions, which are to be signed through an MOU between the government and the NGOs and INGOs. The News is in possession of a copy of the Bill, which has created quite a stir amongst the NGOs and INGOs community. One member of an INGO, speaking on condition of anonymity, told The News: "According to the new law which requires NGOs to register with the government is akin to making Pakistan an even more hostile environment for civil society organizations than Russia. This law is simply to 'control' the NGO

community.” A quick look at the 30-page document reveals that the new law will be applicable to all Pakistanis outside Pakistan and persons within Pakistan and International NGOs, working or operating in Pakistan. The government on suspicion will assign an officer to inspect books of accounts and records. One year jail sentence would be awarded for concealment of foreign contributions. The new law makes it very clear that certificates can be cancelled at will and any INGO or a person who receives any foreign contribution shall utilize such contribution only for the purposes and locations permitted by the federal government.

Violations are punishable by “imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine or both. “In actuality, it has little to do with oversight over funds, and is far more - and yet another - attempt to curb NGO activities and civil society functioning. Shooting the messenger is such an easy thing to do. And stifling independent voices is even easier if the justification is national security,” says someone who has studied the new law. However, the new law would not be applicable to transactions between Pakistan and any foreign government or country or UN or World Bank, IMF etc. Another area of worry to the community that approached that for a certification of registration required, an application for registration should be made to the federal government. Again the new law demands that the federal and provincial governments “can review INGO activities and priorities” and INGOs have to provide information requested by the federal government. As a condition for the granting of certificates of registration, the grantee “shall not engage in propagation of ‘sedition’ or advocate violent methods to achieve his ends”. Of importance to the community is that “sedition” is a word that has been misused in the past, and is a term that is vaguely defined and used for political victimization. Foreign contributions must not be diverted for “undesirable purposes, which is against the public interest”, again a term open to interpretation.

The News - February 26th, 2014

Cabinet Approves National Security Policy

The federal cabinet approved on Tuesday the much-awaited and talked-about national security policy. However, on the insistence of Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan the sitting agreed to formally unveil the policy document in the National Assembly on Wednesday (today) instead of announcing it through the media. “Since it’s a brainchild of Chaudhry Nisar, he wants a grand opening,” quipped one of his colleagues in the cabinet. According to a source privy to the cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will also grace the National Assembly with one of his rare appearances. An official handout said: “The cabinet unanimously approved the national security policy. Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar will give detailed policy statement on the approved security policy on Feb 26 on the floor of the house.” The prime minister and Chaudhry Nisar are reported to have instructed the cabinet members and officials of the Prime Minister’s Office not to make any statement on the nitty-gritty of the security policy before its presentation in the National Assembly.

However, tit bits of information gleaned from various sources suggest that setting up of a joint intelligence directorate and conversion of the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (NACTA) into a powerful decision-making body are the mainstay of the first-ever national security policy of the country. Chaudhry Nisar had on many occasions said that a meaningful intelligence sharing between civilian and military agencies would be ensured in the new policy. The proposed regime envisages a key role for NACTA. The body is to plan and oversee everything which comes under the realm of ‘counter-terrorism’, with top civilian and military leaderships on its list of members. The policy carries broad guidelines for dealing with increasing extremism and sectarian strife in the country, improvement in anti-terrorism laws and speedy prosecution

and conviction of terrorists. Irfan Siddiqui, special assistant to the prime minister on national affairs and coordinator of the four-member government committee, briefed the cabinet on the events which led to the breakdown of peace talks with the negotiators nominated by the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan.

In no-nonsense terms, he explained that members of the TTP committee - Maulana Samiul Haq, Prof Mohammad Ibrahim and Maulana Abdul Aziz - were completely helpless and had nothing in their hands which could persuade the Taliban leadership to agree on an unconditional ceasefire. "In so many words, Mr. Siddiqui said it would be a futile exercise to hold talks with the TTP through its present committee, even if tomorrow Taliban agree to an unconditional ceasefire," said another source privy to the meeting. The cabinet unanimously upheld the government committee's decision that there would no talks with the TTP unless it renounced violence and announced an unconditional ceasefire. The meeting was told that the ongoing military action against militants was a first phase and would continue in coming days. The prime minister told the sitting: "I have given strict instructions to the military leadership to avoid collateral damage, but the state is left with no option other than to react after the militants continued their attacks on security forces and civilians."

Dawn - February 26th, 2014

Musharraf's Trial

Verdict over Musharraf's six Petitions Tomorrow

The special court constituted to try Pervez Musharraf for high treason would announce its verdict about his counsels' six different petitions. The three-member bench of the special court headed by Justice Faisal Arab resumed the hearing of the case against Musharraf for breaching the constitution by imposing emergency in the country on November 3, 2007. During proceedings, the special court reserved the decision over the issue of the biasness of judges raised by Anwar Manoor Khan, counsel for the accused. Anwar Mansoor argued over the petition filed against the alleged biasness of the judges in the treason case. He also argued that Justice Faisal Arab disposed of his client's election petition from the Sindh High Court and barred him from participating in general elections. Musharraf's counsel said that the judge accused of prejudice should recues, adding that a bench of unbiased judges was a prerequisite for fair trial. In his remarks Justice Faisal Arab said that the court would formulate the guiding principle as on what bases judges should dissociate them from the hearing. Anwar Mansoor said that Chile's former military dictator General Augusto Pinochet accused judges of biasness and got relief from his country's courts. He said that many cases can be quoted when judges recued after allegations of biasness. On this, Justice Faisal Arab asked Anwar Mansoor to submit details of the case that he was referencing. Anwar Mansoor completed his arguments relating to the two "biased judges" in the bench. Some journalists from different organizations also appeared before the bench and complained that on Tuesday's hearing they were stopped from entering the court room, as security passes were issued after proper scrutiny. Justice Faisal Arab directed them to submit their application. Later, after hearing the arguments the court reserved judgment and adjourned hearing.

Daily Times - February 20th, 2014

BALUCHISTAN WATCH**Governance Watch****Balochistan Situation: Talk To The Baloch Now**

The ongoing attempts to have a deal with the militants who have been causing explosions all over the country are in a sharp contrast with the policy of ignoring the threat of an implosion in Balochistan that is getting more and more serious every day. An indication of the government's seriousness about resolving the Balochistan crisis will soon be available when the participants of the long march against enforced disappearance reach Islamabad. The federal authorities will do no good to the marchers or themselves if they treat them with the indifference so far displayed. Already reports of some official efforts to restrict the media coverage of the event have created a bad impression. It is necessary to demonstrate that these officials had no mandate from any government. These courageous seekers of justice have already been on the road for 110 days - the longest and probably the only real protest march in Pakistan's history. The boils on their swollen feet offer a measure of the hurt caused to them by the involuntary disappearance of their dear ones.

Ever since the people and the authorities became aware of disappearances a decade ago the issue has been causing increased and more widespread pain and disaffection. The Baloch believe that the relief they have received from the courts has been grossly inadequate. The realization that their tormentors can even defy the country's apex court has only deepened their feeling of alienation from the state. Many developments have added to the Baloch grievances. The recommendations of the three-man judicial commission of 2010 have remained largely unimplemented; no law has been made to regularize and regulate the work of intelligence agencies, nor have they been put on a shorter leash. A variety of factors reduced the effectiveness of the committee headed by retired justice Javaid Iqbal and now the government is having difficulty in finding a suitable person to head a probe body. Those approached are perhaps wary of accepting an assignment that has been made totally unrewarding by the government's incapacity to call the much-pampered security forces to account.

The view that the Protection of Pakistan Ordinance is going to legitimize disappearances and unlawful detention could not but increase the Baloch's apprehensions. And the discovery of mass graves in Khuzdar - and everybody knows about the mafia in power there - has in a way substantiated the Baloch charges against the establishment. The government must realize that any people aggrieved to the extent the Baloch have been can be palmed off with promises of doing better the next time only for a short period. The people of Balochistan reached the end of their patience long ago. The arrival of the long marchers in Islamabad will offer the government a wonderful opportunity not only to announce a plan to close the chapter of disappearances but also to launch a serious initiative to resolve the Balochistan crisis.

It is clear that the issue of disappearances is linked with the need for a new political compact with the people of Balochistan. Disappearances constitute a crude response to the Baloch nationalist upsurge and they exacerbate the situation instead of controlling it. Ways must, therefore, be found, and as expeditiously as possible, to clear the ground for talks with Baloch dissidents without any distinction. After the beginning of negotiations with the Taliban any delay in offering an opening to the Baloch nationalists will cause incalculable harm to Pakistan. The federal authority has to disabuse itself of any notion that dealing with disappearances or the bigger issue of a settlement with the dissident nationalists is the provincial government's

responsibility. The Balochistan crisis is a national issue because it touches on the very survival of the federation. Moreover, all the discontent in that province has resulted from federal acts of commission and omission, and the federation alone has the means and authority to take the steps needed to make amends for the persistent and systemic denial of Balochistan's rights.

It is also time to discard the old charge-sheet against Baloch nationalists. They were not the first to start a confrontation with the state; in each round of conflict they can be shown to have reacted to unjustified violence. The militants among them have harmed their cause by taking out their bile on settlers; the gaps caused in their society by the loss of professionals, from barbers to teachers and doctors, have adversely affected their social outlook and progress. All this must stop. The nationalists are often called by a variety of names that can provoke a population. In today's world no political demands can be rejected out of hand. All matters can be discussed around a table and, given the requisite scale of goodwill and earnestness; there is nothing that cannot be settled in accordance with the recognized principles of justice and fair play. But whether it is a question of giving the participants of the long march their due or moving towards peace with the Baloch people, the custodians of power must realize that while as a willing federating unit Balochistan will be a great source of strength to Pakistan, a disenchanting and alienated Balochistan will remain a potential threat to its integrity.

Dawn - February 13th, 2014

POLITICAL & ELECTION WATCH**Political Parties****Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP)****Real Battle Is To Change Militant Mindset: Zardari**

Spokesperson for the former president Senator Farhatullah Babar said Asif Ali Zardari appreciated the support extended by Canada to Pakistan in various fields and in supporting democracy in Pakistan in overcoming various challenges. Zardari underscored the significance of Pakistan as an important regional player in South Asia that could play an effective role for the stability, peace and prosperity of the region. The former president also highlighted the sacrifices rendered by the people and defense forces while fighting terrorists and stressed the need for international community to help alleviate the sufferings of the people in the war against militancy. Zardari said as president he had always been advocating the need for international community to set up a victims' fund for the rehabilitation of the victims of militancy. He said the year 2014 was very crucial as security and political transition takes place in Afghanistan and the international forces begin to pull out of that country, which will have profound implications not only for Afghanistan, but for all countries in the region. He said a peaceful, economically stable and vibrant Afghanistan was in the interest of Pakistan and 'we would gladly play our due role in this regard'. Zardari said as a political party the PPP also suffered hugely in the fight against militancy and recalled how its leader Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto had laid down her life fighting militancy. The spokesperson said later in the afternoon Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad Dr. T.C.A. Raghavan also called on the former president at the Bilawal House in Karachi and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Felicitating once again the Indian high commissioner on his appointment, Asif Ali Zardari stressed the need for improved bilateral relations for the well being of over a billion people of the two countries and for regional peace and security. "There is no alternative to peace through an honorable resolution of disputes between the two countries, he said, adding that absence of alternatives should help make the mind clear," he added. The former president said there was an increasing political consensus in Pakistan on seeking normalization of relations with India. He said the PPP had long been in favor of trade with India, greater people to people contacts and strengthening SAARC as a trading bloc as instruments for normalization of relations. He said the PPP under the leadership of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto had proposed soft borders in 1999. He said the party had introduced the concept of visa free travel in SAARC countries to groups of people including parliamentarians and judges and also introduced the South Asian Preferential Tariff Agreement. He said the path to peace lay through confidence building, conflict management and creation of a trading bloc of nations to improve the living conditions of all people of South Asia. Patron in chief of PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Bakhtwar Bhutto Zardari were also present in both the meetings.

The News - February 09th, 2014

Pakistan Tehreek - e - Insaf (PTI)

PTI Reveals 35 'Punctures' Fixed In May 11 Polls

Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf has revealed a bizarre scandal involving a secret conversation with a top political party leader and a western diplomat and secret tapes, which hint at rigging in 35 constituencies on May 11. The top western diplomat, whose name was not revealed, confirmed that a leading party chief was informed a few hours before the results came in on May 11, in code words, which clearly meant that arrangements for massive rigging had been made during the polling and counting process in at least 35 constituencies of Punjab. First chairman PTI Imran Khan went on record by tweeting that a party chief was assured of having (repaired) "35 punctures" (meaning flat tires) for elections, which shows the "muk muka" and complicity to facilitate rigging. Imran further tweeted that the 35 "punctures" also help explain why voter verification in the four constituencies of Punjab demanded by PTI had not been done. Spokesperson for the PTI Dr Shireen Mazari in her reply to questions sent by The News said that the PTI had been told this by a western ambassador who asked what "puncture" meant.

"According to confidential reliable sources an important personality rang up a party chief on the night of election and said in Punjabi, "35 puncture la dittay nain." Quoted by a western ambassador who asked what puncture meant the reference was about rigging in 35 constituencies of Punjab; we see it as part of muk muka", Dr Mazari said in her written reply. There is some talk that there exists an audiotape based upon which the PTI is hurling rigging allegations in at least thirty-five constituencies in Punjab. Questions are being raised how such an audiotape could reach a western ambassador as the institutions which record telephone calls in the country are known to all. Analysts believe that rigging even a small polling station is not an easy job let alone rigging 35 constituencies. If Imran Khan's allegations of 35 punctures are correct then the entire election machinery should have been on board - from Election Commission of Pakistan to lower judiciary and from interim setup to election observers, an analyst said.

If Imran Khan's allegations are taken as true then where were the political workers and political leaders of PTI in those 35 constituencies of Punjab? Were they sleeping? Some other observers said had there been any such tape, it would have reached the media. They added that even the pre-election surveys did not favor PTI as far as the 35 constituencies are concerned. It is worth mentioning here that after the May 11 election, PTI has been crying of being deprived of its mandate in Punjab and has also filed applications in the election tribunals regarding disputes and has sought voters' verification. Even ex-chairman National Database and Registration Authority lost his job doing the verification process as has been mentioned in Islamabad High Court judgment. Since May 11, Imran Khan also had to face a contempt of court notice from the Supreme Court for accusing the judiciary of becoming part of the alleged rigging saga, which was dropped later.

The News - February 06th, 2014

Constitution of Pakistan Guarantees Shariah: Imran

The Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said the Constitution of Pakistan was a guarantor of Shariah. In a statement, Imran Khan said he did not agree with the interpretation of Islam presented by the Taliban. The PTI chief said those who claimed terrorism by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was related to the imposition of Shariah stood totally exposed after the banned outfit agreed to talk within the limits of the Constitution. Imran also reminded that in

the nine accords the Pakistan Army had signed earlier with the TTP, there had been no conditionality of imposition of Shariah. "The issue is moot since the Constitution of Pakistan provides for Shariah and states no law can be made repugnant to Islam," he noted. He maintained that his consistent assertion that the TTP's terrorism was directly the result of the US war on terror had once again been validated as the main demands of the TTP were related to Pakistan, extricating itself from this war and the stoppage of drone attacks. Imran said that in this connection, US President Barack Obama's decision to reduce the drone use because of its negative fallout on the population of the target areas was also recognition of the PTI's position on drones exacerbating terrorism in Pakistan. The PTI chief stressed that he had always opposed the military action, including the sending of the military into FATA in 2004.

"It has always been evident, and never more starkly than today, that the dollar-dependent lobby has been deliberately maligning me with false labels such as Taliban Khan, simply to draw attention away from the clear link between the US war on terror and terrorism in Pakistan," he said. In addition, he asserted that pro-war political parties - some with leaders self-exiled in the West, others exposed as having taken huge dollar amounts and still others part of the US-brokered NRO (Condoleezza Rice has claimed her role in this in her book) - were deliberately opposing peace through dialogue with false narratives. "All these parties along with US dictated narratives stand exposed today, as the dialogue process moves forward and peace comes to Pakistan with an end to bloodshed and hatred," he said. "The most likely result is that the negotiations will start, there will be about three or four big explosions and terrorist attacks and the negotiations will be called off," he was quoted as saying. "There will be people baying for blood and the operation will start," he claimed.

Speaking about the US drone campaign, the PTI chief said the talks will only be meaningful if America announces an end to drone strikes. "If the US stops the drone attacks, announces stopping the drone attacks during the talks, it would be a big plus point," he stressed. Imran accused the US of sabotaging an earlier effort at talks with a November 1 drone attack that killed TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud. "The US doesn't want peace talks here or peace in Pakistan while they are leaving Afghanistan," the report quoted Imran Khan as saying. "The thinking is that if they (insurgents) are engaged here, they would not be going across to fight." Imran criticized Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for waiting too long after the May election to start talks with the TTP. He said the state negotiations team also reflected Nawaz's lack of seriousness. "If I was him, I would lead it myself; it's too important an issue for Pakistan," he said. Commenting on why the TTP named him as a negotiator from their side, Imran boasted that they trusted him to withstand the US pressures. Stressing that he disagrees with the TTP's interpretation of Shariah, Imran said, "I don't represent Taliban."

The News - February 08th, 2014

Other Political Parties

Imran, Fazl Decline Taliban Talks Role

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Fazlur Rehman declined role in talks with the Taliban. Imran Khan will not be part of the five-member arbitration committee announced by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), PTI core committee decided. The core committee held a meeting to deliberate upon the dialogue process and subsequent formation of the committee by the government and TTP. A party statement said that that the PTI has always been an advocate of dialogue for peace so that national prosperity and progress could be assured. The PTI reaffirmed its support for the four-member committee in which PTI has its representative, Rustum Shah Mohmand, and also welcomed the formation

of the 10-member TTP committee for dialogue. While the PTI appreciated the trust reposed in Imran Khan, the core committee concluded that he cannot be a part of the five-member TTP arbitration committee. PTI has, however, asked the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to facilitate the dialogue process in any way it can. Meanwhile, minutes after Imran Khan's refusal to be part of Taliban's committee, JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman also withdrew his party member Mufti Kifayatullah from the committee. After a meeting of his party, Fazl told journalists that the JUI-F would not be part of dialogue process with Taliban. TTP expressed disappointment over Imran Khan and Mufti Kifayatullah's refusal to be part of its committee. Media reports said TTP spokesperson Shahidullah Shahid said that now Orya Maqbool Jan and Ansar Abbasi are being considered to replace Imran Khan and Mufti Kifayatullah to play the role of mediators in the committee representing the Taliban.

Daily Times - February 04th, 2014

Local Body/Government Elections 2013-14

Failure to Conduct LB Polls Violation of Constitution: SC

The Supreme Court (SC) observed it was an open violation of the Constitution that the government was not holding local bodies (LB) elections in the cantonment boards. A two-member bench of the apex court comprising Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani and Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed resumed hearing into the local bodies (LB) elections case. The apex court said that LB elections could not be put on the backburner on the pretext of legislation in this regard. The SC asked as to what would be the consequence of any further delay in holding the local bodies (LB) elections in the cantonment boards in terms of Article 140A and as required by the Principles of Policy enshrined in the Constitution (Article 32). The court asked Attorney General Salman Aslam Butt to assist it on the points as to what could be the consequence of any further delay in holding of the LB elections in the cantonment boards in terms of Article 140A and as required by the Principles of Policy enshrined in the Constitution (Article 32). The court further asked the learned attorney general to assist it as to whether the LB elections in cantonment boards could be held under the existing law.

The court ruled that the question of contempt against the Ministry of Defense Secretary Asif Yaseen Malik would also be taken up on the next date of hearing. The court observed that the LB elections in the cantonment boards had not been held since 1998 and now the reason being given by the federal government for the delay was that the government was contemplating on amending the Cantonment Act, 1924 and Cantonment Local Government Election Ordinance, 2002. The court also observed that holding of the local government elections was mandated by the Constitution. Earlier, during the hearing, the court asked Additional Attorney General Shah Khawar as to when the elections in cantonment boards would be held. Shah Khawar informed the court that the position on holding elections in the cantonment boards remained the same as an amendment in the laws was still to be made and was under process. He further told the court that a meeting was scheduled under the chair of the minister of defense with all the stakeholders but that meeting could not take place due to an emergency meeting between the minister of defense and prime minister. Meanwhile, the court adjourned the hearing till February 20. The court also issued a notice to the attorney general for February 20 in the case relating to the holding of local bodies elections in Sindh and Punjab.

The News - February 07th, 2014

KP Local Government Polls in Three Phases Proposed

After getting an order last month to delay the local government elections in Punjab and Sindh, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) again approached the Supreme Court, suggesting that the polls be held in three phases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The law and order situation in the province provides ample justification to hold the elections in phases to ensure security, an application submitted to the court by the ECP as well as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government said. In order to hold the elections in phases, said the application, the provincial government and the ECP needed extension of the date. The last week of April would be most suitable for holding the first phase of the elections. The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had not suggested any election date earlier. On Jan 13, the court allowed the commission to scrap the election schedules for Sindh and Punjab and announce new dates after completing the prerequisites. Earlier, the ECP had proposed the third-time revised dates of Feb 23 and March 13 for polls in the two provinces. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government said the authorities would be able to notify the delimitation by Feb 15. It said it was doing its best to ensure a transparent and fair completion of the delimitation process to avoid disputes and litigation.

The provincial government, ECP and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) were thinking of utilizing a biometric system in the local government elections, the application said. The system and equipment suggested by NADRA were tested in Peshawar and Islamabad on Dec 28 and Jan 11. The application said the provincial government had requested the ECP to hold the local councils' election in three phases. It recalled that the local government elections in 2001 and 2005 were also held in phases in the province. There are 26 districts and 74 tehsils in the province and the government has proposed around 3,200 village and neighborhood councils. The tiers of local councils proposed in the system require every voter to cast seven ballot papers for various categories of candidates – a process that will consume more time as compared to the earlier elections. The process will need a larger number of staff and booths to complete the process within the polling hours. Thus if the elections were held in phases, not only would less number of polling staff be required but also a lesser number of biometric machines, it said, adding that it would also be in the interest of the public to hold the elections in three phases in the geographical zones of north (Malakand and Hazara), centre (Peshawar and Mardan) and south (Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan).

Dawn - February 08th, 2014

SC Seeks Punjab Government's Fresh Stance on LG Polls

The Supreme Court ordered the Advocate General Punjab to inform today whether the Punjab government is interested in challenging the Lahore High Court judgment regarding Local Government polls. A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, hearing the local government elections case also directed the Sindh government counsel to provide the copy of Charter of Democracy, signed by PML-N leader and incumbent Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto in 2006 in London. During the proceedings, Khawaja Haris, amicus curiae, argued the provincial governments have to frame the Local Government Institutions laws, while the Election Commission of Pakistan has to carry out the delimitation process. Khawaja Haris said right to vote is more important than the fundamental rights, because it was the basis of constitution and the democracy. The amicus further contended that Article 140A of the Constitution was about local bodies system and according to that it was the responsibility of the provincial government to frame laws for the local bodies' institutions and ECP was empowered to carry out the delimitation of the constituencies. The election process

starts with the notification of election schedule which included the process from preparation of voter lists and the delimitation.

Khawaja Haris stated to make sure the local bodies elections are held in transparent manner, as before that the LB elections held were dissatisfactory. The chief justice questioned as to whether the political parties did not trust each other, therefore, Article 140A was inserted in the constitution. The CJP further asked whether this LB system was the part of Charter of Democracy. The learned counsel said he thinks it was but not quite sure about it. The bench then put that question to Farooq H Naek, the counsel Sindh government. He replied that it was the part of Charter of Democracy. The court therefore directed him to provide the copy of CoD. Khawaja Haris further argued that the local bodies institutions had financial power, but its control was with the provincial governments. But now the local bodies' institutions have been given full financial power and they could spend funds without getting dictation from the provincial governments. He said the delimitation process was very important in LB polls because any error in that could not be rectified later on, which is against the spirit of transparent polls. Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed remarked if it was accepted that the election process commences with the announcement of election schedule then all the provisions regarding preparation of voter lists would be unconstitutional as the voter lists are prepared before the elections.

If the voter lists were part of election then why delimitation couldn't be part of election process. These two are interlinked therefore either they have to be excluded or include in the constitution. Khawaja Haris concluded his arguments, while Makhdoom Ali Khan, another amicus curiae, had already completed his arguments. Advocate General Punjab Mustafa Ramday informed the court that the Lahore High Court had passed two orders regarding local bodies' polls. He said the Punjab government had accepted the LHC first order, while have objections on certain portions of the LHC second order. The court inquired, why the Punjab government had not challenged the LHC orders. Mustafa Ramday replied that it had already been challenged by Azhar Siddique. Justice Azmat asked whether the Punjab government was relying on Azhar Siddique. The advocate general Punjab told that after taking instruction from the provincial government he would inform the court about it. Upon that Justice Azmat Saeed remarked that they know why the Punjab government was not challenging the LHC orders. Mustafa Ramday stated the provincial leadership was in China. The court asked him to take the instruction from the Punjab government and inform.

The Nation - February 21st, 2014

Situation to Worsen if LG Polls not Held in FATA

As the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is once again the focus of military reprisals against the Taliban, representatives of different segments of the society gathered around a table in a plush hotel here to debate the prospects of holding local government elections in the tribal region. They acknowledged there were several stumbling blocks, but insisted they should not provide excuses to the federal government to keep the already deprived region without local government system. There was consensus that the 2002 local government system, with some fine-tuning, should be introduced to FATA, a region ravaged by a 12-year-old militancy and military operations. The participants warned the government that the situation in FATA could worsen if polls for local governments were not held there. "The FATA region was not brought into the mainstream despite pledges from the political parties.

This created administrative and judicial vacuum that was filled by the Taliban," said Ashraf Ali of the FATA Research Centre. He said it would be disastrous to prolong exclusion of tribal

people from the political process and urged the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government to conduct polls for local governments in the region. The government has been wrestling with a number of problems in FATA and calls for holding local bodies' elections seem unlikely to catch attention of the authorities. Currently, the government is preoccupied with thoughts how to dismantle the Taliban safe havens in this borderland that is believed to be supplying terrorism to the rest of the country. Jetfighters and gunship helicopters targeted suspected locations of militants in different tribal agencies over the last several days to punish militants for carrying out a spree of terror that killed dozens of people.

However, participants of the roundtable insisted that fight against terrorism should not be used as an excuse to avoid elections for local governments. "Law and order situation should not provide justifications to the government to not hold local bodies' elections," Ashraf Ali said, briefing the media after the event. "We believe that if elections for the National Assembly could be held, conducting local government polls should not be a problem," he added. Engineer Toor Gul Chamkani, Sheikh Jehanzada, Brig (r) Said Nazeer, Mufti Hanif, Sakeena Rehman and Ikramullah Kukikhel were some of the participants. Ashraf Ali said his organization held the event to generate a debate on local government system in the tribal areas. He said it was part of a series of events aimed at pressuring the government to take steps for holding the elections. The Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), a special set of laws that administer the tribal areas, is also an obstacle in putting in place the local government system in FATA.

The FCR concentrates all the administrative, judicial and financial powers in the office of the political agent, undermining the role of the elected leaders at the grassroots level. But Ashraf Ali said that though the FCR needed more amendments to make it compatible with rights and wishes of the people, it still didn't impede holding the elections. "Election could be held under the FCR, though it needs changes," he said. Sheikh Jehanzada from Bajaur said political system in FATA would take roots after local government elections. He said the impression about tribesmen that they did not want to change the system was wrong. "We even want to change the name of PA," he said, pointing to the point that how they were sick of the system controlled by political agent. "If we hold elections, we would be able to sort out flaws in the system," Brig (R) Said Nazeer said. Ashraf Ali said the roundtable discussed three main questions:

- a. Should local government elections be held in FATA?
- b. What could be its structure?
- c. What could be qualification for the public representatives?

He said there was a consensus among the participants that the local government elections should be held without delay. They recommended that the local government system in FATA should have three tiers-union council, tehsil council and agency council. He said the participants suggested the office of the PA should surrender judicial and financial powers to local governments and could share administrative powers with elected representatives. He deplored that at a time when all provinces of the country were abuzz with talks of holding elections for local government; there was no word from the offices of the prime minister and president about the polls in FATA. He said almost all political parties had promised in their election manifestos to mainstream FATA, but they were hardly doing anything to bring the region into political mainstream.

The News - February 24th, 2014

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**Human Rights Related Issues****Threats Hamper Minority Minister's Murder Trial**

Extremist threats have hampered the murder trial of former minority affairs minister Shahbaz Bhatti, who was gunned down in Islamabad in March 2011, the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance (APMA) said. Shahbaz Bhatti had been a vocal opponent of Pakistan's controversial blasphemy law. "Threatening pamphlets claiming to be from the Punjabi Taliban were found in the office of our key witness, whose name cannot be disclosed for security." Shamoan Gill, a spokesman for APMA, told. He said the pamphlets had warned the witness to "stay away from the case or get ready to be eliminated along with his family". "He is terrified, he continues changing his place and faces serious life threats," Gill said. The witness is supposed to appear before an anti-terrorism court on February 19. Paul Bhatti, brother of the former minority minister who had also served as a federal minority minister after his brother was gunned down, is the complainant in the case.

Daily Times - February 09th, 2014

Rise in Human Trafficking: Pakistan May Face Aid Cuts and More

Pakistan may join the group of some 44 countries already on the 'Tier 2 Watch List' as human trafficking is rising in the country at an alarming level - the number of most-wanted human traffickers in the country has jumped from 89 to 141 in the last four years. "If it fails to combat human trafficking, Pakistan would become the fourth country in SAARC after Afghanistan, the Maldives and Sri Lanka to be on the Tier 2 Watch List," a senior official of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Pakistan is struggling to meet the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which coordinates with foreign governments to prevent trafficking and protect victims. The TVPA is arguably the most important anti-trafficking law ever passed in the United States, the official added. Currently, TVPA's Tier 2 Watch List includes the names of 44 countries that do not fully comply with TVPA's minimum standards: the absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing; there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat trafficking.

However, the Tier 2 Watch List countries are considered to be making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with TVPA's standards. Pakistan, which currently enjoys Tier 2 status with other over 75 states, witnessed an alarming rise in the number of most-wanted human traffickers. The Red Book prepared by the FIA reads that the number of most-wanted human traffickers reached 141 last year. The figure was 132 in 2012 and 95 in 2011. The Red Book revealed that a majority of most-wanted human traffickers are from Gujrat and Gujranwala, while the rest hail from Sialkot, Rawalpindi, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. According to senior officials at the FIA, over 7,890 people comprise the nexus of 141 human traffickers. They have illegally sent 8,234 Pakistanis through different routes to the Middle East, European and African countries. The agency has intercepted over 61,200 people at the Pakistan-Iran and Pakistan-Afghanistan borders since 2009. Traffickers are using routes of Gulistan, Chaman, Rabat, Nushki, Chagai, Mand Ballu, Panjgur, Taftan and Turbat, they added.

The FIA also issued red warrants for 17 most-wanted human traffickers. FIA's former head Zafarullah Khan was of the view that a crackdown was needed against human traffickers under the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance 2002. "We must increase our forces to completely scan all routes to curb trafficking. We should not be a transit country," he emphatically said. The TVPA's minimum standards allowed the establishment of the US Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons to provide the tools to combat human trafficking worldwide and domestically. The Department of State, in its report last year, stated that 29 countries, including the US, the UK, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Austria, Taiwan, were listed as Tier 1 countries whose governments fully comply with TVPA's minimum standards. The office included 21 countries as Tier 3, which included Iran, Zimbabwe, Yemen, Zambia, Uzbekistan, Syria, Russia, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards.

The Express Tribune - February 24th, 2014

GENDER WATCH**Women Empowerment****Harmony, Thy Name Is Woman**

The Art of Living International Centre in Bangalore, India, will host its sixth International Women's Conference (IWC) from February 7-9, 2014. The conference, inspired by H H Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, humanitarian and founder of The Art of Living Foundation, will bring together eminent personalities and women leaders from over 100 countries around the world. The theme of IWC2014 is 'Harmony - Evolution towards Perfection'. Bhanumathi Narasimhan, Chairperson of IWC, explained that the challenges of our globalized world require innovative solutions to restore harmony, both at the societal and individual level. She said, "Caring and sharing are the foundation for harmony. As women, these qualities are inherent in us. We have the natural ability to unite diverse people in a family, and maintain harmony. We have to extend this ability, expand our circle of influence and reach out to more people who need our support. When we do this, the direct result is peace."

IWC provides a platform for women and key policy and decision makers to engage in dialogue and share best practices. The conference has two key agendas: advancing the status of women in fragile and post-conflict states and promoting girl child education. The upcoming conference will highlight approaches that help individuals maintain harmony in challenging circumstances. It will explore ways to reinforce spirituality and human values in society as a means to establish harmony. "The role of women in the development of society is of utmost importance. In fact, it is the only thing that determines whether a society is strong and harmonious, or otherwise. Women are the backbone of society." Women achievers and leaders will discuss ways to address societal challenges in a sustainable manner, taking the world from conflict to peace, from corruption to good governance, from crime toward non-violence and, ultimately, creating harmony between our inner selves and the outer world.

Every IWC recognizes and honors women with the prestigious Vishalakshi Awards, instituted in the memory of Sri Sri's mother. The recipients are selected from distinctive women who have contributed to the welfare of society and spearheaded change and created awareness on social issues. Interactive and informal discussions with speakers, meditation, yoga, cultural activities for all attendees will add to the flavour of the conference. Eminent personalities from diverse fields participated in past IWCs including first ladies of Mauritius and Sri Lanka, Members of Parliament from Europe, Afghanistan, South Africa, ballet dancers from Russia, artists from Bulgaria, classical artists from India, and business, social and political leaders from over 100 countries.

Daily Times - February 03rd, 2014

Local Government Polls: Empowering Women at the Grass-Roots

In anticipation of local government elections, much of the discourse in recent months has challenged the laws put forward by provincial governments under judiciary-induced deadlines, including lukewarm lobbying for the greater inclusion of women at the grass-roots level. At a seminar hosted by Oxfam, in collaboration with several rights and women advocacy groups, party representatives expressed ambivalence over seats allotted to women in the Punjab, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P). "Women have valuable opinions beyond their own rights, and

this perspective must be included in political decision-making in order to represent all citizens equally," said Nasreen Azhar, one of the founding members of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. For Azhar, reserved seats enable women left behind to carve out their place in the intimidating realm of politics, driven largely through money and influence.

"Participation in local governance enables women to engage with other women, and to work most effectively for the benefit of communities," said Khawar Mumtaz, chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), urging that the 33 per cent seats must be retained in the formation of local leadership and councils, and for more meaningful representation, union councils needed to expand to allow for more than just one female candidate for the sake of symbolism. "There is a need to treat directly and indirectly elected representatives equally, to give women the impetus to fully participate in the electoral process," Mumtaz said, explaining that participation in local governance would push more women in the mainstream and give them the opportunity to participate in general elections. MQM MNA Dr Nighat Shakil endorsed this idea, comparing local governance to social work.

According to adviser to the Sindh chief minister, Taj Haider, the role of women in campaigning and governance is indelible, and a 22 per cent quota of reserved seats for women chalked out by the Sindh Government is a bid to push women away from government support, strengthening them to embrace mainstream elections on their own footing. "Individual parties have an inextricable stake in empowering their female members." According to Shamim Mumtaz, PPP MPA from Sindh, when women were first challenged to break out of the complacency of their domestic roles during local government elections in 2001, they were unprepared for the responsibilities that greeted them. Over 40,000 women were then recruited to run for elections through training and those who knew nothing about politics grew more comfortable, and empowered in time for the next electoral cycle, she said.

Balochistan and K-P have reserved 33 per cent of seats for women at all levels of local government, while Sindh has no reserved seats for women in union committees and councils, except a condition that one of the elected members should be female. Punjab has reserved one out of 10 seats for women in union councils and 15 in district councils, with 25 women representing a sample of 200 in the metropolitan corporation. The resolution to bring women within the fold of political representation began in 1982, through the Women's Action Forum, who demanded that the government must comprise of 33 per cent women to reflect society's mandate. "In terms of the political representation of women, Pakistan has proven to be ahead of the rest of the world," said Oxfam Country Director Arif Jabbar. The idea is to discuss facets of political inclusion for women and how the diverse lenses of political parties could serve to strengthen their effectiveness at the local level, he added.

The Express Tribune - February 19th, 2014

Tri-Nation Moot: Women Lawmakers for Promoting Gender Equality in Education

A three-day dialogue among women parliamentarians of the United Kingdom, Afghanistan and Pakistan ended with a resolve to promote gender equality in education. The parliamentarians were of the view that investing in education for girls yields strong returns across other sectors, including reproductive health and economic growth. The three-day dialogue was the third meeting organized under the Parliamentary Partnership Programme between the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) of the parliament of Pakistan and the CPA UK. The first meeting in this regard took place in London in May 2012 and addressed the political empowerment of women, while the second meeting was held in Islamabad that reviewed the economic empowerment of women. This was the third meeting held here in Islamabad from February 20

to February 22, which focused on the maternal health and education of women in the three countries – Afghanistan, Pakistan and the UK. The participants of the dialogue stressed the need to develop strategies to address the challenges in implementing legislations regarding education in order to ensure that both boys and girls had equal access to primary, secondary and higher education.

They asked for encouraging standardization of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at a national and provincial levels and explore ways through which women parliamentarians could be champions of education in their legislatures and in their respective constituencies, and work together to form multi-party consensus on education. They also called for scrutinizing the allocation of education resources in the national, regional and local budgets and advocating for increase in budgetary allocations. They said that projects and plans, as well as resource allocations should primarily focus on the most poverty-stricken areas. They called for promoting discussions on family planning through parliamentary debates and questions to obtain authentic data and statistical information. They also stressed the need for drawing media attention to the importance of family planning services. They sought focus on the development of strategies to address issues related to reproductive, maternal and child health, besides making effective legislation and raising public awareness on the same. They said that the authorities should work towards ensuring sufficient health provision for pregnant women and new mothers.

Ensuring adequate nutrition for children in their early years was another resolve of the participants. The participants also asked the authorities to initiate plans and implement activities aimed at building and strengthening alliances and cooperation among women parliamentarians at the national, regional and international levels. They urged the authorities to work closely with the national and provincial women commissions to reinforce the efforts towards women empowerment, besides calling for exploring ways through which the Women's Parliamentary Caucuses of Pakistan and Afghanistan could share their successes and encourage the establishment of similar caucuses in the Pakistani provinces. They also sought further cooperation among the Women's Parliamentary Caucuses members through planning and delivering a multilateral programme in London for women parliamentarians from the UK and the South Asian legislatures. They also asked the authorities to enhance the role of women towards greater participation in conflict resolution, peace-building and reconstruction processes nationally, regionally, and globally.

Daily Times - February 23rd, 2014

Biased/Unbiased: The Parallel Justice System in Rural Pakistan - A Close Scrutiny

The council of elders, or jirga/panchayat, is believed to offer cheap and speedy justice in rural Pakistan. Yet, this is not what always happens. Last month, one such village council ordered the gang rape of one woman in a hamlet near Muzaffargarh, Punjab. She wasn't raped because she asked for pardon – although she was stripped and humiliated. Mukhtaran Mai's gang rape was also ordered by a panchayat in Meerwala, also in Muzaffargarh, in 2002. The logic: avenge dishonor with dishonor. "If they are providing justice, then why is the punishment only geared towards women?" asks Samar Minallah, a rights activist who was the petitioner of a public-interest litigation in the Supreme Court against such councils. "The case is still pending, but the top court [in one of its rulings] has declared jirgas illegal." Neither is there any provision in the Pakistan Penal Code that allows the panchayat, nor is there any special regulation on it in Punjab body of law. Be it panchayats in Punjab, jirgas in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan,

and faislo and sulh in Sindh, these are all non-institutional, parallel mechanisms for the settlement of disputes, with punishments usually targeting women.

However, in the tribal areas, jirgas are the judiciary. With no formal court system, the tribal elders - given the title of Maliks - and the leader of a jirga who hears the arguments of the plaintiffs, the jirgamaars, assemble to resolve the dispute or conflict at hand. Jirgas are enshrined in the body of law that governs the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) - the Frontier Crime Regulation, 1901. Similar to the Muzaffargarh panchayat ruling, a jirga in Darra Adam Khel ordered the execution of three women after one of them 'dishonored' the family. The girl, her mother and her cousin were shot dead in cold blood. One tribal elder from Kurram Agency contended that Fata's seven tribal agencies are different from each other. "Darra Adam Khel has a low literacy rate and they prefer to give jirga rulings based on their tribal laws," explained Haji Ghulab, who is a member of the Grand Jirga in Kurram.

Moreover, he claimed that extreme punishments are given only in extreme situations. "Jirgas only order murder in a conflict that has claimed many lives or has been going on for many years." Does the practice of Swara - the marriage of young girls to settle blood feuds - come under extreme measure? "Yes, it does," he responded. "If the two sides become relatives, they will not kill each other or continue the conflict." He quickly added, "But the practice seldom takes place. And we have to convince the girl first." This was a surprising response, but he explained the logic. "The jirga decision won't work out if the girl is not willing to marry." But Minallah, who has supported and even sheltered Swara 'victims', argued that many of them are seen as the enemy after the 'forced marriage'. "These girls are told by their in-laws that their faces remind them of the crime committed by their sons or brothers," she said. They are never accepted and their lives are ruined, she maintained.

Tribal elders do admit that it is not a perfect system, just like the judiciary and court system. "Bad decisions are made sometimes. But not all jirgas make unfair decisions. It's only the ones that adjudicate murder and rape cases that make the news," said Malik Khanijan Afridi, a tribal elder from Khyber Agency. Jirgas are formed by members of society, who are corrupt, take bribes and are biased towards their tribe or biraadri. "However, it's a system that involves mediation, arbitration and consensus-building. It works in the absence of courts," defended Afridi. "We have ordered murder, mostly of men," Afridi admitted, but quickly clarified, "It's rare. You need to understand that the point of giving these verdicts is to end conflict and resolve disputes."

Under FCR, there is allowance for the political administrators, who have magisterial authority, to dissolve the jirga if its ruling does not have consensus, or it causes outcry, or someone files an application to him, or he is not satisfied with the decision. "Therefore, there is room for a kind of appeal and make amends," explained Haji Ghulab. There have been instances when there were complaints about some jirga members for being greedy for money and irresponsible, who were later dismissed. However, panchayats, faislos and Balochistan jirgas do not have similar provisions as it is an informal system. The only possible solution: accountability. "Those who give unfair rulings must be held accountable and punished," suggested Minallah. That is the only way that those who claim to be the custodians of justice do not establish their own fiefdoms of absolute power.

The Express Tribune - February 26th, 2014

KP Lawmakers Call For Gender-Responsive ADP, Budget

Lawmakers from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly called for a gender-responsive provincial Annual Development Programme (ADP) and Annual Development Budget (ADB). Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Deputy Speaker Imtiaz Shahid Qureshi, Health Minister Shaukat Yousafzai along with other male and female legislators, representatives from the Local Government Department and Social Welfare Directorate participated in the consultative workshop at a luxury hotel. The consultative workshop covered mainly two objectives. The first objective was orientation on the entire process of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ADP and ADB formulation at district and provincial levels and role of lawmakers and citizen in development programme and budget. The second objective was to discuss proposals on some political and economic development programmes for women by KP women legislators for 2014-2015 ADP/ADB. The workshop was facilitated by the Pak Women through the support of the United Nations Women Fund for Gender Equality (UNWOMEN-FGE).

Saif Usmani, director of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Department, presented the entire process of ADP, ADB and Umbrella Projects in the KP annual budget. He also shared that how women lawmakers can include women-related political and economic projects and programmes in coming development budget of KP. The health minister announced that women legislators needed to submit their proposals to the Health Department for the coming ADP in the 2014-15 budgets. At the end of the workshop, women legislators demanded that the Planning and Development Department needed to consult them for allocation of budget for women's political and economic development in coming budget. The KP lawmakers demanded the Pak Women and UNWOMEN to continue such consultative workshops, which will not only enhance the capacity of the KP lawmakers for their effective role but also strengthen good governance and women empowerment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Azra Hussain, executive director of the Pak Women, and Hussain Ali, project coordinator of the Women Association Struggle for Development, representatives from other walks of life, including journalists, also participated in the workshop. At the end, programmes were submitted to women legislators for inclusion in the coming ADP. Some women lawmakers called for foreign visits to see parliaments of developed countries with an aim to improve their performance. However, others said the lawmakers do not need to visit foreign parliaments but they just need to implement own policies. "I have visited several foreign countries and I know there are merits and demerits in their systems as well," stated Uzma Khan, Member Provincial Assembly affiliated with the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl from Upper Dir district.

The News - February 27th, 2014

SECTARIAN CRISES & CONFLICT WATCH

Conflict & Sectarian Crisis Incidents

Security Briefs for the Month of February

Date	Incidents	Killed	Injured
February 01, 2014	Four militants were killed in an encounter with the Police during a search operation in Yar Hussain area of Swabi District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	8	0
February 02, 2014	At least five persons were killed and 30 others injured in the night when unidentified attackers hurled two grenades at Picture House cinema on Cinema Road near Qissa Khwani Bazaar in Peshawar (Peshawar District), the provincial capital of KP.	10	30
February 03, 2014	Four Police Officers were killed when unidentified militants attacked their vehicle in Ibrahim Hyderi area of Bin Qasim Town in Karachi of Sindh.	8	0
February 04, 2014	At least nine people were killed and over 40, including children and women, were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a restaurant in the Koocha Risaldar area of Qissa Khawani Bazaar in Peshawar of KP.	20	40
February 05, 2014	A local Taliban 'commander', Shafiq, and three of his bodyguards were killed when unidentified assailants opened fire on their vehicle on Miranshah-Mir Ali road in the Pir Kallay area of NWA in FATA.	8	0
	Four tribesmen were killed by unidentified militants in the Norak area of Mir Ali tehsil in NWA.	8	0
February 09, 2014	Unidentified armed militants attacked the house of a pro-government tribal elder, Gazeen Khan Bugti, killing him and eight members of his family, including three women, three children and two adult males, in Dera Bugti District.	18	8
	At least nine people, including an infant, were killed and 10 others were injured when unidentified militants opened fire on a shrine of Meharban Ali Shah alias Jalali Baba in Saeedabad area of Baldia Town in Karachi.	18	10
February 10, 2014	Four women were killed and three others were injured in a suicide blast near a house in the Essa Khel Garhi area of Peshawar (Peshawar District), the provincial capital of KP.	10	3
	Unidentified motorcyclists shot dead three school teachers in the Kach Banda area of Hangu District when they were on their way home following school duty.	6	0
	Three people were killed in the Malir Town of Karachi.	6	0
February 11, 2014	At least 13 persons were killed and 19 others injured when three back-to-back explosions occurred inside Shama Cinema in Bacha Khan Chowk area of Peshawar (Peshawar District), the provincial capital of KP.	26	19

Date	Incidents	Killed	Injured
	Nine persons were killed after unidentified assailants attacked a house by opening fire and hurling hand grenades in Badhabar area of Peshawar in KP.	18	0
	Three suspected militants were killed in an explosion in the Bacha Khan locality of Kolachi area in Dera Ismail Khan District of KP.	6	0
February 13, 2014	At least 13 Policemen were killed and 58 others were injured in a suicide blast targeting a bus carrying 50 Police officers near the gate of Razzakabad Police Training Center in Shah Latif Town of Karachi. TTP 'spokesman' Shahidullah Shahid said, "We carried out the attack against the Police because they are killing our people".	28	58
	At least four suspected militants were killed during an operation conducted by SFs in Chap Garh area of Dera Bugti District in Balochistan.	8	0
February 15, 2014	Five persons were killed when unidentified militants opened fire at a van near Dattakhel town in North Waziristan Agency in FATA.	10	0
February 16, 2014	The TTP claimed to have killed 23 FC personnel kidnapped in June 14, 2010 from Shoonkri Post of Mohmand Agency in FATA.	46	0
	At least six people, including four children, were killed and more than 35 were injured when two coaches of the Peshawar-bound Khushal Khan Khattak Express derailed after a bomb attack on the tracks near a canal in Thull town of Jacobabad District in Sindh.	12	35
	The Paramilitary Force conducted a search operation in Mohammad Khan Colony, Ittehad Town, during which they were attacked. The terrorist fired gunshots at the soldiers and also attacked with a grenade injuring one of them. Three terrorists were killed in the encounter.	6	1
February 18, 2014	Police recovered four dead bodies from Surjani Town area of Gadap Town in Karachi of Sindh.	8	0
	An Army Major, Jahanzaib, and three militants were killed in an exchange of fire in FR Peshawar of FATA.	8	0
February 20, 2014	At least 35 militants were killed as fighter jets targeted suspected insurgent hideouts in Dattakhel, Shawal and Mir Ali tehsils (revenue unit) of the North Waziristan Agency of FATA.	70	0
	Militants involved in the Peshawar cinema blast (February 10) and killing of an Army officer (February 18) in frontier region Peshawar two days ago, were targeted in fighter jets shelling on their hideouts situated in Khyber Agency. Around seven militants were killed.	14	0
	Eight persons, including seven BLF militants and one pro-Government militia member belonging to Baloch Musala Difa Army were killed while two others were injured in a gun battle between the two in Bessema area of Washuk District.	16	2

Date	Incidents	Killed	Injured
	Unidentified militants opened indiscriminate fire on the car of Israr, a doctor, killing him and four others in the car on the spot in MPR Colony of Orangi Town in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.	10	0
February 22, 2014	At least nine suspected militants were killed when SFs carried out shelling on their hideouts in Thall tehsil of Hangu District in KP.	18	0
	Three people, including local QWP leader Adalat Khan, were killed and two others were injured in a remote-controlled explosion targeting his car in Gokand area of Buner District in KP.	6	2
February 23, 2014	At least 38 militants, including key commanders, were killed in early morning air strikes the Ghaibi Nika area of Tirah Valley in Khyber Agency of FATA.	76	0
	At least 13 persons - among them a woman and a child - were killed and 14 others wounded in a bomb blast at the main gate of Usterzai Suzuki Stand on Hangu Road near Peshawar Chowk of Kohat town (Kohat District) in KP.	26	14
	Three unidentified men were killed and two others were injured in a firing incident in Jhatpat Market area of Lyari Town in Karachi of Sindh.	6	2
	At least five alleged militants were killed during an exchange of fire with SFs in Turbat District of Balochistan.	10	0
February 24, 2014	Asmatullah Shaheen Bhattani, a senior 'commander' of TTP and supporter of peace talks with the Government, was killed along with his three colleagues in Darga Mandi village near Miranshah in North Waziristan Agency of FATA.	8	0
	A suicide bomb attack outside the Iranian consulate in Peshawar of KP killed two FC soldiers and injured ten others.	6	10
February 25, 2014	Pakistani fighter jets and gunship helicopters bombarded hideouts of TTP militants in the North and South Waziristan Agencies of FATA killing at least 30 militants.	60	0
February 27, 2014	At least three militants were killed and three others were injured in an exchange of fire between security officials and militants in Shalobar area of Khyber Agency of FATA.	6	3
		628	237

Compiled from different dialies

Analyses, Reports & News

Infantry Troops Enter NWA Operation Areas

The Pakistan Army infantry troops, including SSG commandos, have entered the most difficult mountainous region in the tribal areas in search of terrorist hideouts, military sources said. According to sources, after the destruction of arms depots, militants will not be in a position to launch attacks on security forces for a long period. These sources said the bombardment of the

fighter aircraft was continuing in North Waziristan tribal region and more militants were likely to be eliminated. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) fighter aircraft pounded suspected positions of militants in the North Waziristan Agency and reportedly killed 40 militants. Military officials said the jets carried out air strikes following intelligence reports about the presence of senior local and foreign militants in the area. Officials put the number of deaths of militants in these strikes at more than 35 and it was claimed that mostly Uzbek militants were killed.

Meanwhile, that at least 40 people were killed in the bombing. The jets pounded suspected hideouts in the Khushali village, Mir Ali subdivision, and in the remote Dattakhel area and Shawal Valley, all located in North Waziristan. In Mir Ali, military officials said 15 militants were killed and their sanctuaries were smashed. The dead, they said, included foreign fighters, including Uzbeks, Chechens and Arabs. According to officials, a senior militant commander Abdul Sattar was running one of the four training centers blitzed by the jets in Khushali village in Mir Ali. Local tribesmen in Mir Ali said the jets started bombing around midnight. In Dattakhel, located near the Afghanistan border, the jets targeted four suspected positions of militants but there was no information about any casualty there. Local villagers said the jets bombed four houses where no one was residing for the past few months.

Meanwhile, a foreign militant known as Tajiki and belonging to Tajikistan was among those killed in the air strikes. They said another foreign militant, Abdul Sattar, who happened to be an Uzbek, was also killed. The third slain foreign militant who was identified was Abu Zubair who happened to be an Arab national. An Uzbeki woman, Bilquis, was also killed in the bombardment. The sources said five militants' compounds were hit, including two each in the Khushali village and Shawal Valley and one in Dattakhel. They added that the first bombing raid by the two jet fighters was carried out at 12:20am in the Khushali village. They said one of the compounds that was bombed in the Khushali village housed the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) fighters led by Commander Jehadyar Mehsud. It wasn't known if he was killed, but some of his men were reportedly slain in the air strike.

In Dattakhel, the sources said a large house owned by a tribesman, Maula Khan, was bombed by the jets. They said five foreign militants were killed and three wounded in the air strikes on this house, a portion of which was being used by the owner, Maula Khan. Sources in the political administration and locals initially gave a count of 15 confirmed deaths in the air strikes. Later, they said not more than 17-18 were killed. The PAF fighter aircraft also flew over parts of North Waziristan but didn't carry out any raids. The air strikes caused concern in North Waziristan and prompted many families to start planning to leave their villages and move to safer places. There were fears that it could be the start of a large-scale military action in North Waziristan following the breakdown of peace talks between the government and the TTP. A large number of families had moved out, mostly from Mir Ali sub-division, due to the previous two rounds of air strikes by the PAF and the army and shifted to Bannu, Karak and other areas.

Our correspondent adds from Bara: Three militants were killed and six others were injured when the Pakistan Army's helicopter gunships hit various targets in Bara Tehsil of Khyber Agency, local and official sources said. The sources said that two helicopter gunships pounded the suspected positions of militants in Alamgudar, Mandikas, Nala, Madakhel and Haji Rasool Jan Killay. They said three suspected militants were killed while six were injured in the shelling. Official sources claimed that several hideouts of the militants, including a factory making bombs and improvised explosive devices, was also destroyed in the air strikes. However, this could not be verified independently.

Official sources said the hideouts of those militants were targeted who were involved in the recent attacks on cinemas in Peshawar and the assassination of Major Jehanzeb, who was martyred during an ambush in the Frontier Region, Peshawar. The helicopter gunships flew in

the area for more than an hour, causing fear among the people who preferred to stay indoors. Muhammad Anis adds from Islamabad: Military sources said that 16 Uzbek terrorists were killed in air strikes in the Mir Ali area of North Waziristan. "It is confirmed that in the air strikes in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, 16 Uzbek terrorists were killed," the military sources said. The sources also said that seven terrorists, including three suicide bombers and an important commander, were killed in air strikes in the Khyber Agency.

The News - February 21st, 2014

Pakistan Most Terror-Hit Nation

Pakistan is the country most affected by terrorism in the world after Iraq, but if the severity of the incidents is considered, it even surpasses the Middle Eastern nation, according to a policy document on internal national security. The draft of National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2013-2018, currently being fine-tuned by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan before presentation to the cabinet, describes the scenario as dangerous, posing an existential threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the state. "From 2001 to 2013, there were 13,721 incidents in Pakistan which is marginally less than Iraq. From 2001 to 2005, there were 523 terrorist incidents in Pakistan but from 2007 to November 2013, the total number of incidents has risen to 13,198." Similarly, the number of suicide bombings between 2001 and 2007 stood at 15 only, but from 2007 to November last year, suicide attacks jumped to 358 – the highest anywhere in the world.

According to data released by the US National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses for Terrorism (Start), Pakistan led the chart with 1,404 terrorist attacks in 2012, surpassing Iraq (1,271). Even Afghanistan was behind Pakistan at number three with 1,023 incidents. More than one-third (33 per cent) of those attacks occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, followed by Balochistan (23pc), Fata (19.6pc) and Sindh (18pc), Start noted. Ironically however, authoritative sources have revealed to Dawn that while KP has been the hardest hit, the interior ministry never asked it to join formal consultation while formulating the national internal security policy. "We were asked to give our input, but were never invited to formal discussions," an official said. The national internal security policy document says from 2001 to November 2013, 48,994 people were killed in the country including 5,272 personnel of the law-enforcement agencies, a large number of them – 17,642 – having been killed in just three years from 2011 to 2013 including 2,114 personnel of the law-enforcement agencies. So far the interior minister has offered only snippets of the 86-page document which largely remains shrouded in secrecy. So much so that according to sources privy to deliberations on what is being billed as the country's first internal security policy, all those in attendance were asked to return its copy within 24 hours of receiving it.

Loss to Economy

The document goes on to estimate the total loss to economy in the last ten years because of terrorism at \$78 billion. It provides a grim picture of the state of security in the country facing what it describes as serious traditional and non-traditional threats of violent extremism, sectarianism, terrorism and militancy. "Terrorist networks lurk in shadows and thrive on a strategy of invisibility and ambiguity. They operate in an ideologically motivated environment to embroil the state on physical, psychological and ideological levels," the document notes. Offering a situation analysis, the document blames flawed and myopic foreign policy choices relating to Afghanistan, Kashmir and India, prolonged military rules and declining capacity of the state institutions and poor governance for the internal security threat. All categories of

violent groups in Pakistan, it notes, have hierarchical leadership, organization and sources of funding. "They have weaved supportive political narratives and have carved out a domestic support base through which they operate," it points out, adding that the most troublesome aspect of the entire phenomenon was their connections of varying degrees with external adversaries.

On pursuing dialogue, the document notes that while it seems a noble idea to proceed on a non-violent path, it also creates confusion in the minds of the foot soldiers and police officers. "Without holding a strong position in negotiations, it is difficult for any party to reach...a favorable conclusion," it argues. Underscoring the need for capacity building of national internal security apparatus, the policy document however, notes that the total strength of 33 national security organizations, including the police and other civil armed forces, both at the federal as well as the provincial level, exceeded 600,000, which is more than the sixth largest standing army of the world i.e. Pakistan. Pakistan spends Rs150bn on policing in a country where the citizen to police ratio, it notes, was well within the Police Rules, except for the Punjab and Sindh. It notes, however, that the countrywide crime rate registered a spike since 2008 and in 2013; the nationwide reported crime figures stood at a whopping 64, 4554.

However, it acknowledges that the metamorphosis of crime accompanied by non-traditional challenge, has prompted the law-enforcement agencies to realign their preparation and posture accordingly, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan where the police forces have gone into an operational mode with other important areas of police work being relegated to the back seat. The document puts forward three elements of the NISP framework revolving around Dialogue, Isolation and Deterrence, providing for an open-door policy for negotiations with "all" anti-state and non-state groups within the limit of the Constitution and "without compromising" the primary interests of the state territorial integrity and sovereignty, developing a national narrative to counterterrorism and extremism, de-radicalization and reintegration & reconstruction and capacity building of the criminal justice system and law-enforcement agencies. The document offers a comprehensive analysis of counterterrorism models in many countries, including the US, UK, Canada, Germany, India, Turkey and Singapore and ventures to offer its own solution to overcome the behemoth of terrorism.

Dawn - February 23rd, 2014

ECONOMIC WATCH**Facts & Figures****IMF Okays 3rd Tranche of \$545 Million for Pakistan**

The International Monetary Fund has approved the third tranche of \$545 million to Pakistan under the six-point \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility. This was stated by the head of IMF Mission Jeffery Franks while addressing a joint news conference after a meeting with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in Dubai. Frank said both the parties have reached the loan agreement. He said Pakistan's economy is moving towards the set objectives and economic growth has increased from 2.8 to 3.1 percent. Speaking on the occasion Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said our economy is on the right track and the government is taking a number of steps for further improvement. He pledged to add 4500MW of electricity to the national grid in the next four years. "The government is providing electricity to industry despite its shortage and subsidy is also being given for the provision of cheap electricity to consumers," the finance minister said. He said electricity distribution companies are being made efficient to overcome line losses, and added that the government has ended unannounced load shedding and approved an energy policy to increase its production. Ishaq Dar said the government is legislating to stop pilferage of electricity and gas. The finance minister said the government is taking important steps for economic stability in the country. He said the government is ensuring smooth supply of electricity to the industry despite shortfalls. The government, he said, is giving subsidy on electricity and the tariff has not been increased for the consumers using up to two hundred units.

Meanwhile, IMF Mission head Jeffrey Frank said Pakistan's economic growth has increased from 2.8 percent to 3.1 percent, which is a good omen. He said the IMF is not pressing Pakistan for privatization but it is in the best interest of the country. Frank said economic indicators are heading towards their set targets. He said agreement with Pakistan for loan has been finalized. He noted that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves are getting stable, and increase in tax collection will reduce the country's fiscal deficit. The IMF has said that decisive efforts to broaden the tax net through the elimination of tax exemptions and loopholes granted through statutory regulatory orders (SROs) are critical to the future of Pakistan's economy. The IMF mission said in a statement that it is encouraged by the overall progress made in pushing ahead with policies to strengthen macroeconomic stability and reviving economic growth. The mission reached staff-level understandings with the authorities on a set of economic policies detailed in an updated Letter of Intent, which will be subject to Executive Board approval. IMF said that services and manufacturing are driving better-than-expected GDP growth, as reforms in the electricity sector seem to be bearing fruit with electricity shortages and unscheduled load-shedding declining. Led by large scale manufacturing and service sectors, growth is picking up and is now expected to reach about 3.1 percent for FY2013/14 as a whole, compared to the earlier estimate of 2.8 percent. Fiscal performance continued on track in the second quarter of 2013/14, with initial consolidation efforts relying on revenue mobilization and reduction in energy subsidies. IMF said that authority's reform programme remains broadly on track, with the government meeting all of the quantitative performance criteria by end December 2013.

Daily Times - February 10th, 2014

Remittances Up By 10%, Revenue Collection By 17.5%: EAC Told

Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar informed the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) that overseas remittances have registered 10 percent increase during the current month while revenue collection targets have shown 17.5 percent growth in 7 months and 21 percent in January 2014 as compared to same period of the last year. The second meeting of EAC was held in Islamabad with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in the chair. The meeting was briefed regarding country's economic indicators which have been positively registered by IMF in terms of upward surge in development sectors. While welcoming the members of the EAC, the minister expressed hope that the second meeting shall mark re-activation of EAC, enabling the forum to provide an opportunity to interact and exchange ideas with prominent professionals associated with the economic development issues of Pakistan. The Ministry of Finance wanted to benefit from their collective wisdom and was open to any suggestion which could add value, he added. "If we all put our heads together we can turn around Pakistan's economy," he said, adding that the Ministry of Finance was ready to provide EAC members access and arrange meetings so that the latter can play a productive role in reshaping Pakistan's economy. GDP now is going up and inflation is declining because of proactive measures undertaken by the present government during its less than one years' incumbency, he added.

Stability in the forex market is another factor, besides POL prices in international market getting favorably settled, adding that overall financial forecast/projection speaks of food and POL prices registering stability to the benefit of country's economy. Ishaq Dar said that the government intends to positively enhance the forex reserves up to \$ 16 billion by end of December 2014. The meeting participants were further briefed that multilateral donors visiting Pakistan are keen to invest and contribute to strengthening of Pakistan's economy through various negotiated financial instruments. By end of March 2014 a sizeable increase in forex reserves is anticipated with a projected figure of more than \$10 billion since forex inflows are adding up steadily, he added. The Federal Board of Revenue management informed the EAC participants regarding rationalization of its taxation-based concessionary regime, with a projected revenue collection target during 2013-14 touching Rs 2,471 billion as against the previous year's (2012-13) revenue collection of Rs 1,946 billion. Presentation on oil and gas reserves in Pakistan was given to the participants, which evoked stimulating discussion and way forward. EAC participants expressed their satisfaction over the policy statement of the Finance Minister. The 30 percent austerity measures adopted by the present democratic government are likely to generate enough financial cushions to meet its fiscal deficit target.

Daily Times - February 17th, 2014

DEVELOPMENT WATCH

Health Projects

Health Reports/Controls

500,000 Vaccinated Against Polio in 'Sensitive' Areas amid Tight Security

The provincial health authorities 'successfully', yet partly, accomplished their task to vaccinate around 500,000 children against polio in sensitive parts of the city with an unprecedented security cover in place for the special campaign, officials said. The campaign was aimed at inoculating children up to five years of age who had missed out in earlier campaigns because of security fears, they added. However, things did not go according to the plan envisaged because security cover was not available for five of the 24 'highly sensitive' union councils (UCs). Officials said three UCs in Bin Qasim and two in Landhi had not been covered because of lack of proper preparedness on the part of the police. During a visit to various neighborhoods, provincial secretary health Iqbal Durrani said the areas left would be covered. "We'll cover it with the same security plan as we have applied in the 19 UCs today," he told journalists. The police squads accompanied hundreds of teams in each UC sealed off areas where children were being inoculated. The authorities had already banned pillion riding on motorcycles in those areas. Officials in the expanded programme on immunization (EPI) Sindh said the campaign remained peaceful in all targeted areas and they received no report of any untoward incident. "It remained completely peaceful," said Dr Durre Naz Jamal, deputy chief of the EPI Sindh.

Officials in the most volatile Gadap Town said they completely covered UCs 5 and 8. However, two of the five zones of UC-4 could not be covered as they deferred it because of the fading daylight. "We'll cover it when we are scheduled to cover UC- 6 and 7 of our town," said Dr Shakoor Abbasi, the town health officer. Unlike a previous schedule, the health authorities have made up a new plan to effectively cover the metropolis because of its security dynamics. The plan is based on sensitiveness of the areas and availability of security personnel. According to the plan, a two-day campaign will begin in 25 UCs. They are: Gadap UC-6 and 7, Baldia UC-5, 6, 7, 8, Orangi UC 3, 4, 5, 7, 12, SITE UC 4, 5, 6, Gulshan UC 4, 7, 8, Landhi UC 3, 4, 5, Korangi UC 1, 2, 6 and Bin Qasim UC 1 and 5. Another two-day campaign will commence on Feb 27 in 24 UCs. They are: Saddar UC 1, 4, 11, Lyari UC 6, 7, North Karachi UC 4, 9, 11, Gulberg UC 1 and 6, North Nazimabad UC 2, 7, Liaquatabad UC 9, 10, 11, Malir UC 6, 7, Jamshed Town UC 11, Shah Faisal UC1, Landhi UC Awami Colony and Keamari UC 1, 2, 5 and 7. Then another one-day campaign will be commenced in the same UCs as were planned which included Gadap, Gulshan, Baldia, Orangi, SITE, Bin Qasim, Landhi, Saddar and Gulberg. The national immunisation days (NIDs) will kick-start on March 4 and continue for the next four days.

The special campaigns with better security cover had been launched after officials warned that the current year was a difficult one for Karachi vis-à-vis incidence of polio because of complexities they faced in ensuring provision of security cover to thousands of vaccinators. Some 10 polio cases had been reported in Sindh - eight of them only in Karachi - last year, which was much more than four cases reported in 2012. Given the fact that Karachi had been a polio-free city in 2012, the emergence of eight cases had alarmed the authorities who planned tougher measures for 2014 to curb the crippling disease this year. The foremost among the measures was to increase the frequency of polio drives from one in two or three months to every month. However, the authorities faced early problems immediately after the commencement of the year's first campaign in January - the dangerous of all was an attack on

polio team in Qayyumabad, which killed three vaccinators. Since the attack was reported from an area traditionally considered a 'safer' neighborhood by the authorities, the murders generated a wave of terror among volunteers who, first refused to continue the campaign, and after persuasion demanded security for every team during the campaign.

Although, the sources said the first campaign could not completely cover all the city's children, officials, however, claimed they had accomplished the task in numerous short intervals. The campaign this month for the city's 40 'sensitive' union councils (UCs) was to start from the beginning of this week, which too was postponed because of unavailability of the required security cover. The officials are perturbed over loss of invaluable time because of security hiccups, which may lead to a difficult year ahead for the city's children. They said winter months were ideal for multiple polio campaigning, which helped improving immunity among children against polio and making the rest of the year safer as it was being done elsewhere in Sindh. They said the ongoing months were colder, which allowed children to have better immunity if they got boosters against polio. This immunity could help a child in defeating polio in summer as well, the officials said. They said a total of 2,147,845 children under five required to be administered polio drops by 7,832 polio workers in Karachi.

Dawn - February 24th, 2014

Pakistan Has the Highest Rate of First Day Deaths: Report

The charity Save the Children said in the report that a million newborn babies a year die within 24 hours, urging governments to tackle preventable deaths. In Pakistan, fewer than half of women had a skilled health worker present at birth. Attempts to improve this have been dogged by "delays in the salary disbursements, 'stock-outs' of medicines, unavailable and dysfunctional equipment, and an unhelpful referral system", the report said. Earlier India had the highest number of first day deaths and stillbirths at 598,038 per year, a quarter of the 2.2 million lives lost. The under-five mortality rate in India has been more than halved since 1990, from 126 per 1,000 live births to 56.1. "(Indian) states with strong health systems and implementation mechanisms have done exceedingly well compared with others," the report said.

The report by the British-based organization said 6.6 million children around the world died in 2012 before their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable causes. The number has almost halved from the 12.6 million in 1990, but there remains a "deplorable problem of lack of attention to babies in their first days of life", the aid organization said. In its report, entitled "Ending Newborn Deaths", it said one million babies did not survive their first 24 hours of life in 2012. It said two million babies could be saved each year if preventable newborn mortality was ended. "Child mortality remains one of the great shames of our modern world. Every day, 18,000 children under five die, and most from preventable causes," the report said. "Unless we urgently start to tackle deaths among newborn babies, there is a real danger that progress in reducing child deaths could stall and we will fail in our ambition to be the generation that can end all preventable child deaths." It said the reduction since 1990 had been achieved through immunization, family planning, better nutrition and treatment of childhood illnesses, as well as improving economies.

Call for Action

Save the Children, which operates in more than 120 countries, called on world leaders, philanthropists and the private sector to commit to ending preventable newborn deaths? They said they would present their action plan to government ministers. They want governments to issue declarations on ending preventable newborn mortality. Save the Children wants them to

ensure that by 2025, every birth is attended by trained and equipped health workers, and user fees for maternal and newborn health services are removed. They demanded a commitment to spending at least \$60 per capita on training maternity workers. They also urged pharmaceutical companies to increase the availability of products for the poorest new mothers. "In many cases, small but crucial interventions can save lives in danger. Skilled care during labor could reduce the number of stillbirths during labor by 45 per cent and prevent 43 per cent of newborn deaths," the report said.

Daily Times - February 26th, 2014

Education Projects

Call To Educate Child Laborers

A study that found that around 3.6 million children under the age of 14 are working, mostly in exploitative and hazardous labor in Pakistan, has suggested incentive-based education for such children. Dare to Sensitize, Train & Inform-Youth & Adolescents Advocacy Network (DoSTI-YAN), a youth and adolescents advocacy network formed by AGEHI Resource Centre, SACHET Pakistan, organized a public policy dialogue on issues of education and needs of adolescents in Pakistan in October 2013. It was not a standalone activity but part of a continued process of engaging communities and policy makers through the indigenous think tank Alternative Perspectives, since 2007. Plan Pakistan supported the network in compiling the reflections and recommendations. And the media was briefed on the report published by Society for the Advancement of Community, Health, Education and Training (SACHET) on "Adolescent & Education in Pakistan" based on a policy dialogue. The report informed that adolescent population aged 10-19 by 2011 is estimated as 39,894,000 which are 23 per cent of total population of Pakistan.

Net enrolment of male in primary school participation is 81 per cent where as it is 67 per cent for females. Net attendance of male in primary school is 70 per cent whereas female's attendance in the primary school is 62 per cent. Similarly net enrolment of male in secondary school participation is 38 per cent whereas it is 29 per cent for females. "Child marriage by the age of 15 prevails around 7 per cent and by the age of 18 it is 24 per cent. Currently married female adolescents are round 16 per cent. Birth rate by age of 18 is 10 per cent whereas adolescent birth rate is 16 per cent. And there is an estimate that around 3.6 million children under the age of 14 work mostly in exploitative and hazardous labor in Pakistan." "We are extremely concerned why these shocking facts and figures do not disturb the relevant quarters?" questioned Dr Rakhshinda Perveen, founding executive director of SACHET Pakistan, while sharing the report. "Why these are not considered newsworthy? Why a common citizen could not perceive any action/intervention to address these issues?"

Why our power elites do not raise their voices to increase the spending on education up to 25 per cent in GDP?" The study contains 26 recommendations and reflections. Increase in budget and investment in education especially for girls and there should be more schools especially for girls, it says. "Curriculum must be relevant to market needs. Today adolescents in urban areas have access to social media and TV so they should be taught through making resources available on social media in interesting manners." It recommends that life skills modules should be added in the syllabus so that children could understand and cope with the physical and emotional changes they would undergo while in transition to adolescence. Teachers should be trained on how to teach the children on reproductive health and on how to guide parents about it. Women and girls who are expert in their vocational skills should also be given some formal education so that they could highlight their skills and work for increased appreciation and benefits And there

should be one non-discriminatory education system for all and most importantly at policy level where if we have an education policy it must be applied to the whole country so we could prevent class divisions.

The Nation - February 04th, 2014

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)

Despite the recent focus of the provincial government on enrolment drive, 16 percent of Punjab's children aged 6-16 still remain out of school, according to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2013. The remaining 84% that are enrolled in the 6-16 age bracket are not learning much either. Conducted by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) in collaboration with National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) and Democratic Commission for Human Development (DCHD), ASER 2013 was launched in the city. Punjab Minister for Population Zakia Shahnawaz, Secretary School Education Abdul Jabbar Shaheen, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) Pro-chancellor Syed Babar Ali, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Secretary General IA Rahman, Oxford University Press (OUP) Managing Director Aameena Saiyed, Director Programs Baila Raza Jamil and representatives of civil society and government officials were present on the occasion. The survey was conducted by 10,000 volunteers across Pakistan.

The ASER survey findings for Punjab is based on the testing of 59,092 children (including 44 percent girls) by thousands of volunteer citizens, who personally visited 21,365 households in 1,074 villages as well as 3,542 children (including 47 percent girls) 1,339 households in 67 blocks in urban areas of four districts across Punjab. For the year 2013, the ASER rural survey has been conducted in 36 rural districts in Punjab, wherein 5-16 year age cohort children were tested for English, Language (Urdu/Sindhi/Pashto), and Arithmetic competencies. According to the report, student competencies in learning English, Arithmetic, and Language are deplorable. Half of the children from Class V cannot read Class II level text in Urdu/Sindhi/ Pushto. In English, only 62% of the surveyed Class V students could read sentences which should ideally be read by students from the second grade. A similar trend has been observed in the Arithmetic capabilities of children where only 56% of Class V children were able to do a two-digit division, something that is expected in second grade curriculum.

The ASER survey also identified that, in Punjab, children enrolled in private schools are performing better compared to those studying in government schools; 71% children enrolled in Class-V in private schools were able to read a story in Urdu compared to 63% Class V students studying at government schools. The difference in learning levels is starker for English, where 70% Grade V could read English Class II level sentences compared to 58% public sector students. Further, the survey explains that gender parity in learning levels is growing. As many as 55 percent of boys were found able to read at least sentences in Urdu with almost the same percentage of girls (54%) equally competent in Urdu. In addition to the assessment of children, the report also highlights school functioning across every district in Punjab. The ASER Punjab rural survey informs that overall teachers' attendance in government schools stood at 88.5% as compared to 92% in private schools on the day of the survey.

Private teachers were reported to have better qualifications at graduate levels; for example, 64% teachers in private schools are graduates in comparison to only 42% in government schools. The trends in multi-grade teaching across schools are also mixed. ASER 2013 findings have found 34% of government and 35% of private schools imparting multi-grade teaching at Class II level. On the contrary, at the Class VIII level, multi-grade teaching is more prevalent in the private sector 43 vs 13 % in government schools. Despite the fact that only 15% private

primary schools receive funds from the government (as compared to 100% public primary schools), the private sector has been reported to be better at school facilities. For example, 95% private primary schools had boundary walls as compared to 81% government primary schools. Similarly, with regard to availability of functional toilets, it has been found that the facility was still not available in 14% public and 8% private primary schools in rural Pakistan.

Daily Times - February 11th, 2014

Sindh Promises Its Children a Better Future

Sindh's major political parties came together to sign a charter to improve education in Sindh by achieving two goals - ensure 100 per cent enrolment in Sindh, so that every child between the ages of five and 16 is in school and to improve the teaching quality of Sindhi, Urdu and Mathematics. Keeping in mind his position as the provincial education minister, it was fitting that Alif Ailaan campaign director Mosharraf Zaidi asked Nisar Khuhro to be the first one to speak at the ceremony. In his trademark deep voice, Khuhro was refreshingly self-critical. "Let us accept that we cannot afford to sink any further as far as education is concerned," he admitted, refusing to beat about the bush. "We need to accept our deficiencies and work on them. However, if I am to point them out, I would be standing here for hours." Elsewhere in the country, at least 80 per cent of the students attend class regularly but in Sindh, school attendance is just 67 per cent - the lowest attendance rate in Pakistan.

Khuhro said the blame lies on everyone - the parents, the public and governments of the past and the present. He was quick to point out that there is no simple solution to the deep-rooted problem. "The education budget has increased from Rs25 billion to Rs132 billion but as much as Rs110 billion of that goes towards salaries," he revealed. "We need to start allocating our resources more efficiently. We will start surveys that will monitor the attendance and performance of teachers." The minister then went on to make a promise that was met with raucous applause by the crowd and appreciative nods by those on stage. "I will stand in the assembly tomorrow and propose a reform based on this charter - to improve enrolment." Seated next to Khuhro was opposition leader Faisal Subzwari, who was next to take up the podium. "First of all, I want to second everything that Khuhro has said," said the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader. "I can assure him that if he does suggest a reform tomorrow, all MQM members will support it."

However, the man to speak next, Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz provincial leader Irfanullah Marwat was not as kind to Khuhro. "We have been talking of education for a long time now but nothing is being done," he said provocatively. "A lot of mistakes have been made, that is why we are gathered here. People claim that our graduates are struggling to find jobs - half of our graduates cannot even fill out a job application in English." The next speaker, Pakistan Muslim League - Functional leader Mehtab Rashidi, pointed out that enrolment should not be the only priority but should be considered hand-in-hand with the number of dropouts and attendance rates. Of the total number of children not in school in Sindh, 3.4 million - or 56 per cent - are girls. Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz's Asif Baladi was one of the few speakers who honored the set two-minute time limit. "Sindh will only live on if its education lives on," he said, using his time and words wisely. He was then followed by Sindh United Party's Syed Ghulam Shah who had a few choice words of his own.

"Our education will lead to our eventual demise," came a chilling warning. "It is in the courtyards of schools that nations are saved. At the moment, the wheel of our province churns with hatred." Pressed for time, Awami Jamhoori Party's Abrar Kazi and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's Dr Arif Alvi were forced to deliver hasty speeches - both appreciating Khuhro's promise

and suggesting a few courses of action to improve Sindh's education. The closing speech came from Sherry Rehman who suggested that politicians should teach in schools for a week so that they can experience the problems first-hand while also insisting that the curriculum needs to change immediately. Once all the speakers were done, the charter was signed and held up by the politicians to show the crowd their signatures. A promise has been made and in three months, those who made it will gather to discuss its progress.

The Express Tribune - February 21st, 2014

ENERGY CRISIS**Government's Role in Oil and Gas & Energy Crisis****Fuel Adjustment Formula: Revised Power Tariff In Feb 2014 Bills**

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) announced that a revised tariff of power distribution companies (Discos) will be adjusted in the electricity bills for February 2014. Nepra had raised the power tariff of power distribution companies (Discos) for December 2013 by Rs1.01 per unit according to the monthly fuel adjustment formula. The increase will be applicable across the board, save for consumers of K-Electric (formerly the Karachi Electric Supply Company). Nepra increased the tariff for December 2013 after examining the actual fuel charges for the month. According to information provided by the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA), the actual fuel charge for December 2013 was Rs8.8714 per kilowatt hour (kWh) against the reference fuel cost component of Rs7.8690 per kWh. The actual fuel charge, as such, was increased by Rs1.0024 per kWh. Discos purchased 104.27 gigawatt hour (GWh) from small and captive power plants for the month of December 2013, the details provided by CPPA revealed. The actual fuel cost of this power amounted to around Rs1.02 billion. While calculating the fuel adjustment for December 2013, however, Nepra did not include the cost component from those plants which had cases against them pending in court. As such, the authority only considered the purchase of 41.61 GWh – at the cost of Rs533.46 million – for the instant fuel adjustment for December 2013. According to CPPA, the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) lost 240.03 GWh on account of transmission losses in December 2013. However, Nepra assessed transmission losses at a rate of 3%, as determined in a July 19, 2013 statutory regulatory order. CPPA has already reduced the overall cost on account of transmission losses in excess of 3% by Rs281 million. As such the impact of increased transmission losses has not been passed on to consumers. After reviewing and incorporating various adjustments, Nepra increased the applicable for Discos for December 2013 by Rs1.0103 per kWh.

The Express Tribune - February 07th, 2014

REGIONAL WATCH

India

Nawaz Invites India for Dialogue on Kashmir

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif invited the Indian government for a peaceful dialogue to resolve the Kashmir dispute as per aspirations of the Kashmiri people. He said his government was ready to consider any proposal for establishment of peace. "We are ready to discuss and resolve all outstanding issues with India, including the Kashmir dispute," Nawaz said while addressing a joint session of Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly and Kashmir Council in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity Day. "The future of Pakistan and Kashmir is linked with each other. Uncertainty and confrontation will continue in the region till peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue casting negative impacts on regional development and stability," the prime minister added. He hoped that India would realize the sensitivity of the matter, respond positively to Pakistan's invitation for a peaceful dialogue and let the people of Kashmir decide their own fate. Held with AJK Speaker Sardar Ghulam Sadiq Khan in the chair, the session was also attended by Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Chaudhry Brjees Tahir, AJK President Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, Prime Minister Chaudhry Abdul Majeed and members of the Legislative Assembly and AJK Council. Among the guests present at the gallery were Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Affairs Chairman Fazlur Rehman and Minister for Information and Broadcasting Pervaiz Rashid. On his arrival, the prime minister was received by the AJK president, prime minister and parliamentarians that followed a guard of honor by a smartly-turned-out contingent of the AJK police.

In his address to the joint session, Prime Minister Nawaz said the people of Kashmir and Pakistan were tied in integral bond of brotherhood that was getting strengthened with each passing day. "This day brings pride to thousands of Kashmiris, who have rendered sacrifices for the independence of Kashmir. Today, we also pledge not to squander the sacrifices of those freedom fighters," he resolved. He said the Kashmir issue demanded enforcement of the fundamental human rights and high values of self-determination. "We cannot evade our responsibility of consoling the innocent Kashmiris. Pakistan has been sticking to its stance of Kashmir resolution according to the wishes of Kashmiri people," he remarked. He said the struggle of the Kashmiris was the natural reaction to the atrocities perpetrated by the Indian security agencies that also substantiated the fact that the Kashmir issue could never be ignored. He said the whole world was aware of the miseries of Kashmiri people. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said the international community could neither overlook nor keep mum over the usurpation of Kashmiris' rights and oppression faced by them. He said Pakistan would also keep up its struggle for the restoration of Kashmiris' rights at all national and international forums until bloodshed came to end in Kashmir and the people got their due rights. He said the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was the incomplete agenda of the United Nations that was of key importance for South Asia. Pakistan has repeatedly expressed its desire of resolving all disputes, including that of Kashmir, through a meaningful dialogue, he added. The prime minister said with a view to redress the difficulties faced by Kashmiris, Pakistan took several confidence building measures, including the opening of Line of Control (LoC) to ease reunion of families from both the sides. He said the continuation of trade across LoC, despite all odds, manifested Pakistan's resolve to facilitate the Kashmiri people.

Daily Times - February 06th, 2014

Bangladesh

Militants Escape from Bangladesh Prison Van in Bomb Ambush

Gunmen opened fire and tossed bombs at a prison van carrying militants of a banned Islamist movement to a court house, freeing three of their colleagues and killing a policeman in the ambush, police and witnesses said. The three convicts sprung from their police escort were members of the group Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), including the group's explosives expert. Two had been sentenced to death. The group was highly active around 2005, when it was involved in spate of bombings on judicial personnel, courts and other targets, but has been relatively quiet over the past 10 years. Police Inspector General Hassan Mahmood Khandker said the incident showed the militants had not been rooted out entirely. "It is a clear indication that they are still active," he told reporters. He said the attack was the first such ambush on a prison van. The militants had been on their way to a court in Mymensingh to testify in another trial, said Abdur Razzak, superintendent of Kashimpur jail, where all three had been held.

Militants blocked a highway in Mymensingh, 120 km (75 miles) north of Dhaka, with two cars and set off several bombs to halt the prison van, police said. One policeman died on the spot and three were injured. About 20 masked men then jumped out from a microbus and opened fire on the van, Subedar Habib, who was injured in the attack, told reporters in hospital. Police who mounted a manhunt and searched districts near the incident later detained one of the men. They also offered a reward of 200,000 taka (\$2,560) for help in capturing them. Border patrols had been put on alert to stop the men fleeing the country. Six leaders of the Islamist militant group were hanged after being convicted of killing two judges in 2005. Among them was JMB chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman, a veteran of conflicts in Afghanistan. The group exploded nearly 500 bombs almost simultaneously on Aug. 17, 2005, across Bangladesh, including the capital Dhaka, in attacks largely aimed at frightening authorities. Its militants later carried out suicide attacks on various courthouses, killing 25 people, including judges, lawyers and policemen, and injuring hundreds.

Daily Times - February 24th, 2014

Afghanistan

Killings Rattle Afghan Voters as Election Campaign Starts

Afghanistan's presidential candidates held rallies in Kabul at the start of a campaign to elect Hamid Karzai's successor, as the killing of a frontrunner's aides highlighted the security threat to the poll. Gunmen shot dead two members of former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah's team in the western city of Herat, dealing an early blow to hopes of a peaceful campaign as the country prepares for its first democratic transfer of power. The April 5 election is seen as a key test of the effectiveness of the 350,000-strong Afghan security forces as foreign troops prepare to exit the country, while the future of US troops in the country beyond 2014 is set to dominate the agenda. Earlier in the day, thousands of people, mostly men, gathered in giant wedding halls where candidates delivered speeches and called on war-weary Afghans to vote for them. The elder brother of President Hamid Karzai, Qayum Karzai started his campaign in the Loya Jirga, a traditional gathering venue. "We will keep all the positive achievements of the current government and we will work on those works that this government has not done yet," he said in front of thousands of supporters.

Earlier, Abdullah, who came second to Karzai in the chaotic and fraud-riddled 2009 election, conveyed his condolences to the families of his slain aides and outlined his priorities as “security in the far villages of Afghanistan, fighting corruption, (and) enforcing rule of law”. He said the signing of a bilateral security agreement (BSA), which would allow about 10,000 US troops to be deployed in the country after NATO withdraws by December, was essential to safeguarding the country’s future. “Afghanistan is in a place, in a position that needs the continuation of international cooperation and help,” Abdullah said. “Inshallah (God willing), with the signing of this agreement, the problems...will be solved.” Abdullah’s rival Ashraf Ghani, a 64-year-old academic, told one packed hall: “Reforms will begin with us: myself, Mr. Dostum and Mr. Danish.” He was referring to his running mates, the former Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum and ethnic Hazara tribal chieftain Sarwar Danish. Security was tight at the rallies, which were guarded by the Afghan national army. But the killing of Abdullah’s aides weighed heavily on some people’s minds.

Arefa Alizada, an 18-year-old Abdullah supporter who attended one of the rallies, said: “I am concerned about security of the election, especially after I heard that two campaigners were killed yesterday. If it worsens, I and many other people won’t be able to vote.” Afghanistan has been gripped by a deadly insurgency for the past 12 years. Most US and NATO troops are set to leave at the end of this year, leaving Afghans in charge of their own security. President Karzai had been expected to sign the bilateral security agreement late last year. But he has stalled and said his successor might now complete negotiations - plunging relations with the US, Afghanistan’s key donor, to a fresh low. Hamid Karzai has ruled the country since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, surviving assassination attempts and the treacherous currents of Afghan political life as billions of dollars of military and development aid poured into the country. He is barred from seeking a third term, leaving an open field to compete in the April 5 vote, which is likely to trigger a second-round run-off in late May between the two strongest candidates. In comments likely to cause further friction with his NATO allies, Hamid Karzai criticised their conduct during the 12-year conflict in an interview with Britain’s Sunday Times, in which he described the Taliban as “brothers” and the US as “rivals”.

Daily Times - February 03rd, 2014

Kalash, Ismaili People Received Threats from Afghanistan

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) informed the Supreme Court (SC) that the ultimatum given to the people of Kalash and Chitral to “convert to Islam” was from across the border but not an internal threat. A three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice (CJ) Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, heard a suo moto case on the Taliban threat to Ismailis and Kalash tribe to “convert to Islam” or face death. The chief justice took notice morning on a report that appeared in a newspaper regarding the Taliban threat to the Ismailis and the Kalash tribe and summoned the attorney general and KP advocate general. The chief justice clubbed the suo moto case with the Peshawar church attack case. Earlier, in a 50-minute-long video released on Feb 2 on the TTP media wing’s website; the Pakistani Taliban had announced an “armed struggle” against the Kalash and Ismaili people. The narrator warned the people of Kalash to convert to Islam or face death.

During the course of the hearing, appearing on court notice, KP Advocate General Abdul Latif Yousafzai submitted before the court that he had talked to the KP home secretary on the issue and he gave the information that the news regarding the militant’s threat to Kalash and Ismailis community of Chitral was correct but it was from across the border but not an internal threat. He contended that the Nuristan province of Afghanistan extended from Dir and Chitral; hence

he said that according to the provincial home secretary, the threat was from across the border but not an internal threat. Abdul Latif Yousafzai, however, submitted that the provincial government took up the matter with the federal government and preventive measures had been taken by the deputy commissioner of Chitral in this regard.

At this, the court directed the KP advocate general to submit a report within a week, explaining as to what further preventive measures had been taken in the instant matter after holding a meeting with the federal government. The court also directed the KP AG to collect the report from the district police and Chitral commissioner and submit a comprehensive report on Feb 24. The chief justice observed that Ismailis had received threats from the Taliban as per the news report. The Taliban had threatened them to “convert to Islam” or face death which, he said, was against the articles 9, 20 and 36 of the Constitution. The chief justice further remarked that Islam is a religion that preaches peace and tolerance. Meanwhile, during the hearing of the Peshawar church blast case, the governments of the Punjab and Sindh submitted reports before the court pertaining to the security measures taken for the protection of worship places of minority communities.

Punjab Advocate General Mustafa Ramday told the court that there was no security problem regarding worship places in the province, adding that all the worship places were being fully protected. He informed the court that there were 97 worship places in Gunjrawala, 24 in Bahawalpur and nine each in Multan and Rawalpindi and all were being fully protected, hence he said there was no security problem of these worship places in the province. KP Advocate General Abdul Latif Yousafzai told the court that the provincial government had already submitted before the court, its report over the security of worship places in the province. A representative of Tando Adam-based organization from Sindh province told the court that they were fully protected and could freely go to their worship places.

The News - February 21st, 2014

POVERTY & FOOD SECURITY WATCH

Poverty

SDPI Report: 58.7 Million Pakistanis Living Below Poverty Line

As many as 58.7 million people in Pakistan are living in multidimensional poverty with 46 per cent of rural population and 18 per cent of urban households falling below the poverty line, says a survey report. The report titled 'Clustered Deprivation' is prepared by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) with the financial and technical assistance of United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The SDPI measures poverty on the basis of five dimensions – education, health, water supply and sanitation, household assets/amenities and satisfaction to service delivery. Further, a person taking less than 2,350 calories per day and earning less than \$1.25 per day according to the United Nations standard has also been regarded as living below the poverty threshold. The highest incidence of poverty prevails in Balochistan with 52 per cent of the households living under the poverty line, followed by 32 per cent, 33 per cent and 19 per cent respectively in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), Sindh and Punjab, said the report presented to all provincial governments during the last month of 2013

In Punjab, higher incidence of poverty was observed in southern districts. Rajanpur is on top of the list with 44 per cent households falling below the poverty line. The people living below the line in other southern districts respectively comprise 40 per cent households in Muzaffargarh, 36 per cent in DG Khan, 33 per cent in Bahawalpur, 31 per cent in Layyah and Lodhran, 31 per cent in Pakpattan, and 28 per cent in Multan, Khanewal and Bhakkar districts. The SDPI report on Balochistan says the restive province faces the highest incidence of poverty as compared to others. However, except for Muskhel, the majority of the districts in the north have relatively low incidence of poverty. It is high in the central and southwest part of the province with the exception of Panjgur and Gawadar districts. In K-P, the incidence of poverty is extremely high in the northern mountainous regions, very high in the southern regions, average in the central parts while the districts adjacent to Islamabad show low levels of poverty.

According to the document, the southeast part of Sindh is the poorest region, while central Sindh is relatively less poor and southwest Sindh the least poor region of the province. Out of 27 districts, the inhabitants of 18 districts are facing severe poverty conditions. Tharparkar has the highest incidence of poverty in Sindh with 47 per cent households living below the poverty line. The report says 42 per cent households in Badin, 41 per cent in Tando Muhammad Khan, 40 in Thatta, 39 per cent in Nawabshah and Jamshoro, 38 per cent in Larkana and Shahdadkot, 36 per cent in Jacobabad, 32 per cent in Tando Allah Yar, 29 per cent in Matiari and Dadu, 28 per cent in Shikarpur and Sanghar, 27 per cent in Khairpur, and 25 in Hyderabad and Sukkar districts live below the poverty threshold. The report reveals that one-third of Pakistani households are facing poverty, with uneven distribution among provinces and rural and urban populations. With more than half of the population below the poverty line, Balochistan is the poorest province. Punjab Planning and Development Board chief Khalid Sultan said the report had used data from Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) that is specifically designed for the analysis of poverty.

The Express Tribune - February 25th, 2014

Food & Malnourishment

Malnutrition Survey: 'Over 70% Mothers in Sindh Are Vitamin D Deficient'

More than 70 per cent of mothers in Sindh are deficient in vitamin D. Nearly half of the children under five years old suffer from stunting and around 40 per cent of children are underweight. These alarming statistics on malnutrition levels in the country were revealed in the National Nutrition Survey, which was discussed in a policy dialogue organized by Save the Children. The event aimed to bring together experts to examine the current nutrition levels in Sindh, identify the role of different stakeholders and come up with a way forward to address the issue in the province. Dr Shabina Ariff, an assistant professor at Women and Child Health Division at Aga Khan University, said that newborns will be affected if mothers were a victim of malnutrition. Women in Sindh had the highest reported rates of night blindness during their last pregnancy, she pointed out. "These figures have not changed significantly in the past decades," she said.

"Under such conditions, children – the backbone of the country – will not be able to help it move forward." There was risk of suffering from a 'demographic nightmare' of a growing unskilled, economically unproductive population if the issue of malnutrition is not addressed, claimed Prof Dr Iqbal Memon, the president of the Pakistan Pediatric Association. "A poorly constructed building will eventually fall." While highlighting several misconceptions about healthy children, Prof Memon said that mothers usually come with a concern that their children were weak despite the fact that they don't know the definition of a healthy child. "Only the fattest child, one who looks like an ox, is considered a healthy child, which is a misconception," he clarified, adding that feeding babies from a feeder led to many diseases. Dr Saifullah Jamro, the head of the pediatrics department at Chandka Medical College in Larkana, warned that malnutrition makes children vulnerable to communicable diseases, such as measles. Malnutrition also reduces the effectiveness of certain vaccinations, he added.

Poverty Not a Major Cause

Dr Salma Shaikh, a professor at Liaqat Medical University, explained that poverty was not the only reason behind child malnutrition in the country as there was a strong relationship between fertility, disease burden and practices, such as hand washing and breastfeeding. "Malnutrition undermines both physical and mental development in children," she said. Other speakers insisted, however, that issues of poor governance, social injustice, gender-based discrimination and poor resource allocations need to be addressed. "If not for God's sake, please be united for humanity's sake," said civil society activist Zulfiqar Halepoto. Even Save the Children's provincial advocacy manager Iqbal Detho urged that malnutrition should be taken up as a national issue and must receive the attention of policy makers and legislators. Dr Irshad Danish of the same organization said that current malnutrition crisis in Pakistan has been estimated to cost the economy three per cent of the GDP per year. Dr Haris Gazdar, a social policy and political economy expert, said that malnutrition was a complex issue which was closely linked with governance and political economy. The complexity of the issue can be unfolded through research and dialogues, he suggested.

The Express Tribune - February 27th, 2014