



PAKISTAN
GOVERNANCE
FORUM

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GOVERNANCE WATCH**Government Working****Government Nod to Sell PIA, Many Other Units**

The board also decided that the liabilities of PIA will not be transferred to the buyer of the 26 percent shares; a senior official who was part of the crucial meeting. Under an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, the government is committed to privatize 32 entities in the next three years. “The financial adviser will be given the task of determining the base share of PIA and shares of the national airline will be off-loaded on the model that was adopted for PTCL. The liabilities will not be transferred to the buyer”. The board resolved to protect the employees’ interests in the process. The board also approved the strategic sale of the Heavy Electrical Complex (HEC) and National Power Construction Company (NPCC), and directed the initiation of the process for both entities. The decision of the board will not be vetted by the Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCOP). The board will not meet again to finalize the strategy to off-load the shares of the Oil and Gas Development Company and to sell the government’s shares in a few commercial banks. The board approved the strategic sale of a minimum 88% of government shares in NPCC minimum 96% government shares in HEC together with management control. It has finalized a three-pronged strategy, which consists of 11 capital market transactions, 17 strategic private sector partnerships that includes PIA and Pakistan Steel Mills and restructuring of three entities, which are to be completed in three to five years. Minister for Finance and Privatization, Ishaq Dar had recently stated that the government was expecting over Rs100 billion revenues from the capital market transactions. The officials said, the authorities were estimating a minimum Rs80 billion gains from 10% sale of OGDCL shares, Rs20 billion by off loading 5% shares of Pakistan Petroleum Limited, Rs15 billion from 10% shares of Untied Bank Limited, Rs50 billion by off loading 20% shares of Habib Bank and Rs10 billion by off loading 10% shares of Allied Bank Limited.

The News - January 09, 2014

Offloading Government Stake: PIA Sell-Off Clears the Last Hurdle

Headed by its Chairman Mohammad Zubair Umar, the Board also approved the strategic sale of Heavy Electric Complex (HEC) and National Power Construction Company (NPCC). Out of six board members, four attended the first round of meeting. The Board will meet again to consider the cases of Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC) and to offload the government’s shares in a few commercial banks. PIA’s 26% shares will be privatized on the model adopted to privatize Pakistan Telecommunication Limited, according to an official of the Commission. The government would not transfer the liabilities of the national-flag carrier to the buyer, he added. The Board resolved to divest the government of the minimum 26% shares and gave the go-ahead for the selection of the financial adviser who would carry out the process, according to a brief statement issued by the Privatization Commission. The Board resolved that the employees’ interests would be protected in the process, it added. The financial adviser will conduct due diligence and determine the base price. After the Board’s approval, the matter will now go to the Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCOP). The CCOP meeting is often considered a mere formality as all the issues are mainly decided by the PC Board. Meanwhile, the Board also approved the strategic sale of the minimum 88% government shares in the NPCC and the divestment of minimum 96% government shares in the HEC together with management control.

These two entities were at the last stage of privatization during the regime of the Pakistan Peoples' Party.

However, the previous government did not complete the process. The HEC is one of the industrial units of the State Engineering Corporation (SEC) engaged in the manufacturing of power transformers of different types with primary voltage rating of 66 KV and 132 KV. Under an agreement with the International Monetary Fund, signed for \$6.7 billion loan, the government has committed to sell off 32 entities in the next three years. It has finalized a three-pronged strategy, which consists of 11 capital market transactions, 17 strategic private-sector partnerships, including PIA and Pakistan Steel Mills, and restructuring three entities, which is to be completed in three to five years. The majority of the revenue will come from capital market transactions. As many as 11 enterprises in oil and gas, banking and insurance and power sector have been identified for privatization in block sales, in primary or secondary public offerings to institutional and individual investors in domestic or international listings. Minister for Finance and Privatisation Ishaq Dar recently stated that the government was expecting over Rs100 billion in revenues from the capital market transactions. According to Privatization Commission officials, the authorities were estimating a minimum gain of Rs80 billion from the 10% sale of OGDCL shares, Rs20 billion by offloading 5% shares of Pakistan Petroleum Limited, Rs15 billion from 10% shares of United Bank Limited, Rs50 billion by offloading 20% shares of Habib Bank and Rs10 billion by selling 10% shares of Allied Bank Limited. According to the Privatization Ordinance 2000, 90% of net privatization proceeds would be allocated to debt retirement and 10% to poverty alleviation programmes.

The Express Tribune - January 09, 2014

Privatization of Steel Mills Okayed

The board of directors of Privatization Commission approved to disinvest the shares of more public sector entities including Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) and Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) which would generate more than Rs. 150 billion revenue for the government. The second session of the Board of Privatization Commission was held with Chairman/Minister of State for Privatization Commission Mohammad Zubair in chair. Apart from PSM, OGDCL, the board of directors also approved to disinvest the shares of Habib Bank Limited, United Bank Limited, Allied Bank Limited and Pakistan Petroleum Limited. According to BBC, the board, among other matters, approved disinvestment of 51 percent shares of Pakistan Steel Mills in the capital market. The Board also allowed the Commission to initiate process for hiring of Financial Advisers for the above mentioned entities and constituted transactions committees (TCs). Mohammad Zubair informed the board that government would ensure transparency in the process of privatization. All stakeholders would be taken into confidence. The chairman also highlighted that government was sensitive to the employees' reservations and their rights would be protected.

Sources informed that government had shares in Habib Bank Limited, United Bank Limited and Allied Bank Limited, which would be disinvested in the capital market. The government is expecting to generate over Rs 150 billion revenue from the capital market transactions. The authorities are estimating a minimum Rs80 billion gains from 10 percent sale of OGDCL shares, Rs20 billion by offloading 5 percent shares of Pakistan Petroleum Limited, Rs15 billion from 10 percent shares of Untied Bank Limited, Rs50 billion by offloading 20 percent shares of Habib Bank Limited and Rs10 billion by offloading 10 percent shares of Allied Bank Limited. It is worth mentioning here that government has initiated the process of privatization of 31 public sector entities as committed with international monetary fund for loan programme worth \$6.64

billion. The board of directors of the privatization commission on the first day had approved the disinvestment of 26 percent shares of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and sale of heavy electrical complex (HEC) and sale of National Power Construction Company (NPCC). The board members including Arsala Khan Hoti, Nasiruddin Ahmad, Zafar Iqbal Sobani and Secretary Privatization Commission attended the second day meeting.

According to BBC, the board also decided to offload 51 percent shares of Islamabad and Faisalabad electric supply companies. It merits mentioning here that then government in 2006 had started the process to privatize PSM and a consortium of Russian, Saudi and Pakistani private companies had got its 75 percent shares by giving highest bid of Rs 21.67 billion. However at that time, Supreme Court of Pakistan had declared the sell-off of PSM illegal and thus the process could not be completed. Established with the technical and monetary support of Russia, the PSM has been one of the major projects of Pakistan. However, for the last few years, the entity was going in deficit. The previous government, to save it from bankruptcy, had also given a bailout package to the PSM. The board of directors approved privatization of three public-sector entities, including disinvesting 26 percent shares of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), to a strategic investor and initiation of the process for hiring of financial advisers in this regard. Chairman/Minister of State for Privatization Commission Muhammad Zubair chaired the first meeting of the board. The board also approved privatization of two other entities, National Power Construction Company (NPCC) and Heavy Electrical Complex. “The Privatization Commission’s board has directed initiation of the process of both the entities, NPCC and HEC,” said an official statement.

The Nation - January 10, 2014

National Assembly & Senate

Fine-Tuning: NA Panel Defers Anti-Terror Bill for 7 Days

National Assembly Standing Committee on Interior and Narcotics Control deferred proceedings on the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2013 - a bill aimed at strengthening provisions related to terrorism financing. The panel expressed reservations over a subsection of Section 11 and directed the ministries concerned to further improve the bill within seven days. Committee’s chairman Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker Rana Shamim Ahmad Khan said that in the present situation, anti-terrorism laws had to be further strengthened to cope with terrorists effectively. The Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) bill, 2013 (Ordinance No VIII) is targeted at strengthening counter-terrorism financing regime and to bring it at par with international standards. Khan said the bill addresses the shortcomings related to the provision of terrorist financing in the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 which were highlighted by Financial Action Task Force (FATF) - an international body that sets international standards on anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNA Dr Arif Alvi said a portion of Section 11 that empowered law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) to issue orders of preventive detention of any person for up to three months, had to be improved. Alvi said over 10,000 people had been arrested in Karachi under the ordinance. He further alleged that 9,000 out of the total had been released by security agencies after taking bribes. Meanwhile, senior officials, briefing the committee, pointed out that freezing properties and accounts of people or organizations that had provided financial assistance to terrorists would help the cause.

The Express Tribune - January 01, 2014

Annual Performance: Senate Passed Over Three Dozen Bills

The upper house of parliament passed as many as 22 bills in 2013, according to the Senate Secretariat. Most of the bills passed last year originated from the National Assembly and were referred to the upper house where they were passed, it said. Some of these bills included Pakistan Academy of Letters Bill 2012, The Maritime Security Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2012; The Provincial Motor Vehicles(Amendment) Bill, 2012; The Investigation of Fair Trial Bill, 2012; The Trade Organizations’ Bill, 2012; The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Bill, 2012; The Darul Madina International University Islamabad Bill, 2013; The South Asia Strategic Stability Institute University Islamabad Bill, 2013; The My University Islamabad Bill, 2013; The Islamabad Capital Territory Private Educational Institutions (Registration and Regulation) Bill, 2013; The Abolition of Discretionary Quotas in Housing Schemes Bill, 2012; The Anti-terrorism (Amendment)Bill, 2012; The Defense Housing Authority Islamabad Bill, 2013; The Global Exchange Impact Studies Centre Act 2013, etc.

Six Ordinances Passed

As many as six ordinances were presented before the house and were later passed. These included The Service of Pakistan (Redressal of Under-Representation) Ordinance, 2012; The Establishment of Office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Order (Amendment) Ordinance, 2012; The Federal Ombudsmen Order Institutional Reforms Ordinance, 2013; The Medical and Dental Council (Amendment Ordinance, 2013 and The Civil Servants (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013 and The Electoral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013.

Bills Introduced In Senate

There were three government and eight private members bills which were introduced in the upper house last year. The government presented The Services of Pakistan (Redressal of Under-Representation) Ordinance, 2012; The Constitution (Twenty-fourth Amendment) Bill, 2013 and The Electoral Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2013 before the house. The private members bills included The Regulation of Foreign Contribution Bill, 2012; The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2013 (Article 140A); The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2013 (Article 1; The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2013 (Article 51 & 106); The Constitution (Amendment Bill, 2013; The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill, 2013; The Pakistan Pharmacy Council Bill, 2013; The Un-attended Orphans (Rehabilitation and Welfare) Bill, 2013 and The Emigration (Amendment) Bill, 2013.

Bills Referred To the Standing Committees

As many as 22 legislative bills were referred to the relevant standing committees for discussions. The Investigation for Fair Trial Bill, 2012; The Services of Pakistan (Redressal of Under-Representation) Ordinance, 2012; The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Bill, 2012; The Islamabad Capital Territory Private Educational Institutions(Registration and Regulation)Bill, 2013; The Constitutional (24th Amendment) Bill, 2013; The Shaheed Zulfikar Bhutto Medical University, Islamabad Bill, 2013; The Federal Ombudsmen Institutional Reforms Bill, 2013; The Capital University of Sciences and Technology Bill, 2013; The Electoral Laws(Amendment) Ordinance 2013; The Darul Madina International University Islamabad Bill, 2013, The South Asia Strategic Stability Institute University Islamabad Bill, 2013; The My University Islamabad Bill, 2013 were some of the bills referred to committees.

The Express Tribune - January 03, 2014

NA Committee to Pass Anti-Terrorism Bill

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Interior would meet to pass the anti-terrorism bill, which was put on hold some days ago because of reservation by opposition parties. The passage of bill is necessary because of growing threat of country being blacklisted if legislation is not done by February 10, especially concerning anti-money laundering provisions. The government's uneasiness can be gauged from the remarks of Amir Khawja, National Coordinator NACTA, at the last committee meeting when he said that the anti-terrorism legislation should be passed by February 10 to ward off this threat. The Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill 2013 was laid before the Lower House of Parliament in the month of November and was referred to the committee for further deliberation before it is tabled in the House. The committee, led by PML-N MNA Rana Shamim Ahmad Khan, will also discuss the Protection of Pakistan Ordinance.

The Anti-Terrorism Ordinance calls for more legislative measures to enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies due to increasing terrorism in the country. It reflects the government's resolve to constantly review and strengthen counter terrorism financing regime and bring it at par with international standards. It also addressed the shortcomings that relate to provisions on terrorist financing in Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 and were highlighted by the Financial Action Task Force, an international body comprising many countries and international organizations that set and monitor international standards on anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism. In particular the legislation strengthens provision relating to offence of terrorism financing and for effective measures for law enforcement agencies to investigate such offences. It also deals with conferring powers of investigation on Rangers, providing legal cover to Joint Investigation Team (JIT), enabling police to become complainants in extortion cases and special provision for protection of witnesses through video link. A prominent feature of this bill states that any person arrested by the armed forces or civil armed forces under Section 5 shall be handed over to the investigating officer of the police station designated for the purpose by the provincial government in each district.

Daily Times - January 13, 2014

National Security Policy Nailed Down

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan says the country is 'still in a state of war' and they have readied a national security policy to meet the challenges, adding the world has deserted Pakistan in a 'foreign imposed war' despite its paying highest price for world security. The 'Internal National Security Policy' will be placed before a special cabinet committee meeting for approval, the minister told reporters after addressing a pass-out ceremony of specialized training programme of assistant superintendents of police (ASPs). The announcement about the much advertised national security policy of the PML-N led federal government comes after a wait of more than six months which, according to a senior official of the interior ministry, will have three components - Secret, Strategic and Operational. Nisar said the government was taking practical steps to enhance the overall security and build capacity of the law-enforcement agencies. He said one-year timeframe has been proposed for implementation of the security policy, under which Rs. 28 billion would be spent to strengthen law-enforcement agencies. To a question about the government's peace talks with militants, the minister said government would welcome and support political leaders' role in talks with Taliban. He said the government was taking this initiative as mandated by the All Parties Conference (APC) and it would take the parliament into confidence on the process and progress of the initiative at some stage.

The government has given a sense of direction and its policies were meant for betterment of people and in the larger interest of the nation, the minister said. He said that a foreign war was imposed on Pakistan, due to wrong policies of the previous governments in the past decade, which made the country an unsafe place. Earlier, speaking at the ceremony of passing out parade of police officers, he hoped that the officers would carry forward their distinction while performing duties in service of the state. He said the country was going through a critical phase and they should be conscious of the serious challenges facing the country. The minister said the police officers should be expected to go beyond their call of duty as the country was still in a state of war. "It is not an open and transparent war. It is war with an enemy which is playing hide and seek with the people and the law-enforcement agencies." Nisar reminded the international community that after the vicious incident in New York in 2001, now most of the world was a safe place. However, despite the fact that none of the alleged perpetrators originated from Pakistan, the country is still bearing brunt of this war waged by the foreign powers, he said. He complained that the international community failed to understand the dire state in which Pakistan was due to war in the region.

Nisar pointed out that Pakistan gave sacrifice of its 26,000 people, including women and children and law-enforcement personnel, in this war on terror. He urged the police officers to support efforts to make Pakistan a place where peace and harmony and rule of law should prevail having no sectarianism, extremism and terrorism. He called upon the officers to act as servants of the state and not the government and protect life, property and honor of people, help them in getting justice, never obey unlawful orders and earn their living honestly. The minister assured that media persons would be provided protection and he would soon be holding a meeting with representative media organizations to ponder on ways to protect journalists from violence. Handing over keys of a bomb disposal response vehicle to Islamabad Inspector General of Police Sikandar Hayat, the minister said the vehicle would save lives of bomb disposal squad personnel as many of them were martyred in the past while defusing bombs with their hands. Civil Defense Pakistan Director General Air Vice Marshal (r) Aftab Hussain told that 65 bomb disposal vehicles will be imported from the United Kingdom and will be deployed in all parts of the country, adding that 100 technicians had been trained for search and disposal of explosive material.

The Nation - January 17, 2014

Cabinet Set To Approve New Security Policy

Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan said that internal security policy was ready and would be presented before the special cabinet committee for approval. He said the timeframe for implementation of policy would be one year and Rs 28 billion would be spent on further strengthening law-enforcement agencies. About talks with the Taliban, the minister said the government would welcome and support political leaders if they were willing to take a lead role in talks or want to use their good offices in support of government efforts. He said the government would hold talks with the Taliban as mandated by the All Parties Conference (APC) and take parliament into confidence at some stage. Those criticizing the government, which is in power for only six months, did not take any initiative to hold talks with Taliban or carry out an operation to end militancy during the last 13 years, he said. The minister said the government was taking practical steps to enhance security for people and capacity-building of law-enforcement agencies. The government has given a sense of direction and its policies are meant for betterment of people and in the larger interest of the nation, he added.

Daily Times - January 19, 2014

NA Committee Approves Anti-Terror Bill with Majority Vote

The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Interior approved the Protection of Pakistan Ordinance (PPO) bill. A meeting of the committee, presided over by its chairman Rana Shamin Ahmed, approved the bill with majority votes. Some of the members gave dissenting notes, saying the bill, presented by the government to enable it to effectively tackle the issue of terrorism, could be misused against innocent people and political parties. The ordinance empowers police and security agencies to arrest anybody on the basis of 'credible' information that he/she is involved in anti-state activities, terrorism and treason. However, the term 'credible information' has not been defined in the bill. The PPO allows anybody to file an appeal in the Supreme Court within 15 days of his arrest. But some members insisted that the period should be extended to 40 days and that appeals should be entertained also in lower and high courts because majority of applicants might not be able bear the cost of a trial in the apex court. It was apparent that PML-N legislators, who are in majority in the committee, were in hurry to approve the bill. The MNAs of opposition parties who offered dissenting views included Dr Arif Alvi of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and Nabeel Gabol and Syed Asif Hasnain of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. "I received a threatening SMS which said that if I did not give assent to the ordinance today I would face the music," Nabeel Gabol told reporters after the session.

Addressing PML-N members of the committee, he said: "You (the ruling party) will soon be out of government and this law will be misused against you." Before the bill was approved by the committee, ruling party's MNA Tehmina Daultana blamed members from the opposition parties for delaying the process of its approval. She was supported by Minister of State Baleeghur Rehman who said the country was in flames and it was the need of the hour to enforce PPO to stop terrorism and killing of innocent people. The chairman of the committee conducted the session in a sagacious way and gave appropriate time to the opposition members to present their arguments. He was ready to call even another meeting on the desire of opposition members but a majority of members hailing from the PML-N insisted on voting. The PPO protects victims of terrorism, assault, kidnapping for ransom, personnel of armed forces and law enforcement agencies, parliamentarians, media persons, members of judiciary and executives, important personalities, foreign officials and visitors, official guests, tourists, internationally protected persons, social welfare workers, health personnel, aid workers and volunteers but it does not provide protection to witnesses in terrorism cases.

Because of insecurity felt by witnesses to incidents of terrorism, they are often reluctant to record their statements and identify culprits as a result terrorists succeed in getting relief from courts. The proposed law will be applied also in the case of destruction and attack on communication lines, devices, grids, power stations and generating and distribution systems, pylons, dams, gas or oil pipelines, liquid or natural gas facilities, tankers carrying the two commodities, aircraft, airports, flight crew and passengers, national defense materials, premises and installations, check-posts, prisons, mass transport systems, buses, cars, ports, maritime navigation equipments and platforms, shipping and port installations and other maritime fixtures, nuclear arms, sites and relates fixtures; conspiring or abetting a conspiracy against the country, hostage taking or attempting to take hostage any person and violence against Pakistani citizens occurring outside the country. Some members expressed the fear that after enforcement of the PPO, no one would be allowed to hold protest and any violent protest against electricity and gas shortage would be dealt under the law.

The proposed law will come into action also on violation of sections of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) related to offences against the state, including waging or attempting to wage or abetting waging of war against the country, conspiracy to wage war, collecting arms, etc., with intention of waging such a war, condemnation of the creation of the state and advocacy of abolition of its

sovereignty, defiling or removing national flag from government building, assaulting president, governor, etc.,...waging war against any power allied with the country, committing depredation on territories of powers at peace with the country, receiving property taken by war or such depredation, a government official's voluntarily allowing a prisoner of state or war to escape, aiding escape of or harboring such prisoners, abetting mutiny or trying to persuade a soldier, sailor or airman to remain absent from his duty, abetting an assault by a soldier, sailor or airman on his superior officer, abetting an act of insubordination by a soldier, sailor or airman, abetting desertion of a soldier, sailor or airman, harboring a deserter or a deserter concealed on board a merchant vessel due to negligence of its master, wearing garb of or carrying a token used by a soldier, sailor or airman and violation of certain laws of army, air force and navy.

Warning Before Use of Force

A section of the bill says that a police officer or member of the armed or civil armed forces, on reasonable apprehension of commission of a scheduled offence and after giving sufficient warning, may use necessary force to prevent the commission of the offence. On doing so, an officer of the armed forces or civil armed forces will exercise the powers of a police officer under the PPC.

Powers of Arrest

The proposed law empowers police and armed forces to arrest anyone on the basis of 'credible information'. The concerned section of the ordinance says: "Any police officer, a member of the armed forces or civil armed forces acting in aid of civil authority may arrest, without warrant, any person who has committed a scheduled offence or against whom a reasonable suspicion or 'credible information' exists that he has committed, or is about to commit any such act or offence; and any such officer may enter and search, without warrant, any premises to make any arrest or to take possession of any property, fire-arm, weapon or article used, or likely to be used, in the commission of any scheduled offence." Arif Alvi said the term 'credible information' must be defined in the ordinance otherwise it would be misused.

Preventive Detention

On preventive detention of suspects, the bill says: "The government may by an order in writing issued by the secretary of ministry of interior, or any officer not below the rank of BPS-21, specifically designated in this behalf, authorize the preventive detention of a person for a period not exceeding ninety days if there are grounds to infer that such person is acting in a manner prejudicial to the integrity, security, defense of Pakistan or any part thereof, or external affairs of Pakistan, or public order or maintenance of supplies and services."

Dawn - January 22, 2014

Provincial Assemblies

Regional Quota: Senator Demands 17.5% Federal Jobs For South Punjab

While Parliament has not yet provided any legal cover to the government's decision to extend the regional quota system for direct recruitment by 20 years, a senator from South Punjab has submitted a proposed amendment bill to further sub-allocate quotas of jobs reserved for Punjab on the basis of the South Punjab formula. According to the proposed bill, the existing 50% quota for federal services jobs in Punjab should be further divided and sub-allocated with 17.5% for

South Punjab and 32.5% for the rest of Punjab, including the provincial capital. The federal cabinet on July 25, 2013 granted a 20-year extension to the time-bound provincial quota in federal services that expired on August 13, 2013. It also approved measures to amend Article 27 (1) of the Constitution of Pakistan but, despite the lapse of a few months, parliament is yet to pass a 23rd Constitutional amendment about the said article. The quota system draws its strength and basis from Article 27 (1) of the constitution, which allocates quotas in government jobs to the provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Similar quotas are prescribed for minorities, women and other marginalized segments of society. The quota for 10 years which was fixed in 1973 had been extended for another 10 years in 1983. It was again extended in 1993 for 20 years which expired on August 13, 2013. Independent senator from South Punjab, Mohsin Leghari, moved his proposed amendment bill in the upper house, saying that there is no constitutional cover for the quota system. This puts a question mark on the allocation of recent successful candidates who have passed their Central Superior Services (CSS) examination, according to him. He said that till Article 27 (1) is amended by a two-thirds majority from the National Assembly and Senate, the cabinet has given its approval to the extension for another 20 years. The Senate has put his proposed bill as its agenda on January 06. He said his bill is related to the 23rd constitutional amendment bill about Article 27 (1), and that he wishes to see the passage of both bills from parliament in no time.

Proposed Amendment Bill

There are two objectives of the bill. The first is to sub-divide the jobs quota for South Punjab, with the second being the provision of legal cover to the allocated federal services jobs to provinces and regions. The Civil Servants Act 1973 (Act LXXI of 1973) provides details of the jobs quota to provinces and regions in light of Article 27 (1). However, no specific clause of the CSA 1973 describes the distribution of job quotas to provinces and regions except a letter which was issued by the Establishment Division on August 31, 1973. The proposed amendment bill suggests the insertion of clause 5A in the CSA 1973, which suggests a formula-based distribution of jobs to provinces and regions which not only empower the parliament to decide the quota system over the executive/establishment division letter but also demand a 17.5% quota for South Punjab. In the original CSA 1973, Section 5 on appointments does not specify the details of the quota or regional representation in government service. The necessity of the proposed amendment is to give due representation to the underrepresented area as envisioned in Article 27 (1) of the constitution.

The Express Tribune - January 05, 2014

Judiciary

Government May Seek Reopening Of Swiss Cases

The government is contemplating reviving through the Swiss court of appeal graft cases against former president Asif Ali Zardari for the return of \$60 million reportedly stashed away in Swiss banks. Informed sources told Dawn that the law ministry was engaged in discussions with a Geneva-based law firm, Python & Peter, and an Islamabad-based firm, Amhurst Brown, to revive cases against the former president that Swiss authorities closed last year due to a time-bar. The sources said the government's legal minds were confident that the Swiss cases could be reopened following a Rawalpindi accountability court's revival of cases that had been kept pending against Mr. Zardari because he enjoyed presidential immunity for five years. "The appeal could be filed in the Swiss court of appeal shortly," said a government official. Currently,

the two private law firms are reviewing “the judgments of the accountability courts in Rawalpindi acquitting the persons co-accused with Asif Ali Zardari in the SGS and Cotecna cases to firm up a future course of action,” he said. However, Law Secretary Barrister Zafarullah said: “Not in my knowledge,” in an SMS reply when asked if the government had decided to request the reopening of the SGS and Cotecna cases in Switzerland. The minister for law and information, Senator Pervez Rashid, did not talk in clear terms about the issue for almost a week.

When contacted on Dec 23, he said: “Your information might be right, but I am not fully updated. I will get back with the latest situation tomorrow.” Approached two days later, he said: “We have decided on oath that we will not politicize any issue. We will go by the book and keep taking steps under the law. “We will not try to persecute anybody or try to exonerate anybody. As you may have noticed, we have initiated the cases kept pending. In case there is a matter of national interest, we will take it to parliament for a decision.” He declined to get into the specifics: “I have not been able to consult the relevant persons so far. I have some meetings lined up now and may be able to get an update on the issue tonight or tomorrow and get back to you.” He did not do this, however. An official said the law firm Amhurst Brown had advised the law ministry that it was “of utmost importance for the government to move fast in the national interest.” Swiss attorneys Jacques Python and Wolfgang Peter of the firm Python & Peter have already asked the government to clear about 39,800 Swiss francs (about \$45,000) in outstanding fee. The Swiss law department informed Islamabad in October that cases against Mr. Zardari in that country’s courts cannot be reopened now because the specified time had already expired earlier in February last year, and thus the cases were time-barred.

The revival of the cases by accountability courts in Pakistan on the principle (culmination of immunity) could be used as a legal argument, even though it would be a tough call in Switzerland, said the sources, adding that Attorney General Munir A. Malik and the National Accountability Bureau’s prosecutor general, K. K Agha, were fully in the loop. Mr. Agha was appointed to this office by the PPP government. The sources said the counsel were of the view that criminal cases against the PPP leader may have been time-barred in the lower courts, but the option of a civil suit in the court of appeal was still open to bring back the money kept in Swiss banks if it was in those accounts. The government will also plead that in intrastate cases the limitation could not be invoked when it was also established that the previous government had intentionally and with ulterior motive delayed the appeal despite Supreme Court orders. In July 2011, the Rawalpindi accountability court exonerated all the co-accused in the SGS case, except for Mr. Zardari. The case, filed in 1997 by the then Sharif government, accused former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Mr. Zardari of receiving kickbacks in a pre-shipment contract. In a similar case, Mr. Zardari was also accused, along with others, of receiving bribe to award a contract for pre-shipment inspection at Karachi.

Last October, the Rawalpindi accountability court initiated proceedings against Mr. Zardari in six corruption references after the expiry of presidential immunity on Sept 8. The proceedings were revived in compliance with the SC judgment passed in the National Reconciliation Ordinance case in Dec 2009. While acquitting A. R. Siddiqui in the Cotecna reference on Sept 16, 2011, the Rawalpindi accountability court had also directed NAB that “the case of the accused (Asif Ali Zardari) will be taken up for trial on ceasing of the immunity. Till that time, the file is consigned to the record room after its due completion”, judge Jahandar Khan Banth had ruled. Both the SGS and the Cotecna corruption references were initially prepared by Saifur Rehman as chairman of the Ehtesab Bureau during the second government of Nawaz Sharif. Ms Bhutto and Mr. Zardari were the main accused while Nusrat Bhutto, former CBR chairman A.R. Siddiqui and six directors of the Swiss company were the co-accused. In some of the cases, Mr. Zardari remains the only accused as accountability courts acquitted the other accused persons. The

cases against Benazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto and a former chairman of CDA, Shafi Sehwhani, were dropped after their deaths.

Dawn - January 05, 2014

FIA Arrests Former CDA Chairman

Farkhand Iqbal, the former chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), was arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) allegedly for malpractice and misuse of authority. According to sources, the main allegation against Mr. Iqbal was foul play in the bidding process of 12 commercial plots in Blue Area. Interestingly, the bidding of these plots had been halted by the then Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf in August 2012 who had raised concerns over the prequalification process for the bidding. Media reports at that time had maintained that the bidding process had been made less competitive and the auction prices of these commercial plots had been lowered. This was allegedly done because only 11 bidders had been shortlisted for the auction of the plots after a 'nontransparent prequalification phase'. The former CDA chairman had denied these media reports. The then Cabinet Secretary Nargis Sethi was later asked by former prime minister Raja Pervez Ashraf to submit a detailed inquiry report on the issue. The report was submitted which found Mr. Iqbal involved in foul play. Subsequently, he was removed from his office in October 2012, but no further action was taken. A senior official of FIA, on condition of anonymity, confirmed that the former CDA chairman had been arrested. He also maintained that there were a number of allegations against Mr. Iqbal, including malpractice in the auction of the commercial plots.

Furthermore, according to sources, during Mr. Iqbal's tenure which started in December 2011, the civic agency had been questioned by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for initiating a controversial project to replace streetlights in the city with LED lights. Under the project, the civic agency had decided to spend Rs6.5 billion on replacing conventional streetlights with LED lights. However, numerous official and unofficial parties called the project unfeasible and overpriced. There were allegations that the contract had been given to blue-eyed boys on the basis of political ties instead of pure merit as the contract had not been awarded to the lowest bidder. NAB then conducted an inquiry into the allegations and finally dismissed the project after finding that the civic agency was procuring LED streetlights for over Rs. 100,000 per piece while the same were available in the open market for Rs. 20,000 each. Similarly in April 2012, the former CDA chairman had been booked by the Islamabad police for illegally taking home the black box and the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) from the Bhoja Air crash site. He had kept the two items in his possession for an entire day. According to sources in the city administration, Mr Iqbal had wanted to personally unveil the cockpit voice recorder later at a press conference.

Dawn - January 07, 2014

Zardari Appears Before Accountability Court

The charges were to be framed against Zardari in the Polo Ground and Cotecna corruption references but that were deferred after Zardari's counsel Farooq H Naek told the court that the charges could not be framed and he needed some time to argue in this respect. The NAB, on the other hand, produced five witnesses in the corruption references namely the Ursus tractors, ARY Gold and Societe Generale de Surveillance (SGS). The witnesses were former officials of the Ministry of Commerce and Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan (ADBP) that was renamed as the Zarai Taraqiati Bank Ltd (ZTBL). The witnesses included Neelam S Ali, Muhammad Malik, Amir Ahmad and Manzoor Hussain Maimon. The accountability court judge

Muhammad Bashir Khan adjourned the hearing till January 18. Later, talking to the media, Farooq H Naek said the witnesses produced by the NAB were those who had already recorded their statements. In these corruption references, the NAB had got no original record with it; he said and added that Asif Zardari respected the courts. Naek said Asif Zardari had been appearing before the courts previously and would appear again if the court ordered.

Despite many threats to his life, Zardari appeared before the accountability court, he added. It was on November 26, 2013 when the court ordered for framing of charges anew on December 9 against Zardari in the four corruption references namely Ursus tractors, ARY Gold, SGS and Polo Ground. Of the four cases, charges in the three corruption references have already been framed against Zardari except the Polo Ground. It may be noted that these were 14-15 year-old cases and almost all the accused had either been acquitted or the references were abated to their extent due to their deaths. In most of the cases, Asif Zardari had been left the sole accused, and the accountability courts had decided that the proceedings against Zardari would be initiated once his presidential immunity expired. The Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) leaders said that a civilian president always respected the court while a dictator never did so. The PPP leaders said this after former president Asif Ali Zardari appeared before an accountability court. Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Syed Khursheed Shah, said that the difference between a civilian president and a dictator was clear now. Former interior minister Rehman Malik said that the PPP leadership always respected the courts and obeyed their orders.

The News - January 10, 2014

NAB To File References against Two Former PMs in OGRA Case

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) approved the references about Rs. 82 billion Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) scam. The references may be filed in Islamabad. In a reference about corruption and irregularities in OGRA, the bureau removed the name of Mr. Gilani, but added his and Raja Pervez Ashraf's names in the reference relating to illegal appointment of Mr. Tauqeer Sadiq in 2009. According to NAB spokesman Ramzan Sajid, a meeting of the executive board approved two references in the multi-billion Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) scam. The first is about illegal appointment of Mr Saidq and the accused include Yousuf Raza Gilani, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Shaukat Durrani, Javed Nazir, Sikandar Hayat Mekan and Tauqeer Sadiq. The spokesman said that the board also approved the second reference naming Tauqir Sadiq, Mansoor Muzaffar, Mir Kamal Fareed Bijrani, Jawad Jamil, Dewan Zia ur Rehman Farooqi, Abdur Rashid Lone, Zohair Siddique, Azeem Iqbal Siddique, Aqeel Karim Dhedhi, Syed Arsalan Iqbal, Mirza Mehmood Ahmed and Yousaf J. Ansari as the accused. He alleged that the accused were involved in corruption and corrupt practices. An interim reference had been filed in the accountability court in November 2012. Earlier, NAB missed four deadlines fixed by the Supreme Court and accountability court for filing the reference. The last deadline was for Jan 17. During interrogation of OGRA chief, NAB realized that it had quoted an 'unrealistic' recoverable amount to be received in the case as it could recover only around Rs1 billion from the accused, which is about 1.2 per cent of the amount mentioned in the scam.

Dawn - January 23, 2014

OGRA Scam: Supreme Court Summons NAB Chief

The Supreme Court summoned National Accountability Bureau chief Qamar Zaman Chaudhry to explain why its November 2011 ruling in the over Rs82 billion OGRA scam hadn't been

complied with. A three-judge bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Jawwad S Khawaja, observed that the progress on the OGRA corruption case was “extremely slow”. “Order sheets show that for a period of more than 26 months, which elapsed since the date of our judgment, very little or at most negligent progress has been made in the investigation and the prosecution of at least four aspects of the case, which have been repeatedly referred to in earlier orders,” the court order said.

Four Aspects of Case

Reeling off four features of the OGRA corruption case, the court says that first is the question of those who may have been responsible for, and involved in, the appointment of Tauqir Sadiq as OGRA chairman. The second is the matter of prosecuting Tauqir Sadiq and others and recovering the amount, which according to the initial investigation made by the NAB, exceeds Rs82 billion. The third is identifying persons who were prima facie, complicit in enabling Tauqir Sadiq to abscond and get out of Pakistan. The fourth is the case of whether persons within the NAB or outside of the bureau may have been less than diligent in pursuing the case.

Court Unsatisfied

During the hearing of the case, NAB Prosecutor General K K Agha appeared before the bench and pointed out that a reference had been filed in this matter, which was pending adjudication in the accountability court. He also said that between May 2013 and October 2013 there was no NAB chairman, a fact that stalled all progress in the case. The bench, however, expressed dissatisfaction over the prosecutor’s statement and noted that over 26 months have passed since its judgment and there was only a period of five months, when NAB was without a chairman.

The Express Tribune - January 22, 2014

Musharraf’s Treason Trial & Ailment

Treason Case: Musharraf No-Show Irks Special Court

The prosecution and defense teams turned hostile with each other in a show of what one lawyer dubbed ‘Shakespearean theatrics’, while the bench of the special court constituted to try General (ret’d) Pervez Musharraf took strong exception to his absence and hinted that a no-show by the former military ruler today may compel it to issue an order for his arrest. While the defense complained about the venue and lack of desk space for papers, a three-judge special bench headed by Justice Faisal Arab sent a clear message that Musharraf would not be allowed further exemption from appearance in the high-treason case. He added that the non-bail able criminal offence of treason prima facie means police could arrest him even without a warrant. He also added that the former president had not sought bail in this case so far. “Don’t force us to pass an order to take him into custody,” the judge warned Musharraf’s counsel, as he appeared in court for the second time without his client citing security concerns. “It is better for you to think about it because we are not going to pass an order and are giving another chance for surrender.”

Justice Arab observed that the court did not want to humiliate the former army chief and therefore had merely issued summons and not warrants. Musharraf’s legal team held that as per the procedure of a high treason case, until the accused is found guilty, he cannot be punished. “Therefore Musharraf cannot be arrested during trial,” said Anwar Mansoor, the senior counsel

on Musharraf's legal team. The environment of the court on January 1 was icier than the first, more relaxed hearing last week. While the presence of Rangers personnel in the courtroom at the National Library persisted, the harmony between defense and prosecution had turned into an abrasive cold friction. The teams objected to each others' conduct several times. With Akram Sheikh appearing as prosecutor for the first time in the historic treason case, the defense objected that he is a 'persecutor', alleging that he is biased due to his closeness with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. He also requested the court to postpone the hearing for five weeks.

After hearing objections raised by Musharraf's legal team over the jurisdiction, composition and malice on the part of the bench, Justice Arab said an order will be passed after hearing complete arguments on these issues. Khalid Ranjha addressed the court on Musharraf's behalf, saying contempt proceedings be initiated against premier Sharif regarding a statement he made in the July 31, 2009, trial. Amid snickers from observers, Anwar Mansoor said Nawaz should be tried for treason under Article 6. Mansoor alleged that Justice Tahira Safdar was a supporter of the retired Justice Chaudhry and that her father was also an "ardent admirer of the former chief justice". Justice Safdar responded saying that it seems the lawyer is not aware that her father passed away 34 years ago.

'Special' Security for Court

When Ahmad Raza Kasuri, a member of Musharraf's legal team, said that the court will be responsible if something happens to Musharraf, Justice Arab responded with a terse, "Don't threaten the court." Despite Kasuri's retort that even the judges security is at risk, Arab said that the courts continue to operate during wars and that the hearing cannot be stopped because a complaint has been lodged. The Inspector General Islamabad Police told the court that 1,000 security personnel, including 732 police and 268 Rangers' personnel, were deployed to provide security to Musharraf. The court held that Musharraf cannot avoid the hearing because of security threats. Addressing the court, DIG Security Jam Muhammad said Musharraf was provided adequate security to appear in court and return to his farmhouse after the hearing. The DIG told the court that while Musharraf had been provided a bullet-proof car, his vehicle was not bomb-proof. The police official also said he is not aware whether bomb-proof vehicles are available in Pakistan. To this Anwar Mansoor said, "We have zero confidence in the police because they are directly operating under the interior ministry which is complainant in this case." At the hearing scheduled to take place, around 1,500 security personnel are said to be deployed.

The Express Tribune - January 02, 2014

Musharraf Gets another Exemption, Court Seeks Medical Report

The special court that is hearing Pervez Musharraf's high treason case granted him the third exemption from personal appearance but directed the medical superintendent or some other official of the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology (AFIC) to produce Musharraf's medical certificate. While hearing the treason case the three-member bench again rejected the plea of the special prosecutor to issue Musharraf's arrest warrant. The court observed that the accused has engaged counsels to represent him in this case and he was presently admitted in hospital, therefore, it would not issue his arrest warrant. It, however, said that the defense counsel had failed to produce medical certificate of the accused or any other document related to his illness, and directed the medical superintendent or any other official of the AFIC to produce Musharraf's medical certificate by 11:30am. On the other hand, special prosecutor Akram

Sheikh has requested the court to constitute a medical board to examine the illness of Musharraf.

Upon this, Justice Faisal Arab said that they would consider his plea at a later stage. The defense counsel and the prosecution exchanged strong words during the hearing. The special prosecutor stated that a person could not hide in AFIC to avoid his trial. The defense side strongly protested these remarks. Musharraf's counsel Ahmad Raza Qasuri alleged that the special prosecutor was maligning the Pakistan Army. He shouted, "Stop it otherwise we know how to stop you!" Another of Musharraf's counsels, Anwar Mansoor Khan, said that an institution should not be maligning. However, Justice Faisal Arab asked the counsels of the accused to avoid cross talk. However, Ahmad Raza Qasuri continued shouting over the special prosecutor's remark, after which Justice Arab observed that this amounts to interrupting the court's proceedings. Akram Sheikh said that he was not only addressing the press but also the court "as majesty of law should not be compromised", adding that until now no medical certificate and application has been filed in the court to prove that the accused was physically disabled. He reminded the bench that he was the lawyer of former army Chief Aslam Baig in Asghar Khan Case and his client had appeared in the court 117 times. "Your lordship has the command to proceed with the case in accordance with law and should issue the production order of the accused".

Akram Sheikh contended, adding that the court had exempted the accused three times from appearance before the court despite the fact that no medical certificate was filed on his behalf. "I have to defend the dignity of this court and there is no exemption of the accused in this law, the Criminal Law Amended (Special Court) Act 1976," he said. Regarding the maintainability of Musharraf's petitions, Akram Sheikh contended that the executive had done nothing wrong and acted in accordance with law by constituting the special court for the trial of the accused. He contended that instead of filing appeals before this court, the defense side had filed appeals in the Islamabad High Court against the constitution of the special court as well as against the appointment of special prosecutor, and these appeals are still pending before the high court. The court will resume hearing of the case today.

Daily Times - January 07, 2014

Musharraf Treason Trial: Shujaat Offers Himself for Trial

Former aides of General (retd) Pervez Musharraf broke their silence to defend their old mentor against treason charges. Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain - former prime minister and chief of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) - went as far as offering himself for trial alongside the former military ruler. Currently, a three-judge special court is trying Musharraf for proclaiming emergency rule in the country on Nov 3, 2007. However, Shujaat says if the government seriously wants to try Musharraf, then it should try him as well as his aides for the 1999 coup, and not just the 2007 emergency. Speaking in the upper house of parliament, the former premier demanded the government to initiate cases against the former army chief General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani as well as himself and his cousin Pervaiz Elahi if it intended to see a 'fair' trial against Musharraf. "Pervez Musharraf is not a traitor. Neither was he all alone in his actions. His aides were also there. If you want a fair trial then you should initiate cases against Kayani and Elahi too," Shujaat told the lawmakers. In the same breath, he added, "Chaudhry Shujaat offers himself for this case and [former chief justice] Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry should also be there." Shujaat took serious exception to the use of word 'traitor' for Musharraf. "An army chief cannot be a traitor," he added. "This word should be omitted from the Constitution and replaced with 'law breaker'." "To call our own army chief who led the army for years a traitor is an insult," he said.

“Politicians have contested the elections under this so-called traitor and many of you even took oath as ministers from the same traitor,” he said, addressing the PML-N lawmakers who had joined former premier Yousuf Raza Gilani’s first cabinet as ministers. In response to Shujaat’s comments, PML-N Senator Mushahidullah Khan said Musharraf had abrogated the Constitution and should be held accountable. “We are not interested in hanging him or putting him in prison for life. But we want to set a precedent so that no one can dare to abrogate the constitution in the future,” he said, adding that all political parties should appreciate this historic move. “Some politicians suggest trying Musharraf for October 12, 1999. We know they will again demand to initiate the case from Gen Ziaul Haq and then from Iskander Mirza when we go to 1999,” Senator Khan said. Senator Shujaat didn’t take the argument lying down. “If the government is seriously interested in trying Musharraf for Nov 3, 2007, then it should at least involve all those who were consulted by Musharraf before proclaiming emergency rule.” Separately, another PML-Q central leader and former deputy Prime Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi said that branding a former president a traitor is “not a good tradition”. Elahi was speaking to the media on the death anniversary of the late Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) ameer Qazi Hussain Ahmed at his residence.

MQM Smells Conspiracy

Echoing Shujaat’s views, the MQM chief, Altaf Hussain, said that blaming only Musharraf for enforcing emergency or martial law and letting others off the hook is a conspiracy against the country. “If cases have to be filed against Musharraf under Article 6, then instead of the Nov 3, 2007, they should be heard from the Oct 12, 1999.” He said that those who were holding Musharraf responsible for the emergency rule and wanted him to be hanged to death were unfair and unjust in their demand. He said that Musharraf was being ridiculed only on being a ‘Mohajir’. This is the insult of not only Musharraf but over 30 million Muhajirs and we are ready to respond to this exceptional ridiculing behavior by all means, he added.

The Express Tribune - January 07, 2014

Shujaat Proposes Amendment to Replace ‘Traitor’ In Article 6

Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain submitted a draft constitutional amendment in the Senate Secretariat for replacing the word traitor in Article 6 of the constitution. He suggested similar changes in 1973 High Treason Act. Shujaat Hussain has strongly criticized the use of word traitor for Pervez Musharraf. He said that a former army chief of Pakistan could not be a traitor, as being a traitor means helping the enemy country against one’s own country. In his draft amendment bill, Shujaat has said that the word traitor should be replaced by “constitutional violator” and also suggested similar changes in 1973 High Treason Act. Shujaat had created ripples in the political scene of the country when he presented himself for trial under Article 6 of the constitution for supporting former military dictator Pervez Musharraf impose emergency on November 3, 2007. The PML-Q leader had claimed that along with Musharraf, former army chief Ashfaq Pervez Kayani and former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry also fall in the ambit of Article 6 for helping Musharraf on various occasions. Shujaat Hussain-led PML-Q was created in 2002 general elections; a few years after Musharraf toppled the PML-N government. Shujaat has been Musharraf’s boldest supporter contrary to the strongman’s other allies of his time in power.

Daily Times - January 08, 2014

Musharraf Bailout: Saudi Royal Laughs off Exit Deal Reports

Appearing at a joint news conference with Prime Minister's Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz in Islamabad, the seasoned Saudi diplomat laughed off a question about a possible deal being brokered by his country. "Absolutely not, I've just talked about the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, especially friendly countries," he said when asked if he was 'on a mission' to bail Musharraf out of his predicament. "I won't call it a 'mission'. I'll call it a visit to a brotherly and friendly country. This visit has taken a long time now in the making," he said, dismissing reports linking his trip to the possible developments in Musharraf's trial. Prince Saud al Faisal - who is the first high-ranking Saudi official to visit Pakistan in years - met President Mamnoon Hussain, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and held formal talks with Sartaj Aziz. His visit had earlier triggered speculation that Riyadh was making back-channel efforts to secure safe passage for the former military ruler. The Saudis had played an instrumental role in securing a safe exit for Nawaz Sharif when his government was toppled by then army chief Pervez Musharraf in a bloodless coup. The Saudi foreign minister said he was in Pakistan to deliver a message of 'friendship and cooperation' from King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz.

Although publicly both sides denied discussions on the fate of Musharraf, sources suggested that the Saudi visitor did advise the government to avoid any internal conflict that could destabilize the country. During formal talks at the Foreign Office, the two sides discussed a wide range of issues from bilateral cooperation to the regional and international situation, particularly in Afghanistan and Syria. The Saudi foreign minister told reporters that Afghanistan was coming to a 'turning point' in the wake of US-led Nato forces' withdrawal from the war-torn country. He said both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia urged the Afghan people to set aside their petty differences and think about the larger interest of the country. He said both the countries wanted no forces to exploit the possible vacuum created in Afghanistan as a result of the drawdown. He said efforts should be made to prevent Afghanistan from slipping into civil war. Saudi Arabia is upset over the lack of action from Western powers against President Bashar al Assad's regime. The Saudi foreign minister said all parties must sit together to put in place a consensus government in Syria. "Bashar al Assad has no right to kill people," he added. Recently, US Foreign Policy magazine claimed that Riyadh after having lost faith in the Obama administration to oust the Assad regime has begun major initiatives with Pakistan to train Syrian insurgents.

In response to a question, Sartaj Aziz said the two countries would discuss defense cooperation soon but refused to comment on the report. "The visit of Prince Saud al Faisal, foreign minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a special significance in our bilateral relations," Aziz said in his opening remarks at the news conference. He said the two countries focused on further cooperation in investment, trade, energy and export of manpower from Pakistan. According to a Foreign Office statement, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif informed the Saudi foreign minister about his government's plans to enhance growth, create jobs and reduce poverty to create a brighter future for the people of Pakistan. He encouraged the Saudi businessmen to benefit from the conducive business environment in Pakistan. "Saudi Arabia's positive contribution to support Pakistan's endeavor for economic development is deeply appreciated. There is a mutual desire to further intensify economic interaction in the years ahead." It was agreed that the Joint Economic Council of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia would meet within the next two months to further enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields.

The Express Tribune - January 08, 2014

Musharraf Ailment: 9 Lives, 9 Diseases

Pervez Musharraf - who has weathered a number of life attempts and braved a string of legal challenges - is suffering from nine different diseases, according to his medical report presented to a special court hearing the most serious (treason) case against him. The three-judge Special Court passed no formal order regarding appearance or exemption of the former military ruler and said it would examine the four-page medical report submitted by the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology (AFIC), where Musharraf is admitted, and would pass an order. The medical report of the former dictator-president - who was termed 'Tom' (a cat character of a popular cartoon series) by his predecessor and foe Asif Ali Zardari - was presented in the court hours before the visiting Saudi foreign minister said that the high treason trial was Pakistan's internal matter. During the proceedings, the court Registrar submitted the report in a sealed envelope that had been signed by Commandant and AIFC Executive Director Registrar Major General SM Imran Majeed. It said Pervez Musharraf's "coronary angiography is required to optimise the management and to ascertain the possibility of further interventions, like coronary artery bypass surgery." It said the former General-President had been suffering from nine diseases: densely calcify Triple Vessel Coronary Artery Disease main stem disease, hypercholesterolaemia, cervical spondylosis, lumbosacral spondylosis, biceps tendonitis, frozen shoulder (left), osteoarthritis with effusion (left knee joint), temporomandibular arthralgia (left) and benign prostatic hyperplasia.

Justice Faisal Arab, Justice Tahir Safdar and Justice Yawar Ali, after having the cursory look at the report, said they would examine it and would pass an order. The judges' keeping from saying anything about Musharraf's appearance apparently means that he has been exempted from personal appearance until the next hearing. Gen Musharraf's lead counsel Anwar Mansoor completed his arguments on the applicability of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPc). He, however, sought time to give arguments on his applications related to jurisdiction of the special court, notification for constitution of the court and the nomination of judges. He rebutted the objections of Prosecutor Akram Sheikh on applicability of CrPc in Criminal Law Amendment (Special Court) Act 1976. Anwar Mansoor argued that in the Act and Contempt of Court Ordinance there was no concept of arrest though both are the constitutional offences. The court asked the defence counsel what the court would be required to do under the Criminal Law Amendment (Special Court) Act and the contempt law if the accused was issued notice and he defied its order. He stated: "I do not say that if you (court) summon someone, he should not appear before it."

However, he contended that the court could not ignore the constitutional provisions otherwise it would be a deviation. He said the special court could not act in whimsical and capricious manner and it had to decide the matter in accordance with the law. He said that it was the inalienable right of every citizen to enjoy and be treated in accordance with the law. He argued that the special court is not a constitutional court but was constituted under the statute. The CrPc per se has not been made applicable to the special law. The special court has to remain within the bounds and parameters of its law under which it was set up. Anwar Mansoor completed his arguments on the applicability of CrPc on Criminal Law and would argue on his applications. Hours after the submission of the medical report in the court hours, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al Faisal told a news conference in the federal capital that he has not come to Pakistan for any sort of deal for the release of Musharraf and the kingdom was not playing any role in this affair. This is the first visit by any top Saudi official to Pakistan since Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif came to power in June last year and it comes amid rumours that Saudi and American friends of Musharraf were trying to bail him out.

The medical report presented in the court says General (r) Pervez Musharraf, 70 years of age, was brought to the emergency department of AFIC at 12:15pm on January 2, 2014. The initial physical examination showed that his pulse was 56 beats per minute (sinus bradycardia) and blood pressure 120/80 mmHg, while the examination of cardiovascular and the respiratory systems revealed no abnormality. There was swelling and tenderness of the left knee joint. ECG revealed sinus bradycardia. The emergency treatment provided to ex-COAS after he was hospitalized in the coronary care unit and emergency treatment was started on the lines of acute coronary syndrome, including subcutaneous injection fondaparinux 2.5 mg daily and daily aspirin, oxygen inhalation and bed rest. During the course of his illness, his chest uneasiness settled but he complained of neck pain, backache, pain in left knee joint and discomfort in the left temporomandibular joint. He had raised serum total cholesterol (218 mg/dl) and LDL cholesterol (150 mg/dl).

The Nation - January 08, 2014

Musharraf Likely To Leave Pakistan by Jan 31: US Media

Former president retired Gen Pervez Musharraf will soon leave Pakistan for medical treatment abroad, the US media reported. In two separate reports, Los Angeles Times and CBSNEWS cited security and intelligence officials as telling their correspondents that Gen Musharraf might leave the country by the end of this month. The reports did not identify the sources. "It is good for everybody, including Mr Musharraf, would go out of the country," a senior security official told LA Times in Islamabad. CBSNEWS reported that members of Musharraf's family and intelligence officials told its correspondents that the former president was expected to leave the country for medical treatment by the end of January. Other sources said the military played a key role in persuading Mr. Musharraf to go, although he wanted to stay and do politics. They claimed that days before the May elections, the then interim government also attempted to send Mr. Musharraf out of the country. A friendly country was willing to transport Mr. Musharraf to a destination in the Gulf from where he was to be moved to Britain, to be with his ailing mother. The plan failed because Mr. Musharraf refused to leave. "Apparently, Mr. Musharraf has now agreed to leave and his former colleagues in the military (that is, retired generals) also helped convince him," said one source. Mr. Musharraf was rushed to the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology in Rawalpindi after he complained of chest pain en route to a court in Islamabad.

A special court trying the former military ruler said it was examining a medical report to decide whether Mr. Musharraf could be excused from appearing in court while he remained hospitalized. The treason charges, which carry the death penalty or life imprisonment, relate to events in 2007 when Musharraf imposed a state of emergency and several judges and protesters were detained. The LA Times noted that Mr. Musharraf's presence in Pakistan had become "a political headache" for the 6-month-old government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. "By attempting for the first time to prosecute a former senior military figure, Mr. Sharif's government has ignited tensions with an all-powerful army establishment that is loath to see a former leader humiliated in a civilian court," the newspaper observed. "Army leaders were said to be frustrated with Musharraf's decision to return to Pakistan last year." The hospitalization of a person who appeared to be in good health in media appearances also fuelled speculations that the military was determined not to let Musharraf stand trial, the Times noted. "Analysts said that Musharraf's departure for medical reasons increasingly seemed to be the only way to resolve the standoff between the government and the arm over his fate," the newspaper concluded.

Dawn - January 09, 2014

Musharraf Summoned On 16th for Indictment

“It is clear that the accused has failed to obey and comply with the order of this court,” the three-judge court said in an order. The court comprises Justice Faisal Arab of the Sindh High Court, Justice Tahira Safdar of the Balochistan High Court and Justice Yawar Ali of the Lahore High Court. The court warned that it would issue an order against the former army chief if he failed to appear before it on Jan 16. “The medical report does not reflect that the accused (Gen Musharraf) suffered a heart attack or that he is ailing to an extent that he is unable to appear before the court,” the order said, adding: “In the medical report it is stated that the accused reported discomfort in his chest and left arm. This could have been taken to be a heart attack or angina pain or any other kind of heart ailment, but the same turned out to be a false alarm as the medical report does not disclose that after examination by the doctors the discomfort in the chest or left arm felt by the accused was due to any heart ailment.” The order said the absence of the accused on three previous dates had been condoned solely on the ground that he was hospitalized. This was done in spite of the fact that neither any application for exemption from appearance was made nor was it even verbally requested on behalf of the accused. This court, the order said, was constrained to call for the medical report of the accused from the Armed Forces Institute of Cardiology (AFIC). “The medical report does not suggest that the accused in his present state of health is unable to attend the court nor any material was placed on record to justify his inability to appear,” it added. Sharifuddin Pirzada, counsel for Gen Musharraf, said his client was suffering from heart ailment and an angiography had been advised.

He said that to undergo such medical procedure it was quite possible that an open heart surgery might be required. The counsel advised the court not to take ailment of Gen Musharraf lightly, recalling that in 1993, the then army chief, Gen Asif Nawaz Janjua, died of a sudden heart attack. He argued that it was Pervez Musharraf’s right to seek the best possible treatment “if it means leaving (the country) for abroad”. Mohammad Akram Sheikh, head of the prosecution team, recalled that Gen Musharraf had in 2002 passed a law barring government functionaries from going abroad for cardiac treatment and issued a directive that heart treatment be provided within the country. Pakistani institutes provided world class health facilities and Gen Musharraf need not go to any other country, he said. Advocate Sheikh alleged that the former military ruler had gone to the AFIC in a pre-planned manner to avoid court appearance. On Dec 24 and Jan 1 Gen Musharraf was not suffering from any ailment, but even then he did not attend the court proceedings. He said that despite having been in the best hospital for several days, the accused did not opt to undergo an angiography, as recommended by the medical report. Akram Sheikh argued that in any case “the presence of the accused is required on a date of hearing which may be for only an hour in order to read out the charge, record his plea and thereafter the proceedings can take place in his absence through his counsel”. The court will announce its verdict on the applicability of the criminal procedure code (CrPC) in the high treason trial.

Dawn - January 10, 2014

Musharraf Treason Trial: Game-Changer or Distraction?

A pivotal moment in country’s history or a side-show with a pre-determined outcome? The treason trial of ex-military ruler Pervez Musharraf has divided opinions in Pakistan where the army has rarely been shy about seizing power. The case has hogged the limelight among the country’s hyperactive TV channels for over a month and a half, with every legal maneuver announced on breaking-news tickers and analyzed in great detail in the popular evening news

shows. The coverage is stoked by the potentially high stakes: the supremacy of civilian rule in a country that has been governed for more than half its history by the military, with three coups since it gained independence from Britain in 1947. "Fundamentally there is a desire by the civilians to hold the military accountable and this trial is very symbolic, because here is a man who violated the Constitution not once but twice," said Raza Rumi, a senior fellow at the Jinnah Institute think tank. The ongoing case, he adds, is "like a sword on the military's head because the military cannot let its chief be tried for treason and punished - that will be the end of its hegemony. And (Prime Minister) Nawaz Sharif knows this and as a smart politician he wants this to be there... so that the military is kept in check."

It began with a bang on November 17, when Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar gathered the press to announce that Musharraf, a former army chief who seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999 and ruled until 2008, would be tried by a special court for "high treason". The charge, which carries the maximum penalty of the death sentence, relates to Musharraf's suspension of the Constitution in 2007 and the imposition of emergency rule, at a time when his rule was being increasingly challenged by the judiciary. Musharraf returned to Pakistan in March last year following more than four years in self-imposed exile, declaring he had come to save his homeland. But he soon found himself caught up in a legal quagmire, accused among other things of the murder of his rival, former premier Benazir Bhutto, the extra-judicial killing of Akbar Bugti and the sacking of judges in 2007. Confined to his luxury residence on the outskirts of the capital, he was also barred from participating in May elections, which ironically saw Sharif - the man he ousted in a 1999 coup - return to power.

Disquiet in the Ranks

Musharraf had won bail in all the cases against him in early November, though was still barred from leaving the country. A few days later, with the country still reeling from flare-up violence, the government dropped its bombshell announcement. The unprecedented trial has the potential to be a game-changer, but has upset many mid-level army officers who resent seeing their former chief being humiliated, according to several analysts. "The army don't want him dragged into this special tribunal, (because) he is a general, he is a former army chief, the next thing you know you will be dragging every army chief in to court," said Ayesha Siddiq, a prominent military analyst. On two occasions when Musharraf was due in court the next day, security forces announced they had found explosives - unconnected to detonators - close to his residence. His lawyers immediately invoked the security threat to justify their client's absence from proceedings.

Last week, as he was finally making his way to the court, the former president developed a heart condition and was diverted to a military hospital. He was diagnosed with coronary artery disease, with his lawyers pleading for treatment abroad. The developments have fed observers' doubts that the case will be seen through to completion. "The military has been protecting him, is protecting him and will continue to protect him not because the generals like him entirely. It's because it is a rule of conduct," argues Siddiq. She sees the process as a "diversion" orchestrated by the Sharif government to distract from its inability to tackle ongoing terror attacks and a chronic energy crisis, and which is aware that it cannot push the all-powerful army too far, even if it appears outwardly to be pursuing a tough stance. The government and the army will eventually reach an agreement that allows both of them to save face, many analysts argue.

The Nation - January 13, 2014

Court Says Abettors' Names Can Be Added To Accused List

The three-judge bench of the special court constituted for General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf's trial hinted that more names can be added to the list of those responsible for issuing the November 3, 2007 emergency order. Amidst protest and agitation from Musharraf's legal team, including leading counsel Sharifuddin Pirzada, the public prosecutor in the case Akram Sheikh concluded his arguments and rejected all objections related to the constitution of the special court. Pirzada lost his cool during proceedings and raised his voice while addressing Sheikh on several occasions. Sheikh told the bench that Musharraf was put on trial because evidence was available thus far against him only. The interior ministry, while discharging its function on behalf of the federal government, has filed a complaint in light of the investigation against Musharraf. The evidence is also annexed along with the complaint, he added. The prosecution will cross-examine the accused during the trial; if any other official or person is involved in the November 3 episode then he also be put on trial, Sheikh said.

In response to a query of the bench, Sheikh said that Musharraf's legal team's concern that only Musharraf has been singled out is genuine, because there are papers signed by the accused which show that he was the person who imposed emergency on November 3. He said that to address this concern, Musharraf should appear before the court and reveal the names of accomplices so the prosecution can add them to the list. To this, Justice Faisal Arab, the leading judge of the bench, said, "We know that the special court can add more names during the trial of the case." A member from the prosecution team told The Express Tribune that no top official of the army has confessed involvement in the imposition of the November 3, 2007 emergency rule. The Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) officials grilled close aides to Musharraf but they denied their role in the November 3 episode and unanimously held Musharraf responsible for the unconstitutional steps. During the proceedings, Justice Faisal Arab asked whether the secretary interior has extraordinary powers that enable him to file a complaint without consent from the federal government. Sheikh replied that since the interior minister is the federal government in this case, the secretary discharged his duty as per law. Justice Arab said that the secretary can involve anyone under such powers.

Justice Tahira Safdar asked the prosecution to address the defense team's objections to the cabinet not being taken on board regarding the bench's constitution. Sheikh said that as per rules of business, the secretary is the administrative head of a division or ministry and that the government did not nominate judges and adopted a more transparent procedure because the accused is also enjoying the right of a fair trial under Articles 10A, 9, 12, 4 and 25 of the constitution. Had the federal government appointed the judges, the objection of bias would be genuine perhaps, Sheikh said. He also pointed out a technical problem: there are five high courts and only three judges are required for a special court, therefore making it necessary to take on board the judiciary in the process. On the request of Anwar Mansoor, who came to court late, the special court adjourned till next hearing.

The Express Tribune - January 22, 2014

BALUCHISTAN WATCH**News & Analyses****Hard Target: Balochistan Has 70 Insurgent Camps**

Inspector General Frontier Corps (IGFC) Balochistan Major General Mohammad Ejaz Shahid said that 60 to 70 Farari camps, or insurgent camps, were operating in the province. However, he added that it was difficult to crack down on these camps because they keep changing location according to the weather. Major General Shahid said that the paramilitary force lacked resources to police the whole province that makes up 44% of the country's total landmass. However, he added that "if the local population cooperates, peace can be restored in no time". He cited the examples of Makran and Panjgur among other districts where the local population was cooperating with the security forces. He lamented that despite the Supreme Court ban, the media was publishing statements of the proscribed organizations claiming attacks on the security forces. Responding to a question, Maj Gen Shahid said that earlier there was 6% quota in the FC for the Baloch youth that has been enhanced to 15% and within next 15 years it would be raised to 50%. The FC has also set up schools in the far-flung areas of the province which are out of reach of the education department. On the occasion, Lt Col Chaudhry Zafar Iqbal said that the FC raided an empty house in the Toba Achakzai area of Qilla Abdullah and seized a huge quantity of explosives. No arrest was made, though. Besides 1.5 tons of explosives, the FC seized 1,320 anti-personnel mines, 500 anti-tank mines, 200 IEDs, 150 prima cards, 17 bundles of wire, 21 remote controls, and nine time bombs. The IGFC said the explosives and weapons were transported from neighboring countries for sabotage activities in Balochistan. Separately, during a search operation in Kili Janu of Gulistan area, the security forces detained two miscreants and recovered two light machine guns, 42 hand grenades, 21 SMGs, one shot gun, and two motorcycles.

The Express Tribune - January 04, 2014

Government 'Not Giving Attention to Higher Education Crisis in Balochistan'

Despite continued financial crisis faced by higher education sector in Balochistan, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Special Task Force for Balochistan, established to evaluate and promote higher education there, could not pay visit to the province. President All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association Balochistan Chapter Dr Kaleemullah said that government has not given attention to the issue of higher education crisis in Balochistan. "When the Task Force was formed, we were very hopeful that it could solve the situation of crisis we face at this time but even that Task Force never visited the province," he said. "We remained on strike for almost one month and ran 'Kashkol' campaign to make the federal government and HEC realize our situation but not much has been done to save Balochistan higher education institutions," he pointed out. He said that as a result of all that protest, the government released only Rs200 million which is not enough for even two months salaries of staff employed in higher education institutions. "It is still a challenge to pay the staff," said Kaleemullah.

President All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association Balochistan Chapter said that situation of Balochistan higher education has no comparison with other provinces. "The federal government asks us to generate funds but they don't realize that only one per cent of our population succeeds in reaching higher education institutions and that too from

underdeveloped and far flung areas. The students could not afford to pay Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 60,000 as university fees.” Kaleemullah was of the opinion that federal government and HEC can easily sustain the finances of higher education institutions in Balochistan. “More than 70 of total 100 PhD faculty members of Balochistan universities have shifted to other parts of the country in recent months due to financial and security issues. Government and HEC must address these issues on emergency basis if they want to save the higher education sector in Balochistan,” he said.

To be headed by HEC chairman, the task force was constituted by Higher Education Commission on the proposal of Chief Minister Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch in July 2013. During a meeting with then HEC chairperson Dr. Javaid R. Laghari, it was agreed to establish a Special Task Force to evaluate and promote higher education in Balochistan so that it can keep pace with national standards. He also assured cooperation in addressing human resource related problems in the province. During last week, talking to media, CM Balochistan showed disappointment in resolving higher education crisis in Balochistan by the relevant federal institutions. The experts from Balochistan were of the view that due to this situation, Balochistan will be compelled to think about its own higher education set up. The notified, the Task Force was headed by HEC chairperson and was comprised of three eminent and experienced academicians and administrators. The members of the Task Force would have to meet the vice chancellors, university administrators, faculty students and other stakeholders in Balochistan and will have to present recommendations to the Chief Minister Balochistan.

As per terms of reference, the task force was assigned to delineate primary challenges the universities in Balochistan are currently facing that impede their development as high standard institutions of learning and research and recommend, for consideration and approval of the chief minister, government of Balochistan, steps and reforms required to improve their performance and progress as world class institutions of higher learning. While assessing the universities in Balochistan, the Task Force shall, among other things, specifically focus on areas including governance and management of universities (structure and practices), adequacy of resources (public and self-generated; including university effectiveness to mobilize resources) and efficiency and effectiveness of resource use, adoption and adherence to quality standards and practices law and order issues arising there from necessitating immediate response and solutions. The Task Force was assigned to meet administration, faculty, and students as may be required in accomplishment of the responsibility entrusted to them. The Task Force was asked to submit its draft report to the HEC chairperson within 3 weeks of its constitution and provision of preliminary statistics by HEC whichever is later.

The News - January 06, 2014

Highway Development: PM Injects Rs. 18b into Balochistan

In a groundswell of support for Balochistan, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced a massive infrastructure development package worth up to Rs18 billion to address the sense of deprivation felt by the people of the province. Initiating three highway projects during his visit to Quetta, the prime minister pledged that the government would accelerate and maximize all development projects in the province. Some Rs8 billion has already been earmarked for the completion of the Gwadar-Rato Dero and Khuzdar-Naag highways, which are scheduled for completion within a year. Another 10 billion rupees will be allocated for the Kalat-Chaman project, the premier said. Travelling to Quetta Cantt via army helicopter, the premier spoke at the Corps Headquarters, saying security forces were playing their role to ensure peace and stability in the province. He discussed steps for improvement in the law and order situation

with the provincial authorities and the military leadership. At the same time, he advised the civil and military leadership to devise a common strategy for the country's security and the safety of the people. PM Nawaz paid tribute to the martyrs of the army, Frontier Corps, police and district administration while laying a floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada. His visit came in the wake of an attack that left 21 pilgrims dead in Mastung earlier this month and the prime minister expressed grief over the attacks, adding that travel arrangements for the devotees by air and sea were under consideration. The problem of terrorism, he said, is not confined to Balochistan and the government is determined to eliminate acts of terrorism and sectarianism across the country at all cost.

Earlier, Commander Southern Command Lieutenant General Nasser Khan Janjua briefed the PM on the province's law and order situation. Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif, Balochistan Governor Mohammad Khan Achakzai, Balochistan Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch and federal Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan were also present on the occasion as well as Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party Chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai, National Party leader Mir Hasil Khan Bezinjo, Home Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti, Balochistan Chief Secretary Babar Yaqoob Fateh Mohammad, IG Mushtaq Sukhera and Frontier Corps IG Major General Aijaz Shahid. Meeting with parliamentarians from the province, the prime minister announced that 90 per cent of the benefits of the Pak-China Economic Corridor would be funneled into Balochistan in the form of employment and other economic opportunities. Addressing the province's energy woes, he said that studies to determine the feasibility of solar power projects in the province's rural areas were being carried out. "This programme will address power shortage problem for the domestic consumers, while providing sufficient power for agricultural purposes." He also directed that Hajj flights be initiated from Quetta. He expressed his desire to meet with the province's youth in connection with the Youth Business Loan Scheme, saying, "I assure the youth of Balochistan that their right in this scheme will not be shared with any other province." Three highway projects - the Kalat-Quetta-Chaman N-25 highway project, Surab-Khushab N-35 project and Gwadar-Turbat-Khushab N-8 project - were initiated in a ground-breaking ceremony at the Governor House.

The Express Tribune - January 31, 2014

POLITICAL & ELECTION WATCH**Political Parties****Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)****PTI against Division of Sindh**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi said his party is opposed to the division of Sindh and asked MQM chief Altaf Hussain to clarify his remarks. Addressing a press conference, Qureshi said it was strange to listen to the MQM complaining about not getting rights despite the fact that the party had been part and parcel of federal and provincial governments during the last 22 years. He said even today Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ibad is an MQM office holder. He said the speech of Altaf Hussain has given rise to different questions. He said the PTI was against division of Sindh and it would also not be acceptable to the people of the province. He said Imran Khan during his address at the public meeting in Umerkot had stated his opposition to the division of the province.

Qureshi said that after Altaf Hussain's speech, he spoke to Ayaz Palejo and conveyed him the PTI's point of view. He said the Sindhi nationalist leader had said they would welcome Imran Khan on their land. He said the MQM had been opposing the division of Sindh and it is necessary that it would give a clarification for the sudden U-turn. He said that demanding a new country for not getting rights raises a negative impression about the MQM. Qureshi said sacrifices of Mohajirs could not be ignored during the Pakistan Movement and they could not be disloyal to the country. He also expressed his concern over the prevailing situation in Karachi. The PTI leader asked Interior Minister Nisar Ali Khan to inform people about the illness of former president Pervez Musharraf because silence of the government is giving rise to speculations that a deal has been reached for sending Musharraf abroad.

Qureshi said there are speculations that the vehicle carrying Musharraf was diverted to hospital after permission from the Interior Ministry. He said they pray for the health of Musharraf but rulers and doctors at the hospital should also give their opinion. He said the facility of open heart surgery is available in Pakistan. He said that despite availability of medical facilities in Pakistan, rumours of sending Musharraf abroad gives the impression that there is something wrong. To a question, Qureshi said that opposition would attend the National Assembly session on January 20 as boycott of the assembly over Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar's contentious speech was for the last session only. Qureshi said the ANP was doing politics on Kalabagh Dam. He said the PTI is in favour of new water reservoirs but this is not possible without national consensus. He said progress on Kalabagh Dam was not possible due to opposition by three provinces. To another question, the PTI vice chairman said Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Maulana Samiul Haq are respectable personalities but the APC had authorized the government to hold talks with the Taliban and it could not get itself exonerated from this responsibility.

Daily Times - January 05, 2014

Demand to Divide Sindh Seems Like a Fixed Match: Imran

Addressing a public gathering here, Imran Khan said, "I apologies for not visiting Sindh. Some people are talking about splitting Sindh into two parts. But we are here to promote unity among

the provinces. He said: “PTI is not a party of any particular province. We represent the whole country. Some people are talking about dividing Sindh, but we talk about the unity of Pakistan and its people.” Imran Khan said there should not be any division on the basis of Sindh, Punjab, Pakhtun and Baloch, but only on the basis of oppressed and oppressors. He said that Sindh was the most oppressed land of all and the PTI was here to get it out of the jaws of oppressors. He ensured the people of Sindh that Kalabagh or any other dam could not be built until a consensus was hammered out amongst the federating units. “The people of Sindh are oppressed and they are subjected to more cruelties,” he said and added that the PTI tsunami, which started from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, had stopped in the Punjab due to rigging.

The PTI chief reiterated his stance that Pakistan would not prosper unless the country came out of the US war against terror. He said that no foreigner was ready to invest in Pakistan and jobs could not be created without investment. “We accepted the May 11 elections for the sake of continuation of democracy. But we did not accept rigging. Any doubt we had about the rigging in May 11 elections stands cleared after witnessing such a massive gathering.” Police, he said, had been depoliticized in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province under the PTI government. “Water is going to be a big crisis in the coming years,” he noted. Imran said that his party would not allow rigging in the coming local bodies elections. He pledged that the PTI would set up a system of justice in the society for everyone. He lamented that the people of minority Hindu community were leaving Pakistan due to lack of justice.

Earlier, Imran Khan said the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-S (JUI-S) President Maulana Samiul Haq should be given the opportunity to hold a dialogue with the Taliban. “It is for the first time that Samiul Haq has been approached to talk to the Taliban in order to seek an end to hostilities,” he said while talking to the media at the Hyderabad Airport. Imran was accompanied by the PTI leaders, including Jehangir Tareen, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and others. Meanwhile, Imran Khan said that masses had attached great hopes with Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman for playing a role in initiating a peace dialogue with the Taliban but he could not deliver on this count. “Fazl’s party was in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government from 2002 to 2007 but why they did not talk to the Taliban then,” he questioned. The PTI chief said the US sabotaged the negotiation process with the Taliban by killing Hakimullah Mehsud in a US drone attack. He said that the federal government should block the NATO supply for building pressure on the US government, adding that the PML-N was following double standards of the former government on the US drone attacks.

The News - January 07, 2014

Dialogue or Operation: PTI Asks Government to Take Parliament On Board

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) asked Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to take parliament into confidence before launching any military operation or initiating dialogue with militants. “The government must immediately brief the National Assembly on its counter terrorism policy and the position on dialogue and/or the possibility of an impending military operation,” The PTI’s Core Committee (CC) said in an official statement. “It must also hold an in-camera briefing for all the political leaders about the current security situation, including on the talks and timelines of any planned military operations,” said the committee as it expressed concern over military actions, based on Pakistan’s tragic past record of such actions. The committee also demanded to know the parameters of such a military operation, adding that disturbing reports were coming in from North Waziristan Agency, where aerial bombardment had left the local people shelter less and resulted in many casualties including that of children. “At the very least, the government should have evacuated the area of civilians before allowing any military operation

or aerial bombardment,” the statement said. The committee said the government’s continuing vacillation on giving a clear-cut counter-terror policy was destroying any hope for peace through dialogue.

“Almost 9 months on, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government has yet to put in place a cohesive counter terrorism policy and state clearly whether the all parties’ conference (APC) mandate for dialogue was ever operationalized or whether it has never been attempted,” the committee said. It said the PTI felt the US had successfully sabotaged the peace process with its droning of the peace talks when they were about to commence. It said the PTI’s principled position on dialogue was premised on the strong logic that one must divide the adversary so that those who were prepared to hold dialogue should be separated from the hardcore groups. “A military operation is always a last resort option and must always have political ownership and guidance so as to give the military national support. We cannot allow our military, whose soldiers have always laid down their lives for Pakistan, to be left isolated without political ownership,” the committee said, adding that PTI had always recognized the tremendous sacrifices of Pakistani soldiers. The core committee also expressed grave concern over Maulana Samiul Haq’s statement that the government was not serious about dialogue. “What is even more disturbing is his claim that the PM asked him to plead with the Taliban to ‘spare us (Punjab),’” it added.

The Express Tribune - January 22, 2014

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

Altaf Threatens ‘Separate Country’ Call

Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) chief Altaf Hussain, addressing a public gathering here, again asked for a new province for Muhajirs, saying, “If you do not like Urdu speaking Sindhis, make a separate province for them.” Altaf said the things can be more serious if not taken wisely. He criticized the PPP government over local government elections and illegal delimitations. “Sindhi and Urdu speaking people want to live together and do not want any division,” he added. The MQM chief lashed out at the Sindh provincial government, demanding immediate solution to the problems of the Mujahir community. He demanded a separate province for the urban population of Sindh and went ahead to say that the demand for a separate province might turn into a demand for a separate country if their concerns were not addressed timely. Altaf further claimed that the Urdu-speaking population outnumbers the Sindhi populace, which can be verified through an independent UN census.

Addressing Bilawal and Asif Ali Zardari, he said if the concerns of Muhajir community were not addressed timely, they would call for a separate province and if the problems still remained unsolved, the demand for a province could become the demand for a separate country. “We are also people of Sindh; if we have been living side by side in Sindh since long, we can live in separate provinces as well,” he added. “The court ruled in our favor about the injustices done to the Muhajir community. Both of us are alike, if you step forward to shake hands, we’ll reciprocate”, he went on saying. Altaf Hussain further warned that Urdu-speaking community was well aware of how to cross rivers of blood. “It was experienced well by our ancestors and we, being their children, know how to take what’s ours,” the MQM chief maintained. “We neither came to Pakistan to become slaves, nor are we here to become masters, we merely want to become equal citizens,” he asserted.

Altaf also demanded immediate suspension of ‘operation against MQM workers’. ‘We know how to sacrifice our lives; we have done that in the past and can do it again,’ the MQM chief

reiterated. He vowed to open Sindh University in Hyderabad if the provincial government did not do it in a month, giving a deadline to the government. Altaf Hussain then took on to the establishment: “You want to sideline half of the population of Sindh. When will you interfere? Are you going to intervene when Muhajirs will demand an independent state? What do you want? Don’t call me a traitor, I am not saying anything; I am merely speaking philosophically. I am not a constitutional expert.” Talking about Musharraf, the MQM chief warned, “What are you doing to Musharraf, a Muhajir? Article 5 comes before Article 6. I am a student of constitution. Punish Musharraf if you want, but also imprison those who acted upon the martial law orders on ground. Why are others being excused?” added Altaf Hussain. “General (r) Kayani, ex-CJP Iftikhar Ch and other judges are also part and parcel of extrajudicial acts,” he claimed. Urging the party workers about his legacy, Altaf Hussain said: “It doesn’t matter whatever happens to me. Even if I am killed, do not let my movement die.” Finally, Altaf Hussain called upon Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to intervene immediately, saying the provincial government has abandoned them.

The Nation - January 04, 2014

By-Elections & Local Government Elections 2013

PML-N Doesn't See LG Polls Till 2019

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)'s leadership believes that local government elections in Punjab are likely to be delayed till 2019, following a ruling of Lahore High Court (LHC), which stopped the government from carrying out the delimitation exercise. The PML-N senior leaders called an emergency meeting after the LHC decision, which abrogated the Punjab Local Government Act (PLGA) 2013's clauses 7, 8 and 9 which allowed the government to carry out delimitation of union councils and wards. According to the ruling, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will now perform the delimitation job. A few of the attendees of the meeting told that the Punjab government had been under pressure of Supreme Court of Pakistan to hold local government elections and had planned to conduct them on January 30, 2014. However, they said that the court verdict had given the government a pretext to defer the polls and now the PML-N leadership had devised a strategy to delay the polls till 2019.

The Strategy

According to some attendees of the meeting, the party has decided that it will not challenge the court decision in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The Punjab government, keeping in view the court order, will take four months in amending the clauses 7, 8 and 9 of the PLGA 2013 in Punjab Assembly. The ECP will be empowered to delimit constituencies instead of the government. The party has estimated a period of six months for new delimitations and two months more for their appeals etc. After one year, the question will be raised by certain quarters that delimitation should be done under new census. Apart from this, a voice will be raised to hold the local government elections after census. They said parliament had recently passed a resolution in the National Assembly and prayed that the LG polls should be held after census. After this hue and cry, the PML-N's federal government - which is not willing to hold census for two or three years due to the law and order situation - will delay census for three years. After that period, the party believes, if it announces to hold local body election in the province six months before the upcoming 2018 general election, people will start criticizing the election and the government will be in a position to further delay them till 2019.

In this regard, the party assigned some role to Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan, who will hold a press conference today, to clarify the party position on LG election and court rulings. Sanaullah confirmed that he did not see local government elections being held in the province in the near future due to the court rulings. He said earlier a special division bench comprising Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and Justice Farrukh Irfan Khan on November 7 had struck down clause 18 of the PLG Act 2013 about non-party based election but rejected petitioners arguments to also strike down clauses 7, 8 and 9 of the Act. "Before passing the PLGA 2013, the Punjab government had mentioned it as the ECP's responsibility to carry out delimitation but the ECP asked the government that it could not carry out delimitation due to lack of human resource," he said. He said later the government had inserted the word 'government' in the said clauses. "On November 7, the government had presented the ECP's letter before the court and the court had observed that the ECP's duty was to hold elections not to carry out delimitation as it declared it was the executive's domain to carry out delimitation," he added. He said the government respected the recent court ruling and local body elections, which were scheduled to be held on January 30, would not be held on the said date.

The Express Tribune - January 01, 2014

Punjab LG Polls Also Suffer Legal Setback

After Sindh, holding of local bodies elections in Punjab on January 30 has also become doubtful as the Lahore High Court has scrapped delimitation of constituencies carried out by the government, which now says the polls could be delayed for up to one and a half years. A full bench of the Lahore High Court (LHC) annulled Section 8 and 9 of the Punjab Local Government Act, 2013 and observed that how the LB elections could be transparent when the delimitation was not done through a fair procedure. A day before, the Sindh High Court had also declared illegal the entire delimitation exercise carried out for local government elections in Sindh, besides the amendments made in the LB law. Punjab Law and Local Government Minister Rana Sanaul Allah said the government respected the LHC decision but the LG polls in the province could be delayed for one and a half years as a consequence. He categorically said that holding of the local bodies' elections was not possible on January 30 after the court decision. He also announced that the government would not challenge the LHC full bench order before the Supreme Court. In light of the court order, the government would need to legislate on the LG law afresh and this exercise would take minimum six months, the minister said. And, if the delimitation is to be done on the basis of fresh census, which has already been approved by the prime minister, holding of the LG elections may be delayed for one to one and a half years, he added.

Rana said that in the process of the fresh delimitations, he said, consideration would also be given to the effectiveness of the demographical strength of every constituency in light of the 1998 census. Commenting about the recently carried out delimitations, the minister said that the executive was authorized to carry out this exercise under direction from the Election Commission which, when the LG law was being framed, had expressed its inability to take up delimitation of the constituencies owing to inadequate manpower. Later on, he said, the Lahore High Court bench headed by the Chief Justice also acknowledged the government mandate to delimit the constituencies but now that decision stands upset by the full bench. So, the LG polls will definitely get delayed in implementation of the latest judgment of the court, he said. As hearing started on a set of petitions in LHC, petitioners' counsels argued that in view of the 18th amendment, holding of local government elections was the responsibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) under articles 218(3), 219(d) and 222 (b) of the constitution. The apex court had also explained the role of ECP in Workers Party Case, they argued. "Therefore,

ECP enjoys unlimited powers from delimiting the constituencies to holding of elections," they maintained. The lawyers contended Section 10-A was added to PLGA on November 9 through an ordinance with malafide intentions because the elections schedule had been issued on Nov 6, three days before this amendment.

At this, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, who was heading the full bench, asked acting Advocate General Mustafa Ramday, in how much time the whole process had been completed. He wondered that how the entire process could be completed in just 11 days. "Prima facie, an MNA or MPA would succeed in having the constituencies delimited as per his or her own choice," the judge remarked. Replying the court query, the acting advocate general submitted that the delimitation was done in a transparent manner by giving full opportunity to the candidates to file objections. He added that the delimitation was not a part of election process as in year 2000 the same was done by the provincial government in the light of powers given by ECP to the government. The lawyers pointed out that at least 400 petitions had been filed in LHC raising same points which show that delimitation was not done in fair manner. The bench announced its short order nullifying Section 8 and 9 of the PLGA. The bench also directed ECP to fulfill its responsibility regarding delimitation for holding elections on time.

The Nation - January 01, 2014

Verdict on LG Act: Sindh Government, MQM File Petitions in SC

The provincial government of Sindh challenged Sindh High Court's (SHC) decision declaring Sindh Local Government Act and delimitation of union councils as unconstitutional in the Supreme Court. The appeal was filed in Supreme Court's Karachi Registry. "In a petition, the government has requested the apex court to overturn SHC's verdict so that the local government (LG) elections can be held without further delays," said Sindh advocate general Khalid Jawed Khan. "The SHC has cited a difference of 40,000 in population between union councils as the main reason for the verdict and has suggested that LG elections be held on the basis of the delimitation carried out during General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf's tenure," he explained. "However, there was a population gap of 50,000 between the union councils at that time in 2001." Khan added that they had submitted the application in Karachi but the case would most likely be heard in Islamabad. "No fundamental right of the candidates has been violated due to the forming of a panel," he said. "Rather, it has strengthened the process."

Meanwhile MQM has filed a petition in Supreme Court praying that no decision may please be given without hearing it in Sindh government appeal plea against the SHC decision on nullification of local bodies' ordinance amendments regarding delimitations. MQM through the petition, filed in SC Karachi registry, has taken the plea that as per information available with it, Sindh government has decided to challenge SHC decision whereby it has nullified the amendments made by Sindh government in Local Bodies ordinance with reference to delimitations in constituencies of local bodies' polls. MQM requested the SC not to issue any decision without hearing it in this case. Advocate Mazhar Chohan has filed the petition on behalf of MQM central leader Farooq Sattar. It may be recalled that different political parties had filed a petition in SHC against the amendments introduced by government of Sindh in local bodies' ordinance with regard to delimitations. The SHC while granting these petitions had declared the amendments null and void.

Daily Times - January 05, 2014

LG Polls Unlikely In Punjab for another Eight Months

After a Lahore High Court order gave the Punjab government time to complete delimitations, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced postponement of Local Government Elections in the province. Punjab local bodies' polls had been scheduled for January 30, but will now be held only after authorities complete delimiting constituencies all over again, a process which could take six to eight months. New delimitations can be carried out only after Section 10 of the Punjab Local Government Act (PLGA) 2013 has been amended as necessary. On December 31, 2013, the Lahore High Court declared Punjab's delimitation laws - Sections 8 and 9 - illegal. The court ordered that a new law be created and implemented to tackle the issue of delimitation. Following the ruling, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leadership met in Lahore and estimated a period of several months before the relevant clauses of the PLGA 2013 were amended. The ruling is considered by many - especially PTI - to have given the government a pretext to defer the polls and devise a strategy to delay them till 2019. PTI Punjab President Ejaz Chaudhry said the local government elections must be held on time even if it meant using the previous delimitations. "The PTI is willing to accept that rather than a delay in elections that should have been held five and a half years ago," he said.

Pakistan Today - January 05, 2014

LG Elections in Punjab & Sindh 'Impossible' In Jan: ECP

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) told the Supreme Court (SC) that holding local government (LG) elections in Sindh on January 18 and in Punjab on January 30 appears to be impossible due to delay in printing of ballot papers. The commission also sought guidance from the SC regarding holding LG elections after Sindh and Lahore high courts decided to set aside delimitation of wards in the two provinces. Akram Sheikh moved an application in the court on behalf of the ECP under order XXXIII rule 6 of the SC Rules 1980, requesting the court to give fresh directions to the commission in the wake of high courts' rulings. Narrating the outcome of high courts judgments', the lawyer told the SC that the delimitation of wards in Sindh and Punjab stands set aside. "The penal system envisaged under sub section (12) of section 18 of the Sindh Local Government Act 2013 in the Union Councils/Committees of the province and the provisions of sub-section (14) of said section which debar independent candidates to contest elections if they fail to form a penal has been declared to be violation of the constitution and the law," Sheikh said in the petition. He added that provisions of giving powers to the delimitation officer to declare a rural area to be an urban area and change in the figure of population in Union Committees of Metropolitan Corporation increasing the variation in their population from 10,000 to 50,000 instead of 40,000 to 50,000 had been declared ultra vires of the constitution and law.

In view of both high courts' judgments', the lawyer said that the Punjab Local Government Act 2013 and Sindh Government Act 2013 had to be amended by the respective provinces and fresh delimitation had to be carried out in light of the courts' rulings. He said that due to the request by Printing Corporation of Pakistan (PCP) Islamabad and Pakistan Security Printing Corporation (PSPC) Karachi to extend the time for printing ballot papers, polls in the Sindh on January 18 and in Punjab on January 30 appeared to be impossible. The ECP's lawyer also pointed out that printing of ballot papers could only be started after the issuance of list of contesting candidates. "In short period of three days, it is impossible to print 300 million ballot papers and distribute them among 228 retuning officers across the province of Sindh before the day of poll," he added. He also stated that a similar situation was being faced in Punjab where 300 million ballot papers are required to be printed "which is impossible within a period of 14 days from the publication

of list of contesting candidates on January 13, 2014". He said that the representative of PSPC had stated that only one assignment could be undertaken at time and that PSPC would first print 30 million ballots papers for Sindh for which they needed at least 15 days.

Daily Times - January 07, 2014

Plea in Apex Court: Poll Body Seeks Delay in Punjab & Sindh LG Elections

Instead of making the announcement, the commission has approached the Supreme Court for assistance over the issue. "We have filed an application before the Supreme Court," a senior ECP official told. The application, he said, has requested the court for an opportunity to submit the ECP's point of view in the Sindh government's case fixed for January 8. The Sindh government had challenged the Sindh High Court (SHC) ruling against the delimitation process. The SHC ruling was challenged at the Karachi Registry of the apex court and the matter has been fixed for hearing on January 8 in Islamabad. "We will ask the court to guide us," said the senior ECP official, adding, "along with the situation of the SHC decision we will also appraise the court of the Lahore High Court (LHC) judgment." In view of both high court judgments, ECP's application said that the Punjab Local Government Act, 2013 and Sindh Government Act, 2013 have to be amended by the respective province and fresh delimitation has to be carried out in light of the courts' rulings. Responding to a question, he said, "We will tell the court that holding of elections in the given circumstances is not possible as per the schedule."

According to the polling schedules, polling in Sindh is scheduled to take place on January 18 and in Punjab on January 30. Advocate Muhammad Akram Sheikh filed a civil miscellaneous application in the apex court on behalf of the ECP, requesting that fresh directions be given to the commission about holding LB polls in Punjab and Sindh. Sheikh submitted that the entire delimitation of wards is no more in existence. "The panel system envisaged under sub-section (12) of section 18 of the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013 in the Union Councils/Committees of the province and the provisions of sub-section (14) of the said section which debar independent candidates to contest elections if they fail to form a panel has been declared to be violative of the constitution and the law". In addition, the commission informed the court that printing of ballot papers was not possible in the previously set dates as, and that in this respect, the Printing Corporation of Pakistan (PCP) Islamabad and Pakistan Security Printing Corporation (PSPC) Karachi had asked that the deadline be extended.

The ECP's counsel has also pointed out that printing of ballot papers can only start after the list of contesting candidates is issued. "In a short period of three days, it is impossible to print 300 million ballot papers and distribute them among 228 Returning Officers across the province of Sindh before the day of polls," he added. Sheikh also stated that a similar situation was being faced in Punjab. He further said that a PSPC representative had conveyed to the ECP that they would start printing 250 million ballot papers for Punjab after completing their assignments regarding the province of Sindh, and for that matter, they would need at least 25 days for printing in Punjab.

The Express Tribune - January 07, 2014

ECP Suggests New Schedule for LB Polls in Sindh & Punjab

The ECP suggested this to a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani during the proceedings of a case against the delimitation of constituencies and the decision of the Sindh High Court (SHC). The apex court also accepted the Sindh government's appeal for

hearing against the SHC's verdict, which declared as illegal the fresh delimitations before the upcoming LB polls in the province and sought details of the amendments in the legislation made by the SHC. The CJP remarked, "LB polls should not be delayed for an indefinite period. Holding LB polls is the responsibility of the ECP and provincial governments. We want to give a decision after hearing all matters in detail". During the course of proceedings ECP Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmed apprised the bench that the Printing Press Corporation of Pakistan sought three weeks time for printing ballot papers. He further informed the bench that holding LB elections in Sindh and Punjab on January 18 and January 30 respectively was not possible. Meanwhile, Farogh Naseem counsel for the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) pleaded that the Sindh High Court verdict was applicable and the electoral process would not be stopped. He pleaded that Sindh government's emended number of illegal provisions in the legislation and made delimitations according to their will and sought a quick judgment instead of providing interim relief. On a bench query Khalid Javed Advocate General Sindh apprised the bench that the legislation was made in speed to comply with the apex court's order and there was a possibility of some mistakes. The AG also pleaded before the apex court to suspend the SHC verdict. While accepting the application of the Sindh government the apex court fixed the matter for hearing on January 27 and clubbed with all applications filed by individuals in this regard. Whereas the hearing regarding LB poll in the Punjab province would be take place on

The News - January 09, 2014

Supreme Court Rejects ECP's New LG Poll Schedule

The ambiguity regarding the holding of local government (LG) elections persists as the Supreme Court refused to approve the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) proposed new polling date for LG elections in Punjab and Sindh. Hearing ECP's application regarding the issuance of the proposed new LG elections schedule in two provinces due to the delay in printing of ballot papers, the three-member bench of the apex court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Tassaduq Hussain Jilani observed that since the whole delimitation process had been set aside by the Sindh High Court and Lahore High Court, there is no need to issue a revised polling date of local government elections at this stage. The bench also observed, "We are confident that the ECP will not show slackness in holding the LG elections." The chief justice has made it clear that the LG elections process would not be adjourned or delayed for an indefinite time period. Addressing MQM's counsel Farugh Nasim, the CJP said that he must be conscious about the mandate of Article 140-A. He observed that the governments did not complete their homework regarding the holding of LG elections; therefore, the court intervened in this regard. Appearing before the bench ECP Secretary Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan and Advocate Akram Sheikh told the court that due to the request of the Printing Corporation of Pakistan (PCP) and Pakistan Security Printing Corporation (PSPC) to extend the time for printing of ballot papers, he said that elections in Sindh on January 18 and in Punjab on January 30 appear to be impossible.

The ECP's counsel has also pointed out that printing of ballot papers could only be started after the issuance of the list of contesting candidates and not before that. Submitting the new proposed polling date of LG elections, the ECP secretary said that the commission had suggested February 23 as polling date in Sindh and March 13 in Punjab. The court, however, pointed out that after the issuance of verdicts by the two high courts, the commission had no need to issue a new proposed polling date. The court has also accepted the Sindh government's appeal against the SHC order against fresh delimitation carried out by the provincial government. Issuing notices to all respondents, the bench adjourned the hearing until January 27. Sindh Advocate General Khalid Javed contended before the bench that delimitation process was carried out in consultation with the ECP. He also requested the bench to suspend the SHC order so that the LG

elections could be held. He noted that 11,000 candidates had submitted their nomination papers. On the other hand, the counsel for MQM, Farugh Naseem opposed the Sindh AG's plea regarding the suspension of SHC's order and asked the bench to give an early date for regular hearing of the case.

Daily Times - January 09, 2014

Turf War Huffing and Puffing In Sindh

Elusive local government elections are in sight now thanks to the pressure of the judiciary. However, in the process, political threats are being hurled by the MQM chief, creating ripples in the country. The MQM is upset because of re-demarcation of the constituencies by the Sindh government. So, do not take the huffing and puffing about the division of Sindh seriously as it is just an election ploy. In any elections re-demarcation of constituencies is usually the first move to achieve favorable results by those in power. The PPP has done that precisely; its leaders were screaming hoarse when, during the Musharraf era, the MQM was the establishment's darling and managed to get the constituencies carved out as it suited them to win the election. This time it is role reversal. The MQM had it carved out well to gain favour in the elections. While Karachi was merged into one mega polis, Hyderabad was divided into three districts. This gave the MQM clean seats as Sindhi speaking areas were separated from the Urdu speaking Hyderabad city. The MQM leaders claim that, this time, the PPP has tried to stretch the constituencies where Mohajir votes were in overwhelming majority by including areas that have other ethnic populations also. And, at the same time, it has carved out constituencies that are non-Mohajir. Before the elections, the candidates use all the tricks in the bag to choose their voters by having their constituency tailored to their desire. We may see more of this at the national level once the belated population census is held sooner or later.

However, the fact remains that in democracies census has to be held every 10 years (ours is being done after 15 years) and constituencies have to be re-demarcated accordingly to match the demographic changes. Ongoing violent ethnic conflict in the city also happens to secure constituencies. The ANP has been saying that their Pakhtun population is close to six million, which means almost 30 percent of the 18 million strong Karachi populations - if the MQM's estimates are accepted. The present tussle between the two parties is mainly a prelude to the forthcoming local bodies and general elections. That looks like the most probable reason. Like all major cities in the world, Karachi has been going through a constant phase of linguistic demographic changes. The city, according to international figures, has a total population of 15.7 million people and ranks as the 13th biggest city in the world. Although, if one extrapolates its 1998 population as reported by the census and on the basis of official 3.5 percent growth rate, it should be around 15 million. However, the MQM maintains that the city's population is much larger. How they calculate this higher figure is not known. According to the 1998 survey, the demographic linguistic break-up is as follows: Urdu speaking 48.52 percent, Punjabi 13.64 percent, Pushto 11.96 percent, Sindhi just 7.34 percent, Balochi 4.34 percent, Sariaki 2.11 percent and the rest 12.09 percent. The rest includes Gujrati and other languages. On the basis of extrapolation of the 1998 census, it can be concluded that the Pakhtun population ratio should not be more than 14 to 15 percent in Karachi.

The number of Pakhtuns living in Karachi is registered as voters in Pakhtunkhwa or in the tribal areas. Until the issue of census, voters' list and constituencies' re-demarcation is not settled, Karachiites will remain on tenterhooks as more violence cannot be ruled out. The MQM and other opposition parties went to court challenging the PPP government's re-demarcation of constituencies and the court ruled in their favor. Now this is the first election where aspiring

candidates have filed their nomination without being sure about the remit of their constituency. It is doubtful that elections will be held on 18th January in this uncertain situation. The other issue is of scrapping the 2001 local government scheme. No doubt, the local government system given by Musharraf had some shortcomings but that could have been improved. However, all the provincial governments have reverted back to the colonial commissionerate system. The most positive part of the 2002 local bodies system was that it had put the local government servants under the elected representatives, undoing the colonial bureaucracy Raj. The PPP could have managed to redraw constituencies without reverting to a system that is bureaucratic in nature and is against the principle of separation of the judiciary and executive. Such thoughtless actions for short-term gains show poverty of serious thinking in all the parties. There is hardly a political party with formidable think tanks; the top leadership believes that they know it all.

Hence, we have seen all the ruling parties from the inception of Pakistan making political blunders without any exception. This system was opposed from day one by the bureaucracy, MNAs and MPAs as they could not tolerate sharing power with mostly middle class elected representatives at the local government level. These politicians have now restored the system that will enable them to interfere with the local governments' day-to-day work as the bureaucracy will now be accountable to the provincial government. Here the MQM is right in opposing the commissionerate system. The argument given by one important PPP leader was that they wanted to do away with the local government system given by a military dictator. Now this is nonsense. Instead, they reverted back to General Ziaul Haq's 1979 local government system and the 1861 colonial police act. They forgot that while bringing in the mega 18th amendment to the constitution, the parliamentarians sagaciously kept some of the positive reforms brought in by Musharraf - for instance, abolition of separate electorate and reserving more seats for women. The fault lies on both sides of the present divide. The PPP has hastened to change the laws curtailing local government powers and introducing the oppressive police act. The MQM is at fault in not accepting the fact that re-demarcation of constituencies is inevitable and the city representation has to be shared with other ethnic communities living in Karachi. No ethnic community should claim that it has the exclusive right to rule any city. Cosmopolitan cities like Karachi belong to all and their representation at the local, provincial and national level has to reflect the demographic mix. This is essential when the melting pot of mega cities has not yet integrated all the ethnic communities into one.

Daily Times - January 09, 2014

LG Poll Process On Amid Looming Uncertainty

Polling for local elections is set to be held on Jan 30 under the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) schedule given on Dec 9. But the deadline is most likely to be pushed forward as the Lahore High Court has declared null and void the delimitations and the ECP sought guidance from the Supreme Court to move forward on the issue. Locating his name in the cause list of additional sessions court of Sajjad Sindhar, the appellate authority for 274 UCs of Lahore, Sharif complains the returning officer rejected his nomination on the excuse that both his proposer and seconder -sons of Sharif - were not registered as voters in the UC. "How come votes of my unmarried sons living in my house be transferred to the adjacent locality (union council)," he asks desperately. At least 147 appellate authorities across Punjab are working to dispose of appeals against rejection of nomination papers from Jan 8 to Jan 11. A total of 420 such appeals have been filed with the court of Mr. Sindhar.

Some members of legal fraternity believe that continuing work on the previous election schedule is contempt of court in view of the LHC verdict, besides being ‘an exercise in futility’. This view is challenged by another lawyer, Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, also a PTI candidate for vice chairman slot for UC-151, Fatehgarh. “The court did not stay the election process. It just struck down the part of the local government law pertaining to delimitations with the directions that the polls be held as per schedule,” he says. He, however, admits that the whole exercise will turn futile if the apex court allowed carrying forward the polling date. The election staff continued scrutiny of nominations, receiving and disposing of objections against the candidatures despite the LHC short order on Dec 31. Faiz Naeem Warraich, district officer (welfare) working as the returning officer for UC 185-192, says they can stop the process only if the ECP notifies to the effect. He says he rejected the papers because the aspiring candidates either mentioned wrong delimitation or seat.

According to him, some candidates have applied against ‘peasant seat’ while Lahore has been declared a metropolis where the quota has been reserved for laborers instead of peasants, under the rules. It points out another anomaly in the election rules for there are many rural constituencies in Lahore where farming is being still done on commercial basis. The peasant community of these UCs will go unrepresented if the relevant rules are not changed. And the government is least interested in removing anomalies in the local government law for it is overly busy with the Youth Festival 2014. “Presently, we’re concentrating on the Youth Festival and have no time for looking into the modalities either of the local government law or anything else,” a senior officer in the local government department told. Another officer involved in the local polls claimed that there are informal instructions to give priority to the festival ‘forgetting the local elections’.

Dawn - January 11, 2014

ECP & Parties ‘Want’ Delay in Local Polls

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will not be the only beneficiary if the Supreme Court accepts the election authority’s plea for delay in local body polls. Some political parties have also been struggling to meet various procedural deadlines. The apex court is taking up the ECP petition. Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, the main opposition parliamentary party in Punjab, and former ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Q have so far neither issued party tickets to their respective nominees nor provided the ECP list(s) of the persons authorized to issue the tickets. Under the schedule, final lists of candidates along with their allotted symbols were to be published on Jan 13. The ECP, however, extended the date by three days in the hope that the apex court during hearing of the case will provide it relief by extending the polling day from Jan 30 to March 13. “So far just six parties have submitted lists along with signatures of their respective officials authorized for issuing tickets and the same have been forwarded to returning officers and assistant returning officers for necessary action accordingly,” a senior official of the ECP told. These parties included Pakistan People’s Party, Jamaat-i-Islami, JUI-F, PML-F, National Party and Istehkam-i-Pakistan Movement. The PPP has authorized four persons - Punjab President Manzoor Wattoo, General-Secretary Tanveer Ashraf Kaira, Makhdoom Shahabuddin and Amer Dogar. The short list suggests that the party is not expecting huge number of aspirants for its tickets. It has already abolished the ticket (processing) fees. The Jamaat-i-Islami has authorised its district president to issue tickets. The PTI admits its failure in catching up with the schedule. Punjab Information Secretary Andleeb Abbas says the party will be deciding its nominees between Jan 20 and 30. It means that the party is also sure that the polls will be postponed. Q-League General-Secretary Chaudhry Zaheer claims they have forwarded the authorized officials’ list to the ECP. He could not explain why the document did

not reach its destination - provincial offices of the Election Commission. In a candid talk, he admits that parties are not much aware about what to do in the present uncertainty shrouding the local polls.

Dawn - January 13, 2014

LG Elections in KPK Slip Away

The notable non-seriousness shown by the provincial governments and the electoral body in holding the local government elections unfolded a new episode, with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government requesting the ECP to delay the LG polls timeline in the province by end of March. The electoral body, in response, asked the provincial government to move the Supreme Court that is hearing a related case. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) also cancelled hundreds of thousands of nomination papers filed for LG polls in Sindh and Punjab and decided not to refund to respective candidates millions of rupees received as nomination papers' fees. This implies that all those candidates who decide not to contest the LG polls but have paid the fees would be deprived of the money paid to the ECP. The KPK government's request to ECP for LG polls' delay appears to have caught the provincial government in a paradox as, on one hand, the provincial government was the one to have claimed last year to conduct the LG polls in the province before September 15 while, on the other hand, it now seeks unusual delay on this count.

The ECP has already expressed its failure to hold the LG polls in Sindh and Punjab this month due to pending pre-poll preparations. It has also cited the related judgments of Sindh and Lahore high courts against constituencies' delimitations and the LG rules in the two provinces, following which the SC has allowed the commission to cancel related electoral schedules and announce fresh schedules after the relevant constitutional requirements are met. To discuss the prevalent issues concerning the LG polls, the commission's top management and the government officials concerned met here with Acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Nasir-ul-Mulk in the chair. The commission reviewed a request moved by KPK Chief Secretary Arbab Shahzad on behalf of the provincial government seeking delay in the LG polls by last week of March. In this context, the chief secretary cited technical difficulties being faced as result of the constituencies' delimitation in KP as well as the tough weather conditions in certain parts of the province. The commission asked the government functionary to move the SC which was hearing a related case on the LG polls in the three provinces, Punjab Sindh and KPK as well as the cantonment boards (CBs). On the ECP's request and recommendation, the SC last November had ordered the conduct of LG polls in Sindh and Punjab on January 18 and January 30 and KP and CBs in February.

Arbab Shahzad said expected heavy snowfall in parts of the KPK, especially in Galiyat and related belt of Hazara region, in February would make it difficult to make arrangements for the LG polls next month. "Snow completely melts by the last days of March and weather gets much better," he said and added technical difficulties like improper or incorrect delimitations in hundreds of constituencies were being faced owing to which the candidates concerned were moving applications against these inaccuracies. "Our government officials are receiving applications, conducting probes and taking decisions accordingly. It's the provincial government's job to conduct the delimitations of constituencies and remove irregularities, which we are doing," the chief secretary stated, adding fresh delimitations had been done in the areas where inaccuracies were detected. The provincial government would look into the possibility whether to move the SC for LG polls' delay, Shahzad said. In another development, the ECP cancelled hundreds of thousands of nomination papers filed by the candidates for the

Sindh and Punjab LG polls, while deciding the candidates would be required to submit fresh nomination papers, but without paying the fees afresh, on the production of fee payment receipts.

The commission, however, failed to devise a mechanism to reimburse the fees dues to those who earlier submitted their nomination papers along with fees but are not interested in contesting the polls once the new election schedules are issued for the two provinces. “The candidates have to produce only the fee receipts and they would not be paying any money,” ECP Additional Secretary Syed Sher Afgan told journalists, without elaborating the specifications. He said the proposed use of biometric verification system in the LG polls in KPK would be discussed at the commission’s next meeting whose date would be finalized soon. Last month, Sher Afgan admitted before the National Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Affairs that the introduction of biometric system was not possible in KPK’s LG polls as demanded by the provincial government, taking the plea that the technology was very expensive and was possible only in dust-free environment. The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and the CBs have yet to frame the LG election rules which require the passage of respective bills from the Parliament, Afgan said in a media briefing.

The Nation - January 16, 2014

ECP Advises KP Government to Approach SC to Get Local Bodies Polls

The Election Commission of Pakistan advised the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to approach the Supreme Court if it wanted to get local government elections delayed in the province. Sources told that the KP chief secretary had informed the commission that it was not possible to hold the polls in February. He said at a meeting presided over by acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Nasirul Mulk that the delimitation exercise was likely to be completed by the end of the current month and LG elections could be held by the end of March. An official said the Printing Corporation of Pakistan had sought three to four weeks for printing about nine million ballot papers for KP. He also said that the KP government’s insistence to use biometric system for verification of voters could delay the polls for an indefinite period. He said that 50,000 electronic voting machines (EVMs), each costing about Rs. 30,000, would be required. Most of the technical problems identified in EVMs during a recent pilot project in Peshawar had been resolved. The machine would require less than 30 seconds for verifying a voter. The director general cantonments informed the meeting that the defense secretary had gone abroad and the LG law for cantonments was still pending before a parliamentary committee. The matter was deferred after the meeting was informed that the case was fixed before the Supreme Court. Representatives of the federal government asserted that they were not bound to hold LG elections in February because the Supreme Court’s order had made no mention of the Federal Capital Territory. They said a draft law had been introduced in the National Assembly and after its passage by parliament delimitation would be carried out. The exercise will require 75 days.

Dawn - January 16, 2014

Balochistan By-Polls Held In 12 Districts

However, voting could not take place for another 331 seats in several districts, including Awaran and Kalat, as no one had filed nomination papers there. Reports said PML-N won the contest for Jaffarabad Union Council where its candidate Nazar Mohammad Bhangar secured 252 votes against 168 polled by his opponent. Polling remained suspended for about two

hours after the PML-N candidate and his supporters complained of bogus voting at a booth for women. The PML-N had grabbed majority of seats in the local government elections in Jaffarabad district on Dec 7 last year. The Domki group, headed by provincial Minister for Labor and Manpower Sardar Sarfaraz Domki, won the polls for ward-6 and 22 seats of Sibi municipal committee. The Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party was leading in Harnai district by securing 14 seats. The Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl bagged two seats while results from other constituencies are awaited.

According to unofficial results from different areas, Jaffar Khan and Gulab Din won the contest in Shirani district; Abdul Majid and Abdul Karim in Mastung district; Wahid Ahmed in Qila Saifullah; Ayub, Nasir Ali and Haider in Gwadar; Ali Mohammad in Pishin and Naimatullah in Quetta. Earlier, Provincial Election Commission had said that by-polls would be held for about 549 seats in Harnai, Awaran, Gwadar, Dera Bugti and other districts. Later, it announced that by-elections were held for 98 seats only - 74 of those in Harnai district alone. The voting could not be held in other districts as no candidates had filed nomination papers. "The polling process remained smooth and peaceful," Provincial Election Commissioner Syed Sultan Bayazid said, adding that polling continued from 8am to 5pm without interval. He said official results would be announced, adding that schedule for elections on seats reserved for women, farmers, laborers and minorities would be released later. Home Secretary Asad Gilani said that Frontier Corps personnel were deployed in Harnai and other sensitive areas to assist police and Levies Force in maintaining law and order. Two hundred soldiers of the army remained alert to meet any eventuality.

Dawn - January 20, 2014

Heads Up: LG Polls Plan To Be Announced In Three Days

Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Inayatullah Khan said the provincial government will announce its plans for holding local government (LG) polls in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) in the next three days. Addressing a meeting of Jamaat-e-Islami's working group on local government; Khan said the government will announce the plan for holding the polls phase-wise under the biometric system. "Meetings in this regard will be held among the K-P government, Election Commission of Pakistan and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) in the next three days for finalizing the decisions," he told participants, adding they were keen on holding the polls under the biometric system. "There are chances the biometric system will be used phase-wise because the machines will be transported to other districts where the elections will be held at a later stage." Khan also shared delimitation had almost been completed across the province. The working group's chairman, Dr Muhammad Iqbal Khalil, said his party is fully prepared for participating in the LG elections and will prefer an alliance with the coalition partners for the polls.

The Express Tribune - January 22, 2014

By-Polls for PK-50: PTI Retains Haripur Seat after Close Fight

Amid tight security and fear of clashes, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) succeeded in retaining the hotly-contested provincial assembly seat (PK 50 Haripur II) during by-election held. According to unofficial results, PTI candidate Akbar Ayub Khan, the younger brother of former provincial minister Yusuf Ayub Khan and grandson of military dictator Gen Ayub Khan, bagged 25,671 votes, defeating PML-N's Qazi Asad who stood runner-up with 19,669 votes. Independent candidate Babar Nawaz polled 19,417 votes. The election was held in the Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's constituency seven months after election tribunal disqualified Yusuf Ayub Khan, the PTI's provincial minister, for having a fake degree. There were seven candidates in the contest including Akbar Ayub of PTI, Qazi Asad of PML-N, Tahir Qureshi of PPP, Irum Fatima of ANP, and independent candidates including Babar Nawaz, Sheryar Khan and Shakeel Ahmed. Tough contest was expected between Qazi Asad, Akbar Ayub and Babar Nawaz.

Turnout

The polling started at scheduled time and lasted till 5.00pm in the evening on all the 116 polling stations of the constituency. Initially the voter turnout remained stuck between 16 and 22 per cent despite there being a local holiday in the district. However it rose to 30 to 33% as the voting exercise drew to a close. An extraordinary activity was witnessed in urban as well as rural polling stations. Minor altercations and scuffles between the supporters of candidates were reported from localities of Pathan Colony, Mohra Mamdooh, Rehana, Darwesh, Roshan Abad and some other polling stations that led to brief suspension of polling. Babar Khan accused the provincial government of using official machinery for maneuvering the election. He said PTI's provincial president Azam Swati went to different polling stations covertly pressurizing election staff to favour his party's candidate. However Akbar Ayub rejected the allegation.

Voter Harassment

In some instances, supporters of candidates were found convincing the voters openly inside the polling station and peeping through the screen while a voter was busy stamping ballot papers.

Police Deployment

Assistant Superintendent Police Headquarters Wahid Mehmood termed the overall situation during election peaceful. Over 1,000 personnel of Anti-Terrorism Squad, Elite Force and regular police were deployed for the security of voters, he told. Additional military troops were on stand-by to assist the police, he said. Sniffer dogs were used to clear the polling stations declared as sensitive. He said the police also apprehended 16 Afghan nationals on charges of violating a ban on their movement on the Election Day under section 144.

The Express Tribune - January 24, 2014

Sindh Says Local Government Polls Not Possible Soon

While the Supreme Court is due to start hearing a petition of Sindh government challenging a Sindh High Court (SHC) judgment that annulled the delimitation exercise carried out for local government elections in the province, the PPP-led provincial government believes the elections are unlikely to be held soon. A Sindh minister said the elections would not be possible for months due to a host of reasons, the foremost being the preparedness of the provincial authorities to hold the polls. There is also the question of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) which too will require considerable time to accomplish the task. "It will take months to hold the local government elections in Sindh," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Sikandar Mandhro told. He said a lot depended on the fate of his government's petition in the Supreme Court. "The high court has annulled the entire delimitation exercise carried out for the local government elections. It also nullified the third amendment to the LG law," he remarked. The minister said the long and cumbersome delimitation exercise would have to be carried out again in case the SC upheld the SHC's verdict. "Besides, we'll have to fix the law as per the directions of the apex court."

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court had allowed the ECP to decide on new schedules for LG elections in Sindh by consulting the provincial government. “It (also) depends a lot on us to get ready by arranging all the requirements for the elections. As per the constitution, the ECP will need at least 85 days to hold the elections after getting the nod from the provincial authorities,” Dr Mandhro said. “We were set to hold the elections on time before the opposition parties moved the court,” he added. Another PPP leader said: “At least five to six months are required for holding the LG elections.” Meanwhile, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), which now has four members in the provincial legislature, has blamed both the PPP and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) for the delay in local government elections. “These two parties are on the same page on the matter,” said Syed Hafeezuddin, an MPA and PTI’s provincial general secretary. “Both of them are trying hard not to empower the people.” He said the two parties were opposing each other publicly but in reality were supporting each other. “Their actions clearly show their intentions. Otherwise, we were ready to take part in the elections, no matter how flawed the law was.”

While Mr. Hafeezuddin said his party would launch protests if the elections were delayed unnecessarily, a leader of the MQM went even further and said his Karachi-based party would move the court again if the elections were delayed as a strategy. “We are the party that is always ready for elections and our record shows that we have never gone for delaying local government elections,” said Khwaja Izharul Hasan, the MQM’s deputy parliamentary leader in the Sindh assembly. He said the PTI indirectly supported the MQM’s stance on the floor of the legislature and also in the court against certain amendments to the local government law. “If the PTI thinks that we are behind a conspiracy for delaying the elections, then they were a part of the scheme because they supported our stance. “Besides, the PTI should not forget that they haven’t given any date for LG elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where they rule.” The MQM wanted the local government elections to be held in the shortest possible time in Sindh, he added.

Dawn - January 26, 2014

Musical Chairs: PML-N Bags NA-19

After a long battle lasting eight months, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz’s (PML-N) Omar Ayub Khan emerged victorious against his nemesis from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Dr Raja Amir Zaman, after re-polling at seven polling stations of NA-19. According to unofficial results, Omar secured 2,506 votes while Zaman bagged 2,059. During the general elections last year, Zaman had defeated Omar with a lead from these seven polling stations which saw re-election. After Omar challenged the results, a recount was ordered wherein Zaman again emerged victorious. Omar then challenged the results one more time and moved the election tribunal for re-polling at the seven polling stations. His request was subsequently accepted. According to unofficial results, Zaman lost during re-polling at the two polling stations in Khalabat Township, and one each in Aooli, Bagra, Kalinjar and Hamlet Ghazi. He, however, won from his native polling station in Mamrial village, securing 810 votes against Omar’s 380. There were 9,198 registered voters in the seven polling stations. Meanwhile, polling was suspended for over an hour at Hamlet Ghazi polling station after an argument between the two candidates. Both accused each other of violating the election code of conduct, but police officials intervened and averted a possible clash. Some women voters complained their votes had already been cast when they went to cast the ballot.

The Express Tribune - January 30, 2014

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**Child Labor****Civil Society Seeks Ban on Child Domestic Workers**

The Child Rights Movement (CRM) Punjab, along with numbers of different civil society organizations staged a protest demonstration outside Lahore Press Club and demanded ban on child domestic labor in the city as well as across the province. The protesters were carrying banners and placards inscribed with different slogans against killings of two child workers by their employers in city during last few days. The protesters said deaths of 10 years old Erum Ramzan at Askari 9 North Cantt and 16 years old Azra at Mochipura Faisal Town January 2 and January 5, respectively by their employers was a stark reminder to society and the government of Punjab which had continuously ignored unending brutal and merciless murders of child domestic workers in provincial metropolis. The organizers of CRM said that Erum's was the first reported case in which the employer confessed torturing the child which resulted her death but in all reported cases (including of Azra) since January 2010, no employer has admitted the crime. They said that police registered complaint against the rich employers on complaints of the victim's families but the CRM feared that police might twist the realities or parents might compromise with culprits because they could stand to influence of the culprits and bear to fight the cases for justice. Azra had come from poor vicinity in Punjab and worked as maid at the house for three months. The employer claimed that the girl had committed suicide.

In all such cases, the employers always make such statements. It is being reported by the police that at the crime scene there was no hook or other support which Azra could have used to hang herself. The CRM member Iftikhar Mubarak said that the media and different organizations had reported more cases of torture on and death of child domestic workers in 2013. The year 2013 proved very lethal for children though the last government had declared it the year of child rights, but in it 21 cases, including eight deaths of child domestic workers (CDWs) were reported. All of the cases in 2013 were reported from Punjab province only; except two, all were girls. The CRM Coordinator Ghazi Nazir said that since January 2010 to December 2013, 52 cases of tortures on CDWs are reported including 24 deaths and 85 percent cases were from Punjab. In 2010, 12 cases of torture on CDWs were reported including seven deaths; in 2011, 10 cases of torture on CDWs were reported, of which six children were dead; and in 2012, eight cases including three deaths were reported. The CRM said that CDWs were deprived of all fundamental rights given in the Constitution of Pakistan (such as Articles 11, 25 (3), 25A) and even the right to life. In June 2013, the Supreme Court of Pakistan had also declared CDW as illegal and unconstitutional and had directed the governments to take measures accordingly.

Pakistan acknowledges and prohibits forced labor, external trafficking, slavery and worst forms of child labor only in documents but yet has not been able to take any legal and administrative measures to ban CDW and stop brutal torture and murders of helpless innocent CDWs, mainly girls. In the light of the UNCRC and its Optional Protocol on Sale of Children, ILO's Conventions 182 and the Constitution of Pakistan, the federal and provincial governments should immediately declare CDW a form of slavery and include it in the list of worst form of child labor and should immediately be banned across the country under the list of banned occupation given in the Punjab Employment of Children (Amendment) Act 2011.

Daily Times - January 08, 2014

HR Related Issues

Illegal Immigrants: 208 Pakistanis Deported Every Day Since 2009

"I did not have a single penny to feed my four kids after being deported from the UAE," the 34-year-old told. "My agent cheated me and now I have nowhere to go." Farid is just one of over 380,000 Pakistanis who have been deported from 54 countries since 2009. According to the official figures obtained, the average deportation of Pakistanis during the five-year period amounts to 208 per day. "No one helped us. We packed up and were sent home in a special plane arranged by the UAE government, which dropped us at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport," Farid said, recalling the days when the Gulf States started a crackdown against illegal immigrants last year. "Before leaving Pakistan, I had handed over all my savings to an agent, Farid of Ward Sheikha Wala, Layyah, for documentation. But it was all a fraud - we were ultimately sent back to Pakistan as our documents were found to be forged," he said. While these figures are startling, Pakistan itself has handed over an estimated 25,712 illegal immigrants to some two dozen countries during the last five years.

Over 259,000 (67% of the total figure) Pakistanis were deported from four brotherly countries, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Iran and Oman. Saudi Arabia deported more than 122,000 Pakistanis during the last five years. Around 60,000 in 2013; 17,000 in 2012; 15,667 in 2011; 15,231 in 2010; and 14,878 Pakistanis were deported in 2009. Over 63,000 Pakistanis were deported from the UAE between 2009 and 2013. The Iranian immigration staff has sent back around 43,000 Pakistanis in the last five years. Tehran handed over some 9,000 illegal immigrants to Pakistan's border authorities at the Taftan border in Balochistan in 2013. Similarly, the United States sent some 600 Pakistanis home in the last five years, with 90 deported in 2013. The United Kingdom has deported some 9,000 Pakistanis since 2008 on the grounds that they were living there without proper documentation. Around 2,100 Pakistanis were expelled in 2013. Over 31,000 Pakistanis were deported from Oman in the last five years, with 6,123 in 2013 alone.

Over these five years, as many as 14,280 Pakistanis were deported from Greece, with 2,564 illegal immigrants sent home just last year. More than 6,500 Pakistanis were deported from Turkey in the last five years, with 1,345 illegal immigrants sent back in 2013. Almost 6,500 Pakistanis were deported from Serbia. South Africa sent home around 2,000 Pakistanis in the last five years while some 27 Pakistanis were deported from Afghanistan. While 12 were deported from China, Canada saw 79 deportations with France expelling 575 Pakistanis in the last five years. A senior official associated with an Anti-Human Trafficking Circle under the Federal Investigation Agency that there are two reasons behind this mass deportation. In the first instance, deportees deliberately misplaced their documents to prolong their illegal stay. Some migrants managed to gain entry of other countries on the basis of forged documents usually prepared by their agents or human traffickers, he added.

The Express Tribune - January 08, 2014

GENDER WATCH**Political Women Empowerment****Gender Sensitivity: Speakers Advocate Equal Rights For Women**

The rights accorded to women in Pakistan, or lack thereof, has been a contentious topic. “Women are important segments of our society and major contributors to our economy,” Dr Manzoor Ahmed said while explaining the significance of women rights. He observed that the dilemma of our society remains that every one of us dreams of a tolerant public space, where rights are accorded to people who can exercise them, but no one is ready to work for it. He further added that women empowerment is imperative if we want to prepare our women for leadership roles in the future. Facts and figures evincing women empowerment from the last two years were cited by him in validation of his argument. Nazoora Ali hailed the positive developments which have occurred with regards to women rights in the recent past. She delved into an in-depth discussion of various clauses of the constitution related to human rights, highlighting the struggle of women from around the world who are held back by the predominant system. These problems and the protests registered by women across the board indicate that no religion, culture or value system denies the provision of healthcare or education to women. She concluded by asserting that every person in their individual capacity and sphere of influence needs to exercise their agency to bring about the betterment of society. Other areas of concern such as violence against women, female education, right of information, child marriages, child labor, war crimes against women and economic injustice were also brought to the fore in the discussion.

The Express Tribune - January 04, 2014

Latvia Nominates First Woman Prime Minister

Latvia is poised to get its first woman prime minister after the country’s president tasked Laimdota Straujuma with forming a new government. Straujuma, 62, is to replace Valdis Dombrovskis, who stepped down after a deadly supermarket roof collapse in a suburb of the capital Riga in November. Latvia’s agriculture minister since 2011, Straujuma impressed with her negotiating skills to press for a better EU deal for her country’s farmers. Dombrovskis remains as caretaker premier pending the formation of the new government, which is expected to take two to three weeks. The new administration will rule until scheduled elections in October. “I am confident that this centre-right coalition can work effectively,” Straujuma told reporters in Riga. Dombrovskis, a 42-year-old trained physicist respected for his squeaky clean politics, resigned on November 27 over the catastrophic collapse of a supermarket roof in Riga which killed 54 people. He was the longest serving premier since Latvia gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Latvia, a largely rural Baltic state with a population of two million, became an EU member state in 2004. This year it became the 18th EU country to adopt the euro as its currency. Straujuma, who was previously an economist and civil servant, has up to now served as a non-partisan politician. She was made a member of the liberal-conservative Unity party in order to become their official nominee.

At her Riga news conference she was flanked by representatives of four political parties which supported her candidacy as prime minister in principle. Straujuma said her priorities heading the new government would be using EU funds effectively, and improving education. “It is

necessary to maintain stability for the next nine months,” she said. Local media have commented on her physical resemblance to Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel. But Straujuma laughed that off saying: “I’m deeply flattered to be compared to Mrs. Merkel.” Having received presidential backing, Straujuma will now hold talks with political parties represented in parliament. The coalition of four parties, plus independent lawmakers, which she outlined would give her control of 66 out of the 100 seats in the Latvian parliament or Saeima. Though no woman has ever headed a government in Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga held the presidency for two consecutive terms from 1999 to 2007 and is widely regarded as one of the country’s best presidents.

Daily Times - January 07, 2014

Call To Recruit Woman Cops to Cope With Gender-Based Violence

Experts urged the government to recruit women in police force to end gender-based violence in society. Speakers and participants of a policy dialogue on gender responsive policing stressed to recruit woman police at key posts and subjects related to gender-based violence must be included in the police training courses. They opined that gender sensitive training should be provided to police force and women should be encouraged to join police force in order negate the impression that police is not career job for women. They also urged the high-ups of police to expand the role of women police to all departments including investigations, patrolling and coping with terrorist activities. The participants of the policy dialogue further said that women police should be provided with conducive environment and there is a dire need to improve existing working of women police, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). The policy dialogue on gender responsive policing policy of KPK police was jointly organized by KPK government and Aitebaar, a non-government organization with the cooperation of DFID aimed to further develop the proposed policy on making policing more gender responsive.

The Nation - January 10, 2014

Uks Launches Annual Desk Diary: Dilemma of Women through the Eyes of the Media

Uks Research Centre launched its Annual Desk Diary 2014 titled ‘Women of Pakistan: rebuilding lives courageously after each disaster and conflict’ which focused on the disasters and crises that have struck Pakistan, besides analyzing how the media reported on these disasters from a gender perspective. Being a media advocacy group, Uks also keeps a constant eye on the relationship between the media and social issues and to what extent the media reflects and corrects social behavior, whether of an individual or of a group or community. With the aim of enhancing awareness of this extremely sensitive and important issue, Uks, after thorough research compiled the report which in particular focused on the plight of women who were affected by natural disasters in the country. Accordingly, this year’s desk diary looks at the dilemma of women through the eyes of the media, how and to what extent the editors, columnists, reporters, photographers and cartoonists acknowledged and took up the sufferings of women as a major issue after disasters. Uks also kept a constant eye on the relationship between the media and social issues and the extent to which the media reflects and corrects social behavior.

The diary also highlights the media’s role in helping these women by bringing their issues to the attention of the public. People belonging to different sectors of society ranging from the print and electronic media, civil society, NGOs were present on the occasion. The launch began with an introduction of Uks and the 2014 Diary. Uks Director Tasneem Ahmar spoke about each

year's desk diary being based on a particular theme that ranges from women and politics, health, education and entrepreneurship. She also spoke of the extensive research that goes into the making of this diary every year and explained how this handy document gives a well-rounded view of the theme for a particular year, essentially related to women development. Tasneem expressed her concern over the lack of space given to news on the issue of women in the media and said, "The main focus of the diary is to bring out to the public what the media has reported on women and disasters and also to emphasize that the media needs to report on disaster/crisis issues with a gender lens." A documentary by Samar Minallah titled 'Women in Conflict' was also played during the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Tahira Abdullah, the volunteer editor of the diary, said, "The 2014 diary is yet another milestone achievement of Uks, commemorating the bravery, courage and resilience of Pakistani women." "This is true not just in disasters and conflicts - we are always brave and resilient." Renowned TV anchor Asma Shirazi also addressed the participants of the launch, sharing her experiences of reporting in disaster-hit areas. Audio clips from Uks' vast collection of radio programmes on disaster and crisis were also played at the beginning of the ceremony, which was accompanied by a slide presentation.

Daily Times - January 23, 2014

NCSW Chairperson Criticizes Abolition of 33% Women's Quota

While criticizing the local government acts 2013 placed by provincial governments, National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz said that the provinces have rolled back representation of women into local governments system by abolishing their 33 per cent reserved seats. She said that there was representation of women having 33 per cent seats into 2001 local bodies system introduced by the military regime while in 2013 these seats were abolished. "New local government system placed by the provinces have rolled back what we had achieved through ten year struggle in 2001 local bodies system," the NCSW chairperson said while participating in panel discussion organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). On the occasion of launch of its new quarterly magazine named "Development Advocate: Pakistan" by UNDP, the panelists comprising renowned names asked the government to establish independent commission for delimitation of constituencies after conducting population census and holding elections on party basis in order to strengthen local government system in the country.

Saeed Shafqat, Director of Centre for Public Policy and Governance said that the 18th Constitutional amendment was game changer in the country's history, but the provinces seemed reluctant to devolve financial and administrative powers to the local governments. Haris Khalique, columnist and analyst said that evolutionary process would take its time for getting its strength so when masses would elect their representatives in local bodies they would strive to get powers from the provinces. The legal wizard, Babar Sattar, said that independent commission should be established for ensuring fair delimitation. The population census should be held as ground realities have changed altogether in 2013 compared to 1998. Seeking the opportunity to share and foster robust national public discourse on development challenges and solutions in Pakistan and to provide a platform for Pakistani authorities, civil society and intelligentsia to exchange ideas on key development solution pathways in Pakistan, UNDP released its development magazine, The Development Advocate.

The first edition titled 'A New Way Forward for Local Governance in Pakistan' focuses on local governance including perspectives from the civil society, academia and government counterparts. In countries around the world, the absence of effective local governance

arrangements exacerbates inequality, instability and underdevelopment, as well as social exclusion and lack of empowerment among youth, women and minority groups. Local government is fundamental to mitigating these grievances as it brings government closer to the people, and has the potential to increase the quality and coverage of services to citizens. Haoliang Xu, UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific launched the publication. He said, “The 18th Constitutional Amendment - unanimously passed in 2010 - has set new directions for Pakistan as a federal, democratic and parliamentary state. Pakistan is undergoing a very critical phase of implementation and transition management of this Amendment. In this most important endeavor - and at the request of the Government of Pakistan - UNDP is pleased to support the Government and the people of Pakistan in this process.’ Marc-André Franche, Country Director UNDP in Pakistan thanked the panelists and said, “Today marks the beginning of what will be an ongoing discourse leading to innovative development solutions. We are creating a space for dialogue that bridges the gap between policy and people’s daily lives.”

The News - January 25, 2014

Violence Against Women

Cyber Stalking: New Challenges

The country is catching up fast with the cyber world, a clue being the way cyber crime is becoming an issue. Reported misuse of the technology ranges from websites being hacked to forgery and financial fraud. But of the more than 30 registered offences that were committed through the internet, it is cyber stalking that tops the list. More than 80 per cent of all the complaints registered with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) vis-à-vis the internet pertains to this. Most of the victims are young women facing blackmail, harassment and extortion. And in most cases, those harmed are not just the victims but also their families. “It is becoming a pervasive problem,” said a senior FIA official, pointing out that the reporting ratio is much too low. “Victims don’t know where to report. Those who do know are afraid that the FIA will make things harder. In other instances, complainants do not open up, making investigations difficult. It is imperative that individuals coming forth cooperate fully because cyber stalking is as much of an offence as any other criminal act.”

Incidents of blackmail and harassment are not limited to social networking sites - mostly Facebook and sometimes Twitter. The FIA has also come across cases where morphed or genuine images, the contact details of individuals or the phone numbers of family members, were uploaded on OLX.com, a popular online marketing website. “It is outside our purview but during past investigations we have learned that some working women had to quit their jobs [due to cyber stalking],” said the official. “There have been problems between engaged couples, as well as cases where such acts bring disgrace to the neighborhoods where the victims of cyber stalking live.” Mostly, it’s men harassing women. But in 5pc of the cyber stalking complaints registered with the FIA, women have been harassing men.

Cyber stalking is mainly an issue with undergrads and in some cases with dropouts. Of the complaints registered with the FIA, 20pc are against teachers (for harassing students) and another 10pc of the incidents happened in the workplace. “It’s done mostly to settle scores,” the official said. The official suggested that it was imperative that parents monitor their child’s activities on the internet. This can be done by placing the desktop in shared space, where the child or young adult knows that adult supervision is likely. Parents ought to keep an eye on who their children talk to over mobile phones. “It is important that the possibility of abuse via computers and the internet is taught in schools and colleges, as well as how it can be avoided,”

said the official. "It is also necessary for internet users to set privacy settings to the maximum, especially on social networking sites." Some college and university teachers argue that students here are taught imported syllabi and that lessons specific to the challenges of Pakistani society are ignored. "It is important that our syllabus touches issues of the land and the problems of the people," said Tahir Malik, who teaches international relations at the National University of Modern Languages in Islamabad.

While FIA sources assert that awareness in academic institutions and students is necessary, the agency also emphasizes the need for legislation. Pakistan does not have a specific law to deal with cyber crimes, particularly cyber stalking. In the absence of such a law or ordinance, the FIA cannot touch many issues. Government offices relied on the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Ordinance, 2007. When it lapsed in November, 2009, they turned to the older Electronics Transaction Ordinance (ETO), 2002, when required. Under the ETO, the highest punishment for cyber crimes is a maximum of seven years in prison. So far, the FIA has been content with the conviction rate, said the agency's official. But "because we do not have a law, international internet concerns are not bound to assist to curb incidents of cyber crime in Pakistan," he pointed out. "We've been lucky so far in that they entertain our requests and oblige. But this cannot go on forever." The Ministry of Information and Technology (MoIT) has been working on the Cyber Crimes Bill for two years. "Most of the work on the bill is done," said Kamran Ali, the MoIT's Member Legal.

Dawn - January 05, 2014

SECTARIAN CRISES & CONFLICT WATCH

Conflict & Sectarian Crisis Incidents

Security Briefs for the Month of January

Date	Incidents	Killed	Injured
January 01, 2014	At least three people were killed and 30 injured in a suicide attack targeting Shia pilgrims in Akhtarabad area of the provincial capital Quetta.	8	30
January 02, 2014	Three alleged gangsters, identified as Attaullah (35), Adil Khattak (30) and Hamid alias Mota (36), were shot dead during an ambush by a rival group in Ibrahim Hyderi's Ilyas Goth area in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.	6	0
January 04, 2014	At least three Shia men were killed and four others were injured in an incident of firing by armed assailants Maskan Chowrangi in Gulshan-e-Iqbal area of Karachi.	6	0
January 06, 2014	At least nine persons, including three suspected militants and three children, were killed and several others were wounded in a bomb blast targeting the house of tribal elder Hakeem Khan Akakhel in Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency in FATA.	18	∞
January 07, 2014	At least six dead bodies were found near the Sufi shrine of shrine of Ayub Shah Bukhari in Gulshan-e-Maymar area of Gadap Town in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.	12	0
January 08, 2014	At least 10 militants and three SFs were killed when militants attacked Green Ridge check post in Ladha subdivision South Waziristan Agency of FATA.	26	0
January 09, 2014	CID of Karachi Police claimed killing a trio of TTP militants in Manghopir area of Gadap Town in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.	6	0
	Three Policemen, CID SP Chaudhry Aslam Khan was killed and 10 others were injured when a suicide bomber smashed his car into Aslam's convoy near Essa Nagri at the Lyari Expressway.	8	10
January 10, 2014	Three TTP militants were killed in an alleged Police encounter within the jurisdiction of Mauripur Police Station in Musharraf Colony of Baldia Town in Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.	6	0
January 12, 2014	Five persons, including three Policemen and two security guards were killed in an IED blast targeting the convoy of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's senior aide Amir Muqam in Shangla District of KP.	10	0
January 14, 2014	Police found four unidentified men's bodies near a riverbank in the Amagarh area of Nowshera District in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.	8	0
January 15,	Three suspected militants were killed while five others	6	0

2014	arrested by the SFs during a search operation in Zaidi area of Khuzdar District in Balochistan.		
January 17, 2014	Three people, including Mufti Usman Yar, the Secretary General of JUI-S, were killed when unidentified militants opened fire on a car near Awami Markaz in Shahra-e-Faisal Town of Karachi. The other two killed were his driver and a personal guard.	6	0
	TTP militants killed three Express News staffers, including a technician, guard and driver, by opening fire on a DSNG vehicle near Matric Board Office in North Nazimabad Town. TTP Karachi Chapter 'spokesman' Sajjad Mohmand claimed responsibility for the attack.	6	0
	Four people were killed and 65 others were injured when Khushaal Khan Khattak Express passenger train carrying around 400 passengers derailed following a bomb explosion on its tracks in Omar Kot area of Rojhan sub-district in Rajanpur District of Punjab.	8	65
January 18, 2014	Three persons were killed when unidentified assailants opened fire on a car carrying ASWJ leader at Noori Gate in Sargodha area of same District in Punjab.	6	0
January 19, 2014	At least 26 soldiers were killed and another 24 were injured when a bomb ripped through a military convoy in the Bannu Town (Bannu District) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at 8:45 am.	52	24
January 20, 2014	Army helicopters pounded several militant hideouts in Mir Ali area of North Waziristan Agency in FATA killing at least 24 persons and injuring 15 others.	48	15
	A TTP suicide bomber killed 13 persons, including eight soldiers and three children, and wounded 29 others in Royal Artillery Bazaar close to General Headquarters in Rawalpindi District of Punjab.	28	29
January 21, 2014	At least 24 Shia pilgrims returning from Iran were killed and 40 others were injured in a bomb attack targeting their bus in the Khusak area of Kanak in Mastung District.	48	40
	Three abductors were killed while three people, including a Police Official, one ATF official and one passerby, were injured in an operation near Sariab Road in Quetta.	6	3
	At least 12 suspected militants were killed when fighter jets bombed their hideouts in the Inzar Kor area of Kukikhel in Khyber Agency of FATA.	42	0
	Six Police officers and a 13-year-old student were killed and nine others injured in a bomb blast near a police mobile in Sardheri Bazaar of Charsadda Town (Charsadda District) in KP.	14	9
	Three anti-polio workers were shot dead when unidentified militants opened fire on them in Qayyumabad area of Korangi Town in Karachi of Sindh.	6	0
January 22, 2014	SFs claimed to have killed about 32 militants in Tora Waila, Darota area of Kukikhel in Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency in FATA.	64	0
	At least five people, including a woman, identified as Raquiya	10	∞

	(35), her son and a relative, were killed and several others were injured in a grenade attack during a clash between gangsters near Juna Masjid in Zikri Mohalla of Lyari Town in Karachi.		
	Four unidentified dead bodies were found an empty plot near Link Road, within the jurisdiction of Memon Goth Police Station in Bin Qasim Town.	6	0
	At least eight persons, including seven Levies personnel and one militant were killed, while ten others, including a Spanish tourist, were injured when a militant kidnapping bid was foiled in Darin Garh area of Koshak in Mastung District of Balochistan.	16	10
January 23, 2014	At least six persons were killed and eight injured when a bomb exploded in a vehicle at a car workshop near Scheme Chowk area of Peshawar, the provincial capital of KP.	12	8
January 25, 2014	Unidentified assailants, riding motorcycles, attacked a Police van near Afaq House in Landhi town of Karachi in Sindh with a hand grenade and opened fire on the other. The attacks left six Policemen injured who later succumbed to the injuries at Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre.	12	0
	Four militants were killed and seven others arrested by the Balochistan FC during a search operation in Shabood area of Panjgur District of Balochistan.	8	0
January 26, 2014	Around 25 dead bodies were found buried in the Totak area of Khuzdar District in Balochistan.	50	0
	Six children were killed and one injured while playing with a hand grenade in Babar Mela area of Hangu town (Hangu District) in KP.	12	1
January 27, 2014	The bodies of three persons were found in Badhaber area on the outskirts of Peshawar, the capital of KP.	6	0
January 29, 2014	Two Rangers and the security guard of a nearby telephone exchange were killed while two passersby were wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside the main entrance of the Headquarters of Pakistan Rangers Sacchal Wing in the North Nazimabad Town of Karachi, the provincial capital of Sindh.	8	2
January 31, 2014	Three FC personnel were killed and four others sustained injuries in a roadside IED explosion near Awaran town (Awaran District) of Balochistan.	6	4

Compiled from different dialies

Peace Talks with Talibans

Taliban Talks Need No Nod from Foreign Powers: PM

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said the government does not need to take permission from the world powers to hold talks with the Taliban. He said the country was entrapped by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because of the wrong policies of the previous government. He was speaking to senior journalists during a meeting of the federal cabinet at the Prime

Minister's Office. He said Pakistan is a sovereign country and does not need to ask anybody to run its affairs. He said the government would talk to the Taliban without 'them' (world powers) and it is unfortunate the way matters were handled had made the situation worse. He said the government has not made any decision with the approval or a certificate from anyone else. He said they have not adopted a 'double policy'. "Before coming to power, we opposed drone attacks," Nawaz said, and added that after coming to power, "I made it clear in the presence of US President Barack Obama that drone attacks are not acceptable to us." He said the country has improved its relations with Afghanistan to a great extent. He said through Mullah Baradar, Pakistan is acting as a bridge between the Taliban and President Hamid Karzai. He said Pakistan arranged a meeting between a delegation led by Salahuddin Rabbani and Mullah Baradar. He said his government has adopted a multi-dimensional approach to resolve regional problems.

The prime minister said Pakistan and Afghanistan would not allow their territories to be used for attacks on each other. Addressing the special meeting of the federal cabinet at the PM Office, the prime minister said the government is working on a comprehensive strategy to revive the economy. He said the government is also trying hard to overcome the energy crisis through comprehensive long and short-term policies. He said projects are being launched to generate cheap electricity through coal, wind, hydel and solar resources. Besides, he said, the government is also taking measures to reduce line losses and improve the power distribution system, which would help reduce load shedding. Nawaz blamed the previous governments for the economic mess that has compelled his government to take a loan from the IMF. He said the worst energy crisis being faced by the country is also because of the flawed policies of previous governments. The prime minister said that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has committed to provide two billion dollars for the Karachi Circular Railway project. He said India has come out of the IMF programme and it is hoped that Pakistan's economic situation would also improve in the weeks and months to come.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar while briefing the federal cabinet said that due to the government's economic measures the budget deficit has been reduced from 8.8 to 8.2 percent in six months. He said that 30 percent cut in the budgets of all ministries and affiliated departments and 40 percent in the Prime Minister's Office and Finance Ministry had been made. He said that the discretionary funds of the prime minister and all ministers had also been abolished, which will save Rs40 billion annually. Dar said an additional Rs. 2 billion would be saved by barring federal secretaries from becoming part of any board. The government has banned the import of duty-free vehicles. He said the government cleared the circular debt of 480 billion rupees within 45 days of coming to power and 1,700MW electricity has been added to the system after payment of the circular debt. The finance minister dispelled the impression that currency notes were printed to pay for the circular debt. He declared that the government would increase the country's foreign exchange reserves to 16 billion dollars in 12 months after tackling the current account deficit. The government, he said, is vigorously pursuing non-conventional sources, including the launch of Euro bonds and remittances-based bonds, to raise money. He said through the GSP Plus status, the country's exports are expected to increase by 1.5 to 2 billion dollars. He expressed hope that the outstanding amount of 800 million dollars from the UAE-based telecom company Etisalat would soon be received.

The News - January 02, 2014

'Good Taliban' Welcome, 'Bad Taliban' To Face War

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan stated that negotiations with the Taliban were the government's top priority and serious efforts are being made in this regard, but warned that the

militants unwilling to hold talks will be dealt with sternly. Nisar said the government was entrusted with holding talks with the Taliban by the political leadership of the country during the all-parties conference. He said that the country was passing through a delicate phase and there was a need to have complete unanimity of views and consensus on the strategy to deal with the challenge of terrorism and violence. The interior minister called upon the Taliban factions opposing the peace process to grow out of their mindset and respond positively to the gestures of the government. "I urge Taliban groups who are refusing to hold dialogue that the path of Islam is the path of welfare and peace, and not of bullet." Nisar said that both talks and military operation against the Taliban are difficult tasks, as they are not a party or force which is in front of us. He said we are tolerating a lot of unjustified criticism for talks with Tehreek-e-Taliban.

The minister said negotiations are underway with different groups and hoped for a good outcome. He said the government welcomes those Taliban groups who respond to talks' offer positively, but those who will resort to arms, the government will wage a war against them. He said the government would go after them wherever they are. "The desire for talks should not be considered as a weakness of the government," the minister said. Moreover, he said that the Pakistani nation, in particular the people of FATA, has given matchless sacrifices in the unending "war of terror", and it is high time to give peace a chance. "No one should have any misgivings that we would let terrorists coerce us into accepting their unconstitutional terms. We will do everything under the constitution," the interior minister said, adding that the "use of power would be the last option". "If needed, we're fully prepared for its (power) effective use, everyone should keep this in mind that we have the ability and the will to take the fight to the terrorists," the minister warned. He categorically stated that the dialogue process could not proceed if the Taliban continue to attack civilian and government officials.

The Taliban had killed a top policeman renowned for his tough stance on criminals and militants in a car bomb in Karachi. The Taliban described Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Chaudhry Aslam's death as a "huge victory". At least eleven others were wounded in the attack at Lyari Expressway near Essa Nagri. In 2011, the militant group rammed his house with a huge car bomb, killing eight people but leaving his family unscathed. "We were working for a long time to eliminate him as he killed and tortured many of our people in Karachi," said Taliban spokesman Sajjad Mohmand from Mohmand Agency in the tribal areas. "We trained this (suicide bomber) especially to eliminate him. It's a huge success for our people." He said the Taliban would continue to target other officers on a hit list. Interior Minister Nisar said that negotiators were talking to the Taliban leadership to persuade them to get on with the talks with the government. "Maulana Samiul Haq and some other religious clerics are using their influence to bring Taliban to the dialogue table," Nisar said.

Daily Times - January 13, 2014

Tough Talk: Government Ready to Take on Irreconcilable Militants

Amidst a fresh upsurge in violence, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali said that the government was ready to act against those militants who counter its dialogue offer with violence. "We will wage war against those who respond to our talks offer with bullets - we will chase them down no matter where they are," he told a news briefing at Punjab House. "The government will sincerely pursue talks with those who positively respond to its offer of dialogue," he added. He said that those calling for military action against these groups should elaborate on how and where they propose the launch of such an operation against militants. The use of force and negotiation with militants are nuanced options, he said, adding that "it's a hard

nut to crack to impose power through a military operation as well as to pursue dialogue”. The minister was of the view that the proposed peace process, thrown off track after the killing of Tehreek-e-Taliban chief Hakimullah Mehsud, was still on uncertain ground. He added that efforts were being made to engage religious leaders and security experts in the negotiation process. “There will be no compromise on the dignity of the state and respect for the Constitution and laws in the process of dialogue,” he said, expressing surprise at demands for an operation against militants in the tribal areas as a response to police officer Chaudhry Aslam Khan’s killing in Karachi. Nisar renewed the government’s offer of talks with militant groups, saying “this is the spirit of Islam”. “Our aim is to bring peace in Pakistan, particularly in Fata,” he said. He reiterated that the government would take all steps to maintain peace in light of recommendations made by the all-party conference.

The Express Tribune - January 13, 2014

Samiul Haq Quits Taliban Peace Talks

Maulana Samiul Haq who has close ties to the Taliban said he would no longer act as a government-backed peace broker with the militants after airstrikes killed 40 people in a tribal district. Samiul Haq, who heads the Darul Uloom Haqqania seminary and is often referred to as the “Father of the Taliban”, was given the task of initiating peace talks with the Pakistani Taliban in December by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, whose government announced its talks policy in September and began making preliminary contact with the Taliban’s leadership, but the initiative ended after a US drone strike killed then-Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud in November. “The government does not seem serious and concerned. I had requested them to avoid a military operation and use of force but yesterday it started bombing in North Waziristan and tribal areas,” Haq, who is also chief of his own faction of the religious Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-S) party, said in a statement sent to AFP. The air strikes in the North Waziristan and Khyber tribal regions were retaliation for two major Taliban attacks on military targets in as many days. But Haq, whose seminary has awarded Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar an honorary doctorate, said more fighting was not the answer. “Both sides (Taliban and government) are in a state of war. Innocent citizens and soldiers are dying,” he said in the statement.

Daily Times - January 23, 2014

Violence News & Reports

Report: Vicious Year - Terrorism Surged In 2013

Since 2010, the number of overall incidents of violence saw a downwards trend for the two subsequent years. This trend could not persist in 2013 and took a slight upward curve, mainly, during the campaigning phase of the general elections and sustained until the year’s end. This was revealed in a report titled ‘Pakistan Security Report 2013’ compiled by Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), said a press release issued. According to the report, militant, nationalist insurgent and violent sectarian groups carried out a total of 1,717 terrorist attacks across Pakistan in 2013, claiming the lives of 2,451 people and causing injuries to another 5,438. Compared to 2012, the number of reported terrorist attacks in Pakistan posted a nine per cent increase while the number of people killed and injured in these attacks increased by 19 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively. Despite the killing of its top brass in drone attacks and military operations by Pakistani security forces, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) remained the major actor of instability in the country in 2013 through its alliance with numerous militant

groups. It carried out 645 terrorist attacks in 50 districts, claiming the lives of 732 civilians and 425 security forces personnel.

Meanwhile, a rise in sectarian violence that started in 2011 continued through towards end of 2013, with the number of people killed and injured in such incidents increasing significantly. The number of suicide attacks across the country rose by 39 per cent, with 46 suicide attacks in 2013 compared to 33 in the previous year. As many as 18 (39 per cent) out of the total suicide attacks in 2013 were recorded in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), 12 in FATA, nine in Balochistan, five in Sindh and one each in Rawalpindi and Azad Kashmir. Of the total, 34 suicide attacks were perpetrated by the TTP and its affiliated groups. Nine were sectarian-related mainly carried out by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and one suicide blast was carried out by nationalist insurgents. Another two attacks were carried out in inter-militant clashes. US drone strikes on the other hand saw a 31 per cent decrease in 2013. Out of 31 reported drone attacks, around 24 struck militants and their hideouts in North Waziristan Agency, in FATA. Five drone strikes were reported in South Waziristan, and one each in Khyber Agency and Hangu, a settled district of K-P. Fatalities in these attacks also fell by 39 per cent.

The number of overall cross-border attacks and clashes increased in 2013 mostly along Pak-India border, but the casualties in these attacks decreased. Also, 26 and nine attacks were reported from Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan and Iran respectively. On the whole, 103 border attacks and clashes were reported from Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan, India and Iran, which were 30 per cent more than such incidents in 2012. As many as 59 Pakistani citizens including personnel of security forces and civilians lost their lives in these incidents, 82 per cent less than the killings in such incidents in 2012. The incidents of ethno-political violence in Pakistan increased by 22 per cent, from 183 in 2012 to 224 in 2013, but the fatalities in these incidents slightly decreased from 288 in 2012 to 283 in 2013. While most incidents of ethno-political violence in 2013 were concentrated in Karachi (over 81 per cent), such incidents were reported from a total of 28 districts in all four provinces of Pakistan.

Apparently, the May 2013 elections made the ethno-political violence in the country a more complex phenomenon with increasing number of political parties becoming either a part of it or being beleaguered in politically motivated targeted killings. Interestingly, the number of militants killed in 2013, in overall incidents of violence, declined by 28 per cent while fatalities among security forces personnel decreased by a meager two per cent. The report, while endorsing the establishment of the Cabinet Committee on National Security (CCNS), recommends the expansion in its role from a consultative and decision-making body to implementing and monitoring secretariat of National Security Initiatives (NSI).

The Express Tribune - January 06, 2014

Study: U.S. Drones Killed No More Than 4 Civilians in Pakistan In 2013

U.S. CIA drone strikes against militants in Pakistan killed no more than four civilians last year, according to an annual study by a British-based organization, the lowest number of reported civilian deaths since the drone programme began in 2004. The study by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism released this month showed that the number of civilian casualties stood at between zero and four. The findings may reinforce the position of those who support unmanned drones in a debate over the legality, effectiveness and accuracy of the strikes compared to more traditional military operations. The United States releases no information about individual strikes. Information issued by Pakistan's government is patchy. The Bureau tracked 27 suspected strikes, using news reports, field investigations and research by Amnesty

International. It said drones, used mainly in remote northwestern areas, killed altogether 112-193 people in 2013. The death tolls varied as different sources often gave conflicting accounts.

Increased scrutiny, political pressure and a sharp drop in the number of strikes may have helped cut civilian casualties, said Alice Ross, who heads the Bureau's drone research unit. "The lack of transparency surrounding the drone campaign means it's very hard to say what's causing the drop in civilian casualties," she told Reuters by telephone from London. "The fact they can now take out a single room in a building does suggest the technology and intelligence are quite advanced, but we haven't seen a commensurate fall in civilian casualties in Yemen."

Decline in Strikes, Casualties

In 2012, the Bureau tracked 47 strikes, with civilian casualties put at 13 to 63. The drop indicated that previous civilian casualties were genuine, Ross said. Amnesty International has documented strikes that killed a grandmother and a group of laborers in 2012. "If civilian casualties had been fabricated, you would expect it to continue," she said. She said more reports of civilian casualties might still emerge. Possible civilian deaths on January 8 and February 6 last year were reported by some Pakistani media. The New York Times reported that the February 6 attack may have been an air strike by the Pakistani military, something they denied. Some Pakistanis welcome the strikes, saying they kill fewer civilians and are far more effective against Taliban militants than traditional military operations. Others argue the strikes still because civilian casualties terrify residents and violate Pakistani sovereignty. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif says he wants them to end.

Activists from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf political party are blocking a NATO supply route to Afghanistan to protest against the strikes. A PTI spokeswoman did not respond to requests for details of civilian casualties. The figures for civilian deaths in Pakistan are much lower than those reported for Yemen. Yemeni officials told Reuters a December strike hit a wedding party. The bureau says 61-99 people were killed in 16 confirmed drone strikes in Yemen last year, and 11-29 of them may have been civilians. There were another 16 suspected drone strikes. In Afghanistan, NATO is investigating a September drone strike. Afghan officials say it killed eight women and children. Since 2004, Pakistan has been hit by 381 drone strikes, the Bureau says, and between 416-951 civilians have been killed.

Pakistan Today - January 24, 2014

Braced For Action: Government Signals Willingness for Military Operation

The government has decided in principle to launch a military operation against anti-state groups and the prime minister will announce the operation in the next session of parliament. The decision was taken during a high-level meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on internal security following a wave of deadly bombings in the country. Separately, President Mamnoon Hussain has summoned the National Assembly's eighth session on January 27. According to officials, the government is likely to promulgate the Protection of Pakistan (Amendment) Ordinance 2014 and debate options for dealing with the threat of militancy. At the meeting, the government was informed by the country's military leadership that "a full-fledged operation in the tribal areas" is required to curb sectarian violence and terrorism, officials told. The premier was told that the army was fully prepared for any tactical strike or even a full-fledged operation. Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif presented a preliminary report to the prime minister, detailing the sequence of terrorist incidents and the existing security situation.

Officials said the army chief's briefing revealed that "foreign elements" have actively taken part in exploiting the country's internal troubles. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) director-general, Lieutenant General Zaheerul Islam, and the Director-General of Military Operations (DGMO) gave briefings on the security situation along the country's borders. Responding to the briefings, PM Nawaz said that although the specter of violence and terror had loomed large over the country, the deadliest waves of attacks have struck Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) and Balochistan, which need to be addressed on a priority basis. Several sets of options were placed on the table - from surgical strikes to a large-scale military operation - and examined by senior officials. The consensual view was that intelligence agencies needed to swap information regularly and coordinate with each other as much as possible. The meeting decided to draw up a mechanism to expand intelligence sharing between the federal and provincial units. With regards to the targeted operation in Balochistan, as demanded by the Hazara community, General Raheel assured the prime minister of the army's full support to the Frontier Corps (FC) and the law-enforcement agencies in restoring peace in the province.

Earlier, PM Nawaz ordered the completion of draft laws against terrorism, keeping in view the sensitivity of the security situation. The interior minister was also directed to visit Quetta and address the concerns of the Hazara community. Chaudhry Nisar arrived in Quetta, assured the protesters of a targeted operation against the culprits and managed to end the sit-in. Earlier, Prime Minister Nawaz and army chief General Raheel held a one-on-one meeting as well. In a rebuff to the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Sami (JUI-S), the government issued a statement regarding the letter written by Maulana Samiul Haq. The government's spokesman said the JUI-S chief had not been given any "specific mission" regarding measures to address issue of terrorism. Instead, he was asked in general to use his good offices and cooperation in this regard, said the statement. Maulana Sami, in a press statement issued, walked away from the peace process, citing the lack of seriousness on the government's side. However, the government denied the claim and said that after his meeting with the prime minister, the JUI-S chief was informed of the people appointed with which he would maintain contact. "Even three weeks after the meeting, he did not inform (the government) about any progress," the spokesman said.

The Express Tribune - January 24, 2014

ECONOMIC WATCH

Facts & Figures

Government Urged To Revisit Economic Reforms Act 1992

Tax experts advised the government to revisit the Economic Reforms Act 1992, review the immunity scheme under Section 111 of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 and speed up the process of privatization of public enterprises to check outflow of foreign exchange and to arrest the depreciation of rupee. They felt that the Economic Reforms Act, 1992 has become main conduit for money laundering. The immunity scheme failed to attract industrial investment from expatriate Pakistanis enjoying tax exemption on remittances. The PSEs lead to hemorrhage (Rs400-500bn per annum) of public resources forcing heavy borrowings. Younus Rizwani Sheikh, former president of Pakistan Tax Bar Association (PTBA), said that by allowing Pakistanis to carry up to \$10,000 each time they travel abroad, the government has facilitated people to park their savings or ill gotten wealth outside Pakistan as no document or declaration of the source of money is required. Even production of National Tax Number (NTN) is not required. Mr. Sheikh suggested that rules be amended to make production of NTN compulsory for Pakistanis traveling out with foreign exchange. Mohammad Aleem, another tax expert, said that conversion of earnings into foreign exchange without paying tax is a crime.

Similarly, he said carrying of such foreign exchange without explainable source is also against the provisions of Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010. The amount so carried by a person, he said, should be provided by a bank after scrutiny of the NTN and income tax returns or alternatively at every airport, there should be a counter of Inland Revenue wherein an officer of BS-18 should be posted to check such documents from FBR's master index. There is an urgent need to make suitable amendments in the Foreign Exchange Act, 1947 and Protection of Economic Reforms Act, 1992 so that conflicting sections with the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010 are removed to arrest flight of untaxed foreign exchange from the country, he asserted. Syed Rizwan Shoaib, another tax consultant, observed that the government should not expect to achieve higher investment by allowing tax exemption on remittance. He suggested that exemption from income tax should only be allowed on investments in green field industrial projects for a period of three years. Rehan Jaffery, former president Karachi Tax Bar Association (KTBA), felt that the government will save resources injected in public sector enterprises by privatizing loss-making entities.

Dawn - January 01, 2014

Shouldering Responsibility: Government Assures IMF Over New NFC Award

In an attempt to strike a balance on fiscal decentralization, the government has assured the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that the upcoming round of negotiations with the provinces over the new National Finance Commission (NFC) award will focus on transferring some federal expenditure to the provinces. The assurance came in the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) that Islamabad submitted to the IMF recently. However, analysts fear that any such attempt will open a Pandora's Box, allowing the provinces to raise politically sensitive issues. "The government will seek a new agreement that will ensure that the terms of fiscal decentralization find a balance between devolution of revenue and expenditure responsibilities", reads the MEFP report that the IMF released last week. Subsequently,

Islamabad also assured the monetary body that the negotiations with provinces for the 8th NFC Award will begin from July this year. The 7th five-year NFC award had been agreed in 2010 between the federal and provincial governments. The award increased the provincial shares in federal taxes from 47.5% of the divisible pool to 57.5%. Under the 18th amendment in the constitution, the provincial share in federal taxes cannot be reduced from 57.5% until a new amendment is made.

Sharing details, officials said that the PML-N-led government wanted to go the extra mile and was contemplating on asking the provinces to shoulder the federation by sharing expenditures incurred on defense and maintaining law and order in the country. If the federation presses the provinces into taking on these responsibilities, the federating units in return can ask for powers to collect all types of taxes and the powers to determine the federation's share of taxes, said Dr Kaiser Bengali, an economist and a leading expert on provincial finances. "If the federal government is going to introduce the principle of funding the federation by provinces, it should be done in totality," said Bengali. He said then the responsibility of collection of taxes should be with the provinces and they will determine the federation's share in taxes - which will be a reversal of the present mechanism. The IMF agreement, according to Dr Bengali, is unfair because it is silent on the issue of slashing the federal government's expenditures. "We did not try to get more money for the provinces to finance the federal government," he added.

According to another expert, the consequences of such a debate could be explosive, as it could turn the federation into a confederation. At a time when Musharraf's administration was negotiating the NFC in 2004-05, he said, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) had floated a proposal to transfer all types of tax collection responsibilities to the provinces that in return will fund the federation. The proposal had been rejected as its implementation would turn the country into a confederation, he added. According to the MEFP, the 7th NFC award left the federal government with an imbalance between its remaining expenditures responsibilities and its revenues. Critics of the 7th NFC award hold former finance minister Shaukat Tarin, ex-finance secretary Salman Siddique and former special finance secretary Asif Bajwa for not linking the increase in share of revenues with the responsibilities that under the constitution are provincial subjects.

The Express Tribune - January 06, 2014

For The Record: IMF Blows Holes in Ishaq Dar's Claims

IMF mission chief Jeffrey Franks said there had been dialogue about the possibility of measures to raise revenue. "In the end, in the absence of a programme with the IMF, the caretaker government chose not to implement any of the measures," said Frank by telephone from Washington. Franks said the IMF accepted the caretaker government's decision, adding that the PML-N government took measures to reduce the gap between national income and expenditures. In the last cabinet meeting, the finance minister had admitted that an estimated Rs200 billion in taxes that his government levied was one of the main reasons for skyrocketing inflation. But he blamed the caretaker government for the move, while providing a summary of revenue-increasing measures suggested by the PML-N government. Dar said that after former president Asif Ali Zardari did not approve the measures, the PML-N government was bound to honor the commitment made to the IMF. Franks statement suggests that the government was trying to pass the buck to its predecessors, particularly as independent economists have criticized the government for levying indirect taxes in the budget for raising revenues instead of widening the tax net. They voiced fear that indirect taxes would fuel inflation - as can currently be witnessed. Analysts also doubt the credibility of Dar's statement, arguing that if the caretaker

government had finalized a decision, why would the PML-N government spend three weeks to finalize the programme? The IMF chief also appeared dissatisfied with the performance of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). "There has been some progress in the annual growth in revenue collection but it is far from adequate and more needs to be done to improve collection and tax administration," said Franks.

In six months, the FBR witnessed a 15% growth through the collection of Rs1.020 trillion in taxes - far below the required growth rate of 28% to hit the Rs2.475 trillion tax targets. Franks also maintained that the IMF did not lower the Rs2.475 trillion tax targets. "We deliberately pitched the projected collection at Rs2.345 trillion but the government should aim at its original target," he said. He maintained that an improvement in the areas of taxation and energy was a multi-stage process. "It is unrealistic to expect progress in just six months, as it will take a few years to fully implement reforms," he explained. Franks said the IMF was neither soft nor hard on Pakistan. "There is a fine line between being too tough or not to being tough enough," he said, adding that the programme required flexibility in order to take into account the country's circumstances. He said the adjustments Pakistan is making have to be made with or without the IMF programme. To a question regarding the relaxation of a target of building foreign currency reserves to \$2 billion by State Bank of Pakistan for the second quarter of the fiscal year, Franks said the IMF had to adjust the target after the first review as some of initial projections were not met. He said in the upcoming second review meeting of the programme, the IMF will consider if there is a need to review any targets again. Franks said there were no specific concerns about data manipulation, either of the fiscal deficit or economic growth. "We have no reason to doubt the data of Pakistan," he stated. He said the IMF was offering technical assistance to improve the quality of data, adding that the quality of quarterly GDP numbers will gradually improve.

The Express Tribune - January 11, 2014

DEVELOPMENT WATCH**Education Projects****KP Needs Rs. 18 Billion for Higher Education Reforms**

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will need Rs18 billion to implement the proposed higher education reform programme that underlines a three-year roadmap for improving regulatory framework, academic standards, departmental functions, and institutional output. The provincial government's working group set up to recommend reforms in the higher education sector has pointed out the regulations that need improvements, set timelines for the reforms to take effect, recommended the establishment of some new institutions, and proposed measures to improve quality of higher education institutions. "The group has recommended the provincial government to invest five per cent of the provincial Gross Domestic Product in education, including 1.25 per cent for higher education and 3.75 for the remaining (schools and secondary educations)," said an official. The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-led provincial government after assuming office last May set up 17 working groups to pin point grey areas and suggest reforms to improve provincial public sector functioning and services delivery.

According to the officials, the government will either need to arrange additional funds to implement the proposed reforms or make budgetary adjustments in its existing current and development budgets to implement the reforms. "The province has seen a mushroom growth in the number of its public sector universities during the past five years, now it needs consolidation to turn its newly set up universities into quality institutions," said a senior official. The group for recommending reforms for the higher education sector, according to official circles, was tasked to focus on four topics: transformation of higher education sector to contribute to socio-economic development through policy reforms, role of the higher education and library department in the post 18th constitutional amendment scenario, academic reforms in higher education institutions, and reforms in the college sub-sector to make it a 'vibrant and responsible partner' in higher education.

The government has been recommended to arrange an in-house exercise to devise a mechanism for prioritizing human resource development and research in the higher education to contribute to socio-economic development. Similarly, an enhanced role for academia has been suggested in policy formulation and the government has also been asked for sponsoring internship programmes for university graduates. The working group also recommended funding for higher education institutions under a standard mechanism to be adopted in due course of time whereas the amended Khyber Pakhtunkhwa University Act will be adopted in the next financial year. The government has also been asked for introducing periodic audit of universities to ensure transparency. In an effort to strengthen the higher education department, the group has recommended to hold an inter departmental dialogue for bringing the Agriculture University and Khyber Medical University, commerce and managements science colleges under the ambit of the higher education department.

In this respect, the department will improve its capacity and introduce changes in its rules of business after approval from the KP needs Rs18bn for higher education reforms competent authority. The department will also undertake an exercise in 2015-16 to 'identify ways and means' to promote and encourage higher education in private sector. With regard to the department's role in the post-18th constitutional amendment scenario, the working group has recommended the establishment of the 'Provincial Higher Education Council' to manage and

regulate higher education institutions in the public and private sectors. Consultative process to providing regulatory framework for setting up the new council will begin during the current fiscal whereas it will start functioning in the 2014-15 financial year after hiring the required staff and allocating sufficient financial resources. The government has also been asked to look into the possibility of merging the higher education and secondary education ministries for which consultation will begin somewhere next fiscal.

The proposed academic reforms have been categorized in seven sub-areas, including resource rationalization, quality improvement, relevance (of academic courses), financial sustainability, international linkages, research and knowledge transfer, and higher education institutions' involvement in public policy formulation. The resource rationalization has been recommended to ensure the prudent use of the available resource by avoiding duplication of academic programmes. In this respect, it has been proposed that feasibility reports be made mandatory for establishing new HEIs. To improve and ensure quality education, the group has recommended that the government introduce anti-plagiarism and anti-unfair means laws. The province has also been recommended to switch over to semester system from the existing annual academic system of education. Besides, the public sector universities have also been asked to institutionalize performance evaluation of vice chancellors, teaching, and non-teaching staff. Public response will also be solicited for switching over to the semester system after which the new system will be introduced in the next fiscal year given approval by the competent forum.

The government has also been proposed to introduce demand drive programme in the higher education institutions by strengthening their relevance. The relevance will be established through national and international surveys. Similarly, surveys will also be conducted to launch associate degree programmes in the public sector HEIs. To encourage and promote research in HEIs, they will be allowed to market their research products of commercial significance and the provincial government will match the grants earned by HEIs. The working group has recommended that HEIs should be made to allocated 10 per cent of their budget to research. In this respect, the establishment of the 'Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialization' has also been recommended in all the HEIs. In an effort to utilize the knowledge base of HEIs in public policy formulation, the government has been recommended to create a think tank from academia for public policy. The government has also been suggested to complete the transformation to the four-year BA/BSc programme in the next fiscal and in this respect bridging programmes have also been suggested to facilitate the complete the conversion of the programme to the four-year programme. Apart from recommending the introduction of a comprehensive posting and transfer policy in HEIs and bringing the teacher/student ration to 1:40, the working group has urged the government to conduct an exercise for rationalizing colleges and college faculty and reward good performers.

Dawn - January 04, 2014

Health Projects

Health Reports/Control

CDA Health Directorate Achieves 100% Coverage in Anti-Polio Drive

The Capital Development Authority's (CDA) Directorate of Health Services has achieved 100 per cent coverage of children under the age of five year during the anti-polio campaign held from December 27 to 30 last year, as shown by independent evaluation of the campaign by the World

Health Organization (WHO), said a press release. The activity is part of the sub-national immunization day (SNID) campaign announced by the Prime Minister's Cell for polio eradication, headed by Ayesha Raza Farooq, the prime minister's focal person for polio eradication. The objective of SNID is to administer anti-polio drops to the children under the age of five years residing in high-risk areas, such as slums, villages, unplanned settlements, etc. Since polio virus is transmitted in unhygienic and poor sanitary conditions, it is important to cover children in these areas. For December, the CDA chalked out a special plan to cover children in rural slums and high-risk areas in the north west of Islamabad. The entire area was divided into seven zones, with teams in each zone targeting 7,000 to 10,000 children. A total number of 58,558 children were vaccinated during the campaign, the statement read.

According to the information released, each zone was led by a zonal supervisor, while 35 sector supervisors were deputed to organize and monitor the field activity. As many as 151 mobile teams consisting of 302 workers went from door to door to administer anti-polio drops to children. In addition to that, 40 teams were deputed at fixed points at various centers in order to cater to those who were missed when the mobile teams visited their houses. Twenty transit teams were established at various locations at different entry and exit points where passengers from surrounding cities and districts entered Islamabad. Major areas - in addition to other smaller villages around Islamabad - targeted included Golra Sharif, Tarnol, Sangjani, Noon, Jhangi Syedan, Budhana Kalan, Dhoke Pracha, Pind Pracha, Drek Mori, I11, Bokra and Mera Badia.

The hallmark of the effort was that the third-party independent evaluation by the WHO monitors had announced that no child was missed in these poor high-risk areas, which were planned to be included in the SNID. Monitoring tool Lots Quality Assurance (LQS) is being used to make an assessment of the quality of the campaigns. The LQS is considered to be one of the strictest monitoring tools. The CDA Directorate of Health Services has reportedly adopted a new strategy to ensure 100 per cent coverage of children through revisiting unavailable children, locked houses and refusals. This new strategy ensures that a child once missed for any of the above-mentioned reason is revisited until the drops are administered. The strategy seems to be successfully working as shown by independent WHO monitoring results of the campaign.

Daily Times - January 04, 2014

Pakistan Becomes First Author for The Latest Guidelines In 2013

Pakistan has become the first author for the latest guidelines for treatment of Hepatitis C by the World Gastroenterology Organization (WGO) in 2013. The guidelines are prepared in last three years by Hepatitis C Treatment Guidelines Committee of the WGO comprising gastroenterologists and hepatologists from 24 countries. Renowned gastroenterologist and hepatologist from Pakistan Professor of Medicine and Principal Rawalpindi Medical College Dr. Muhammad Umar chaired the committee that prepared the guidelines. The members of Hepatitis C Treatment Guidelines Committee of the WGO were gastroenterologists and hepatologists from members' countries including Pakistan, India, UK, Belgium, Egypt, Switzerland, Malaysia, Japan, Russia, France, USA, Netherlands, Germany, Croatia, Argentina, Chile and Austria. This is for the first time that a gastroenterologist from any Asian country chaired the committee and in this way, Pakistan has become the first country from Asia to get honor of the first author of the guidelines for treatment of Hepatitis C in 2013, said Professor Muhammad Umar. He explained that the guidelines for treatment of Hepatitis C are applicable globally not only in developed or the first world countries but especially designed to treat

Hepatitis C patients in third world countries including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Egypt and Africa along with other developing countries having limited resources.

Dr. Umar said that the new guidelines are in Cascade Format helping the treating physician to move from one option to other in Methodological manner without increasing the unnecessary cost of treatment and tests without compromising the evidence based approach. "These guidelines are available on WGO Website," said Professor Umar. He also informed that a new drug which has been approved by FDA of the USA for treatment of Hepatitis C. "This drug is Sofosbuvir (Sovaldi) in tablet form that can cure Hepatitis C patient in six months," said Dr. Umar terming it a breakthrough in treatment of Hepatitis C. Professor Umar was invited to deliver a research lecture on Hepatitis C in Pakistan in Shangai, China during Asia Pacific Digestive Week (APDW) meeting in September 2013 and in July in USA Orlando.

To a query, Dr. Umar said that the issue with the new drug approved by the FDA is that this is costly but in near future this would be available in affordable range in this part of the world including Pakistan. He added that Sofosbuvir may replace injection therapy and after using it, Hepatitis C patients would not need administration of interferon injections. He said that he along with his team is planning Research Trial on the Sofosbuvir (Sovaldi). He said that the patients of Hepatitis C would be treated with this modern drug for six months only for complete cure. "It is observed that nearly 50 per cent of the patients having interferon therapy are at risk of getting Hepatitis C virus active again but it would not be the case with the new drug," said Dr. Umar while responding to a query.

The News - January 05, 2014

Punjab to Be Polio-Free In 2014, Claims Official

Parliamentary Secretary on Health Khawaja Imran Nazir has said that healthy Punjab will lead towards a healthy Pakistan and the target for making Punjab polio-free province would be achieved in 2014. He expressed these views while administering polio drops to the children at Mayo Hospital Paeds ward in connection with the three-day anti polio campaign launched in the province. Besides, DG Health Dr. Zahid Perviaz, Director Health (EPI) Dr Munir Ahmad, MS Dr Abdul Majeed Chaudhry and other doctors and nurses were present on the occasion. Responding to a question, Kh. Imran Nazir said that security arrangements had also been made for polio vaccination teams in sensitive areas. He informed that health department had constituted about 39,000 teams for administering anti-polio drops to 17 million children in 36 districts during three-day drive whereas in Lahore the target was to vaccinate 1.5 million children for which 3300 teams had been constituted. On the occasion, Dr Zahid Pervaiz informed the media men that January 23 would be the catch-up day to vaccinate missed out children during this drive. He further said that strict monitoring of vaccination teams was also being carried out and special assignments had been given to the officers of health department as well as the representatives of WHO, UNICEF and other international partners.

Daily Times - January 21, 2014

ENERGY CRISIS

Government's Role in Energy Crisis

PM Rejects Summary for Hike in POL Prices

Inflation-hit masses would find a New Year gift with the start of January 2014 as Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has rejected the summary for price-hike in petroleum products (POL) and ordered to maintain the prices at current level. With this decision of reprieve from the PML-N government to the over burdened masses, Finance Ministry would provide Rs 5.36 billion subsidy to keep the prices of POL products unchanged during the first month of a New Year. The regulatory authority dispatched a summary pertaining to the prices of Petroleum Products (POL) to the Ministries of Petroleum and Finance. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) recommended to the government not to pass on the increase in oil prices by adjusting the rate of the Petroleum Levy (PL) on petroleum products to provide relief to the consumers. The OGRA in its summary worked out up to Rs 3.60 per liter hike in the prices of petroleum products for the running month in line with upward trend of prices in the international market and also in accordance with determination of oil marketing companies. The regulator proposed hike in the per liter price of petrol by Rs 2.91, High Speed Diesel (HSD), which is used mostly in the transport and agriculture sectors, by Rs 2.63, Light Diesel Oil (LDO), which is used mainly for industrial purposes, by Rs 1.80, High Octane Blended Component (HOBC), used mainly in luxury cars, by Rs 3.60 and kerosene oil, which is used for cooking and lightening purposes in remote and hilly areas where Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) is not readily available, by Rs 1.38 from 1st January. With effect to the decision of the Prime Minister pertaining to no change in the prices of POL products during January 2014, per liter price of petroleum products would remain at the same level. Petrol to stand at Rs 112.76, HSD at Rs 116.75, LDO at Rs 101.24, Kerosene oil at Rs 108 and HOBC at Rs 141.23 in the open market during ongoing month. Meanwhile, prices of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) have been reduced by Rs 20 per kilogram with immediate effect. After a decrease of Rs 20 per kilogram the household LPG cylinder would be available at Rs 225, while the commercial unit would stand at Rs 905, with both prices being immediately applicable. Chairman LPG Distributors Association in a statement further told that prices in Karachi would decrease by Rs 100 per kilogram, while it would be lowered by Rs 125 in Northern Areas. The new prices would be Rs 1150 in Sindh including Karachi, and Rs 1400 in Northern Areas.

The Nation - January 01, 2014

Nuclear Power: China Promises \$6.5b Cheap Loan for Two Plants

China has committed \$6.5 billion to two nuclear power plants being constructed in Karachi and efforts are under way to further deepen civil-nuclear cooperation, said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif whose government is struggling to cope with acute power shortages. He was addressing a special cabinet meeting on the state of the economy, which, unlike the past, was not held behind closed doors but in the presence of media. Sharif said China was providing a concessionary loan for K2 and K3 nuclear power plants having combined generation capacity of 2,117 megawatts. The repayment period will be 10 to 20 years. The premier said the government was executing a multi-pronged strategy to end power outages, but he did not give any timeframe. Elaborating, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar pointed out that paperwork had been started for 22,000MW

projects including Dasu power project and Diamer Basha Dam. He expected addition of 8,000MW to the national grid in the next five years.

Circular Railway

The prime minister expressed the desire to complete the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project as early as possible. He also took up the issue of KCR financing with the Japanese premier during his last visit to New York. Sharif said the Japan International Cooperation Agency would provide \$2 billion for the project, but Tokyo would first see whether Pakistan was committed to the \$6.7 billion IMF loan programme. Pakistan has already successfully completed the first review of the IMF programme. Dar stressed that all conditions set for the first half of the current fiscal year had already been met and Pakistan would soon send a letter to the IMF, asking it to set dates for a second review. As part of the condition, the government amended the Pakistan Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure Act to punish the people involved in electricity theft. It also increased rates for the Gas Development Surcharge to collect an additional Rs104 billion.

Economic Stability to Take Time

Meanwhile, the finance minister said it will take time to put the economy back on track. “There is no magic wand to restore economic stability and the recovery will be painful and take some time,” he said in his opening remarks. The government did achieve a breakthrough, as economic growth in the first quarter (July-September) of 2013-14 remained at 5.1%, he said, adding this could be possible only after clearance of circular debt and increasing gas supplies to the industries.

Foreign Reserves

Dar vowed to increase the foreign currency reserves up to \$16 billion within a year by adding \$10 billion to the current figure. The reserves will be replenished with the help of a \$1 billion loan from the World Bank, \$400 million from the Asian Development Bank and \$730 million from the Islamic Development Bank. He said the government was attempting to tap unconventional sources of foreign currency including launch of euro bonds worth \$1 billion and remittances-backed bonds also worth \$1 billion. Justifying the approach to the IMF, Dar said had Pakistan not gone for the loan programme; it could have faced serious payment problems in the first half of 2014. In the last six months, the reserves had depleted as inflows were not enough to meet international debt obligations, he pointed out. Dar expressed the hope that \$800 million would soon be recovered from Etisalat as part of remaining privatization proceeds. Pakistan will also get \$1.54 billion from the United States on account of Coalition Support Fund.

The Express Tribune - January 02, 2014

Electricity Production: Work On Chashma-IV Plant Under Way

Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has said that Pakistan has a right to produce electricity through nuclear power plants for the economic development of the country. He was speaking at the dome placement ceremony of the Chashma-IV nuclear power plant. The power plant is being constructed through a joint venture between China National Nuclear Cooperation (CNNC) and Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC). The C-3 power plant is already under construction and, by 2016; both C-3 and C-4 will be adding around 640 megawatts (MW) of electricity to the national grid. PAEC Chairman Dr Ansar Parvez said that the project will enter the installation process after the dome placement of the C-4 power plant.

The minister informed the gathering that the government is planning to install more nuclear power plants and Muzaffargarh has already been approved by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) as a potential site. The proposal will be sent to the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) soon for final approval. "We live in an age of economic competition where the failure or success of a country is determined by its economic strength," the minister said. He said the year 2013 marked a milestone in the history of cooperation between China and Pakistan. The Chinese premier has also reassured Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that he was supervising the progress of the agreements, added the minister. If successfully executed, Pakistan will become the centre of trade and economic activities in the region, Iqbal said. Meanwhile, highlighting the current energy crisis in the country, the minister said, "We are heavily depending upon oil-based power generation which cannot be run on a sustainable basis. "The government is working on different power projects including the Gadani Power Project that will produce 6,000 MW electricity," he said, adding that Dasu and Diamer Bhasha hydro power projects, once completed, will produce over 9,000 MW electricity.

The Express Tribune - January 03, 2014

POL Road Levy May Replace Toll Tax

The government is considering slapping the already hard-pressed consumers of the petroleum products (POL) with yet another tax with the name of road levy, which is likely to raise the prices up to Rs. 2.50/liter. According to well-placed sources, the new levy on petrol and diesel would replace the existing toll collections at the national highways and motorways. At present, Rs10/liter petroleum levy (PL) is being collected on petrol and Rs8/liter on diesel. In addition, 17 percent General Sales Tax (GST) is being charged to the petroleum consumers, besides around Rs. 2.50/liter freight margin. "The idea is to include the toll price into the actual price of any of the petroleum product that a transportation vehicle would consume to run on the national highways and motorways," an official told The Nation on condition of anonymity. "Either way, toll tax or road levy on the petroleum price has to be paid by the motorist," he added. "It would not be fair to call it a new tax," he claimed. The sources confirmed that the ministry of inter-provincial coordination is working on a proposal to end the collection of toll tax on vehicles and impose Rs1 to Rs2.50/liter new tax on petrol and diesel.

The sources also said that the amount to be collected on account of this new tax would be given to the provinces to initiate new development work. And, the final approval of Council of Common Interest (CCI) would be sought before the imposition of road tax, they added. At present, private contractors are engaged in the collection of toll tax under a so-called toll tax system. The toll tax is being charged at toll plazas from all private vehicles over use of national highways that are situated in all four provinces. It is largely believed that the collected heavy amount on account of toll tax is not utilized in public welfare and development projects. Most often the contractor receives major chunk of the collected toll tax. So this move would help the provinces to undertake more welfare and development work. Sources in the ministry of petroleum and natural resources said that the ministry of finance could annually earn heavy revenue worth above Rs20 billion if the proposal of inter-provincial coordination ministry is approved. The sources also told this scribe that the ministry would soon dispatch this proposal to the provinces for consultation. And, after getting the nod of provinces, the ministry would float this proposal in CCI meeting for final approval.

The Nation - January 08, 2014

Hydropower: Dasu Dam Expected To Be Cleared

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) is expected to clear the Dasu hydropower project for final approval of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne). Headed by Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal, the CDWP has the mandate to approve up to Rs1 billion worth of projects, and recommend them for the approval by Ecne. The CDWP will take up 10 projects with an estimated cost of Rs961 billion. Dasu is one of the two mega projects that the PML-N government has promised to give to the energy-starved nation. The other is the Diamer Basha dam, which many believe has been put on the back burner due to opposition by the international lenders. Out of the foreign exchange component requirements estimated at \$3.5 billion (Rs383.3 billion), the assured foreign funding is only \$700 million, or just 20% of the total, to be provided by the World Bank. Due to lack of funding, work on the Diamer Basha dam could not be started despite the fact that the dam's ground breaking ceremony was performed twice, first by former president Pervez Musharraf and then by former prime minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani. The Economic Affairs Division will brief the CDWP about funding arrangements and the decision is expected to be taken in light of funding promises, said Asif Sheikh, spokesman of the Ministry of Planning and Development. Approval for the Dasu hydropower project will be treated as a step away from the \$14 billion Diamer Basha dam, as the country cannot afford to build two mega dams with an estimated cost of \$21 billion at the same time.

However, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had claimed that the government would construct Diamer Basha dam by using its indigenous sources. He said that the government would initially build the dam for storage purposes only. The site for the Dasu power project is 74 kilometers (km) downstream of the Diamer Basha dam and 350 km from Islamabad. The feasibility study and detailed engineering designs of the project have already been completed. The present government has planned to start work on power projects of up to 22,000MW of capacity to increase the present generation capacity to 36,000MW in the next five years. These include nuclear power plants, which will be constructed with financial assistance from China, according to the Prime Minister. As demand remains far more than generation, the country is passing through a severe energy crisis, facing up to eight hours of load shedding. The CDWP will also take up the coal-fired 1200MW Jamshoro power project again, having an estimated cost of Rs197 billion. The CDWP had earlier constituted a committee to reduce the cost of the project and exclude the cost of procurement of rail engines and bogies for coal transportation from sea port to the project site. Iqbal had then directed that instead of setting up its own arrangement the Ministry of Water and Power should sign an agreement with Pakistan Railways for transportation services. However, the committee has kept the procurement plan as part of the project and recommended to meet the cost from the contingency pool of the project, said Sheikh. He said the CDWP will take a final decision whether to procure engines and bogies. The Asian Development Bank has already approved \$900 million loan for the project despite opposition by the United States.

The Express Tribune - January 16, 2014

Ex-PM Indicted In RPP Case

Judge Mohammad Bashir read out charges against Mr. Ashraf and other accused who was pleaded not guilty and said they intended to challenge the allegations. According to the prosecution, Mr. Ashraf in his capacity as water and power minister (from March 2008 to February 2011) misused his authority and awarded the project to some parties in violation of procurement rules. Chaudhry Riaz, additional deputy prosecutor general of the National

Accountability Bureau (NAB), informed the court that the bureau had cleared Iqbal Ahmed and M.N. Baig because there was nothing on record against them. He requested the court to proceed against the former prime minister and others and indict them in accordance with the law. Mr. Ashraf is accused of receiving kickbacks from nine rental power firms and awarded contracts to set up their plants in 2008 to help overcome the electricity crisis. NAB alleged that Mr. Ashraf had misused his authority by obtaining approval from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) and the cabinet in violation of PPRA rules, willful failure to exercise authority to prevent the grant, or rendition of any undue benefit or favor and issuance of illegal policy for an increase in down payment from seven to 14 per cent to rental power companies.

According to NAB,

Ashraf authorized submission of a summary to the ECC on April 13, 2009. The summary contained misleading facts and misrepresentations, stating that terms and conditions of the bidding envisaging 7pc advance could not be met because of financing difficulties and recommended that it should be raised to 14pc. It was approved and authorized for submission to the ECC on August 17, 2009. NAB had filed a preliminary reference in the Naudero-II power plant case on May 27, 2012, but Mr. Ashraf's name was not included in it because he was prime minister at that time. Other accused in the reference are: former water and power secretary Shahid Rafi, former additional secretary Sheikh Zarrar Aslam, former managing director of the Pakistan Electric Power Company Tahir Basharat Cheema and former Pepco directors Malik Mohammad Razi Abbas and Wazir Ali Bhayo and Tariq Nazir, Abdul Malik Memon and Rasool Khan Mehsud. Their names have also been placed on the exit control list.

Dawn - January 18, 2014

Electricity Crisis: Power Cuts In Summer to Last Six To Eight Hours

Addressing a press conference, Ali alleged that ministers in the K-P government were involved in defaulting power bills and that PTI banners were placed on kundas in K-P. The state minister was confident that nobody was stealing electricity in his constituency in Faisalabad, and promised to resign if anybody was found pilfering power. "There are more than 90 per cent line losses in many feeders of K-P and that despite the provision of proof against power pilferers, the PTI-led provincial government was still reluctant to take action against the accused," Sher Ali said. He added that only 10 per cent of the people in K-P paid electricity bills due to which a massive amount of electricity was pilfered. Sher Ali also alleged that provincial minister Shah Farman had made announcements in mosques telling people not to pay electricity bills and that his constituency had to pay bills worth Rs1.35 billion.

The problems faced by Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO), the minister said the provincial government deliberately shied away from facilitating PESCO workers in accessing no-go areas. "Receivables of PESCO have swelled to Rs87 billion while the provincial government owes Rs30 billion to Rs40 billion to the federal government," he said. Calling for impartial treatment, Sher Ali said the Tarbela Dam produced 320 megawatts (MW) but PESCO'S demands were over a 1,000MW. "We should go beyond provincial prejudice and take decisions based on national interest," the state minister remarked after quoting these figures. "Dams are the property of the federal government and not any individual. The K-P government should first construct a dam if it wants to provide free electricity to the masses," he said.

Talking about line losses in Punjab, the minister said line losses of four distribution companies in Punjab were 15.4 per cent while total receivables were Rs499 billion. He also said that in the coming summer season, the government would restrict load shedding to six to eight hours and 2,000MW would be added to the national grid. In response to a question, the minister said the first phase of the construction of Dasu Dam would add 2,130MW of electricity to the national grid by 2017. He also said that after the completion of Tarbela's unit four and five, 2,500 MW of power would be added to the grid.

The Express Tribune - January 18, 2014

Thar Coal Project: Sindh Government All Set To Generate 660MW

Modalities to start coal mining and coal-based power generation up to 660MW in the first phase from Thar Coal field Block-II were discussed and given final touches in a steering committee meeting on Thar Coal Energy Board (TCEB) presided by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah at the CM House. It was decided that the groundbreaking ceremony of coal mining at Thar Coal Block -II would be organized on January 31, 2014 in which high dignitaries from all over the country would be invited to attend. The project, which would jointly be executed by the Sindh government and Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company, would have the capacity to generate 660MW coal-based energy in its 1st phase and it to be increased up to 1320MW in its second phase. This project would have 230km transmission line to link the power in national grid for distribution, accordingly. The meeting formed different committees to make groundbreaking ceremony as more success and source of attraction for attending expertise and organizations from all over country.

A separate committee was constituted to work out for strengthening the TCEB and more empowering it in decision making with reference to implementation coal-based power generating projects. The meeting also approved the tariff rate of Thar Coal and decided to encourage the companies interested in coal base power generation. The chief minister while addressing the meeting said energy crises were not only the problem of particular province but also a national issue, which shall be resolved under the national umbrella with joint efforts. He said that Sindh had always remained ahead to resolve national issues, and would lead in meeting the energy crises as well. Sooner or later, he said, by virtue of investment being made for coal and wind base power generation, Sindh would be hub of electricity production in the country. Sindh Information and Local Government Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, Advisor to CM for Finance Syed Murad Ali Shah, Sindh Social Welfare Minister Rubina Qaimkhani, MNA Shazia Mari, Sindh Chief Secretary Sajjad Saleem Hotiyana, Secretary to CM Rai Sikandar, Secretary Energy Board Agha Wasif Abbas, Secretary Finance Sohail Rajput MD Thar Coal Energy Board and other officers attended the meeting.

Daily Times - January 25, 2014

REGIONAL WATCH

Pakistan & United States

US Fighting ‘Wrong War’ Against ‘Wrong People’

Adviser to Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said that America is fighting the “wrong war with wrong methods against the wrong people”. Sartaj Aziz said Pakistan has been protesting against the drone attacks at all levels, as these are un-productive and violate Pakistan’s sovereignty. The foreign affairs adviser said Pakistan has got support from the international community on its stance on drone attacks. He said a resolution by the United Nations General Assembly has also been adopted to condemn the drone attacks, which reflects the international public opinion. He said this also speaks of legality and illegality of the use of drones. Reiterating Pakistan’s position on the drone attacks that they violate sovereignty of the country and cause collateral damage, Aziz said Pakistan will continue to protest against these attacks at all levels. He said according to the United States drone strikes have achieved the desired results, as high value targets have been killed in these strikes, therefore, now these drone attacks should be stopped. He said Pakistan’s next move will be to approach the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva against drone attacks and make efforts for adoption of a similar resolution there. He said Pakistan will continue to build international opinion against drone attacks.

Sartaj Aziz said government is using force against those elements who are challenging its writ in the tribal areas. Replying to a question, he said the use of force by Pervez Musharraf damaged the tribal culture and made it difficult for the government to resolve the issue of militants in the region. The adviser said the “war on terror” in the last over ten years has achieved less and caused more damage, especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan. He said due to the war, the local public in these areas has turned against the government and some criminal elements have intruded into the area, who are now disturbing the situation. Replying to a question on the progress of negotiations with Taliban, Sartaj Aziz said some contacts have been established in this connection but refused to elaborate on the development of these talks. He said besides starting negotiations with the Taliban and initiating development projects in the tribal areas, the government has decided to strengthen the border areas to stop illegal movement of people across the border. He said the government has established its writ in seven of the eight tribal agencies and was making efforts to establish its writ in the eight agencies.

Earlier, while addressing the function to launch the book “The Thistle and the Drone: How America’s War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam” written by renowned writer Akbar Ahmad, Sartaj Aziz said tribal culture and ethics should be ensured to ensure peace and security in these areas. Appreciating the efforts of Akbar Ahmed in writing a comprehensive book on the issue of war against terror and tribal culture, he agreed that the war had destroyed the tribal culture. Aziz said that the use of drones against tribal people is paradoxical. He said that in dissecting the conflict, the analogy of thistle and the drones is very revealing. He said that America is fighting the wrong war with wrong methods against the wrong people. Speaking on the occasion ISSI Chairman Khalid Mehmood said that ethnicity and tribal identity is a crucial factor to terrorism.

Daily Times - January 09, 2014

Pakistan & India

Indo-Pak Friendly Ties To Benefit Region: Singh

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that friendly relations between India and Pakistan are in the benefit of the region and both the countries should step forward in normalizing the volatile ties. He said that India and Pakistan were near an agreement on the Kashmir issue during the Musharraf era. Manmohan Singh announced he would step down after nearly 10 years in office, setting the scene for a polarizing clash between personalities and ideologies in polls due within months. The world's largest democracy is likely to hold a general election - almost certainly the biggest such exercise ever - in April or May. It will pit Rahul Gandhi, the scion of India's first political family against Narendra Modi, a controversial Hindu nationalist opposition candidate. Singh, 81, told reporters in Delhi that Gandhi, whose father, grandmother and great-grandfather all led India, had "outstanding credentials" to "outstanding credentials" to become the next prime minister and leader of the Congress Party. He said if Modi was elected, it would be "disastrous" for the country. Congress, which has led coalition governments since ousting the Hindu nationalist opposition Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) in 2004, is expected to break with the tradition of not announcing a candidate before polls to name Gandhi later this month. In a prepared speech, Singh listed his government's achievements, though admitted its inability to contain inflation or generate enough jobs. Singh said the poverty ratio in India had fallen steeply to 21.9 percent in 2012 from 37.2 percent in 2004 and that initiatives including a new right to information law had improved public life.

The News - January 04, 2014

Call for Opening Sindh-Rajasthan Border for Trade

The Sindh government has asked the federal government to open Sindh-Rajasthan border just like opening of Pakistan and Indian Punjab border, in order to provide opportunity to the province to improve its trade. The suggestion was made by participants of provincial consultative workshop on Pakistan Vision 2025 and 11th Five Year Plan (2013-18) before Federal Minister for Planning and Development Prof Ahsan Iqbal, held at Sindh Secretariat. The workshop proceedings were presided over by Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah. The participants said that opening of the Sindh border would provide more opportunities to the people of the province. They said that the traders would benefit due to huge industry in India. Prof Iqbal said that he held consultations with provincial government over preparation of Pakistan Vision 2025 and 11th Five Year Plan, a project initiated by federal government. Iqbal said that the recent talks showed maturity of the Pakistani politics, where parties having different perspectives are on one page over cooperation for progress of the country. He said that the initiative was taken to provide better chances of education, employment, housing facilities to people. "Input given by Sindh was great and the performance of every sector will be scrutinized every month so that each of them should perform their duties in a better way," the minister said. The minister said that no dam would be constructed without consent of provincial government. "Federal government has a policy to avoid building projects that could damage the unity of the country. We have started progress over construction of Diamer Bhasha Dam."

70 percent of the electricity is produced through oil but now the federal government was mulling over to produce electricity through other natural sources including coal, water, nuclear and wind. "We are giving priority to Thar Coal project and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had asked Chinese investors to come and invest in this project

during their recent visits to China.” He said that the government would induct competent staff in regulatory authorities like OGRA, NEPRA and others to enhance their efficiencies. “We inherited problems in these institutions but soon they will be eliminated after induction of new staff.” He said that there was no difference of policy by current and former governments over privatization. “Those institutions that were not able to run by government should be privatized to increase their efficiency. We are searching investors for fleet induction in PIA so that the institution could gain profit instead of causing a loss of Rs 3.0 billion in a month.” Speaking on the occasion, Shah said that province has resources but was not able to find any investor. “We are happy that federal government is working to attract investors for projects in Sindh.” Shah said that all problems related to issues regarding health, education and social sector were discussed in the meeting. “Modern procedures to increase crop in the province were also discussed so that Sindh could produce surplus crop.” He said that there was a delay on execution of Thar coal project by federal government but he discussed this issue with the prime minister and he was hopeful that the project would be initiated on time. The chief minister said that the next meeting would be held on January 25 to overview the progress made in this regard.

Dawn - January 05, 2014

Breakthrough Only After Indian Polls: Aziz

Any breakthrough on outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, including Kashmir and Siachen, are expected only after the Indian elections, Prime Minister's Adviser on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said. Back-channel talks are being held on the issues like Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachen as it is Pakistan's utmost endeavor to improve relations with India, Aziz told the state-run Radio Pakistan. The composite dialogue is facing delays due to the upcoming polls in India, but the groups handling trade energy and the visa regime are conducting negotiations, he said. “Back-channel talks are continuing with India on the issues of Kashmir, Sir Creek and Siachen,” he said. Pakistan has appointed former foreign secretary Shehryar Khan as its point man for back-channel talks while his Indian counterpart is former envoy SK Lambah. Now when India is heading for the elections, peace on the Line of Control (LoC) and continuation of talks is necessary to avoid any tension in bilateral relations, he added. Aziz described Kashmir as a very important problem whose solution is imperative for improving Pakistan-India relations. Several countries have realized the importance of peace between the two sides and are now evincing interest in the Kashmir dispute, he claimed. He further said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had invited his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh to visit Pakistan. “Though there is less possibility of his visit, but if he wishes to visit Islamabad in the next few weeks, we will definitely welcome him,” he said. Singh expressed the hope of visiting Pakistan in the next four months and said circumstances were not appropriate for a visit at present. Pakistan is keen to resume the composite dialogue with India, which was called off after an Indian soldier was allegedly decapitated in January last year along the LoC. He said: “It is our utmost effort to improve relations with India and a significant lobby there also cherishes the same dream.”

The Nation - January 05, 2014

Flag Meeting: Pakistan, India Agree To Strengthen Peace

The decision was taken during a brigadier-level flag meeting held at the Rawalakot-Poonch crossing point at the LoC, said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

“The meeting was held as part of a decision taken by both sides during the meeting between the [two countries’] directors general military operations (DGMOs) at Wagha on December 24, last year,” it added. There were five officers in the flag meeting team from both sides, headed by their respective brigade commanders. The meeting lasted over one and a half hour. The meeting took place just days after both sides accused each other of violating the ceasefire along the LoC in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. On January 13, India claimed Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire along the LoC. At the time, Indian army chief General Bikram Singh said it could not be expected that New Delhi would stick by the rules if Islamabad did not. In a news conference, Gen Singh described the LoC violations as a ‘mini war’. He added that the Indian army would give a ‘befitting response’ in any sector where Indian soldiers were fired upon.

Pakistan Army termed the Indian allegations baseless and reiterated that it was respecting the ceasefire along the LoC in ‘letter and spirit’. According to the Press Trust of India (PTI), the Indian side lodged a strong protest with Pakistan over the ceasefire violations at the brigadier-level flag meeting in Poonch district. “We have lodged a strong protest with the Pakistan Army authorities over the ceasefire violations along LoC,” PTI quoted an unnamed senior India army officer as saying. “Pakistani authorities denied the ceasefire violations from their side,” the officer said, adding that the meeting was held in a cordial and conducive atmosphere. A statement issued by the Indian defence ministry termed the meeting another step forward in the confidence-building measures agreed upon by both sides during last December’s rare face-to-face DGMOs meeting. “Both delegations were led by Brigadier level officers and discussed various issues related to the ceasefire agreement as well as the need to improve the responsiveness of existing communication channels,” the Indian defence spokesperson said.

The Express Tribune - January 18, 2014

Pakistan & Bangladesh

Elections in Bangladesh

Bangladesh Ruling Party Wins Polls Hit By Violence, Boycott

Bangladesh's ruling Awami League won a violence-plagued parliamentary election whose outcome was never in doubt after a boycott by the main opposition party. With fewer than half of the 300 seats being contested, voters in modest numbers cast ballots on amid heavy security in polling that lacked the festivity typical of Bangladeshi elections and was shunned by international observers as flawed. Low voter participation could pile new pressure on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to find a compromise with the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for holding new elections. Either Hasina or BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia has been prime minister for all but two of the past 22 years. The Awami League won 105 of the contested seats, on top of the 127 seats where it ran unopposed, giving it a more-than two-thirds majority. Hasina is expected to form a new government this month. “The immediate fallout of this dismal voter turnout will be the Hasina government coming under greater pressure to hold talks with the opposition,” said Hossain Zillur Rahman, an economist and adviser to a former “caretaker” government tasked with overseeing an election. “It is the ultimate sign of protest by Bangladeshi people and tells us that they are unhappy with the way elections have been held in this country.”

The impasse between the two main parties, which showed no sign of easing, undermined the poll's legitimacy and is fuelling worries of economic stagnation and further violence in the impoverished South Asian nation of 160 million. “This is a suicidal election as it will not bring any peace in the country,” Abul Kashem, who works as a driver and is a supporter of the BNP,

said outside a Dhaka polling station. The country's \$22 billion garment industry, which accounts for 80 per cent of exports, has been disrupted by transportation blockades ahead of the election. BNP officials said party supporters would maintain the blockade and called another in a series of general strikes. Eighteen people were killed in separate incidents on Election Day, according to media reports, and voting was halted at about 400 polling stations. More than 100 people were killed in the run-up to the ballot, mostly in rural areas, and fears of violence kept many voters away. Police said they had been forced to fire on opposition activists in six incidents. Apart from a handful of crude bomb explosions, Dhaka was calm. In Satkania, near the port city of Chittagong, a poll official's arms were broken and police were attacked.

Future Election?

Hasina has spoken of holding talks with the opposition on the conduct of future elections which, if successful, could lead to another poll. The BNP had demanded a halt to the current electoral process. Turnout figures were not yet available; though election officials acknowledged that they had anticipated low numbers and voting appeared slow at Dhaka polling stations. At one, in the Lalbagh area, 626 of 2,274 voters, or 28 per cent, cast ballots. At another nearby site, final turnout among male voters was 21 per cent. The BNP said low turnout vindicated its denunciation of the poll as a farce. "The turnout is a clear indication that the common people rejected this election and it is almost an election without voters," Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury, a BNP vice chairman, told Reuters on. Junior Law Minister Mohammad Quamrul Islam said the election was necessary for the democratic process and repeated that another poll could be held anytime in agreement with the BNP. "But they must stop violence before dialogue for the next elections could start," he told reporters after voting.

The BNP denounces Hasina's scrapping of the practice of having a caretaker government oversee elections. The Awami League says the interim government system has proved a failure. Many BNP leaders are in jail or in hiding, and Khaleda says she is under virtual house arrest, which the government denies. The European Union, a duty free market for nearly 60 per cent of Bangladesh's garment exports, refused to send election observers, as did the United States and the Commonwealth, a grouping of 53 mainly former British colonies. "The elections have to happen to ensure a government is formed and the country can start functioning again normally," said Mehedi Rahman, 43, a schoolteacher voting in Dhaka. "The unfortunate part is there is hardly any meaning because the opposition has boycotted it and the outcome is known."

Hasina Insists Re-Election Legitimate

Hasina insisted her re-election in polls boycotted by the opposition was legitimate and said her rivals must shun "terrorist activities" before she would talk to them. The boycott by the main opposition BNP should "not mean there will be a question of legitimacy", said Hasina, whose Awami League party won vote by a landslide. "People participated in the poll and other parties participated," Hasina told reporters in her first comments since the elections. The BNP refused to take part in the polls after Hasina stonewalled their demands to stand aside and allow the elections to be organized by a neutral caretaker government. But the prime minister said she had offered Khaleda Zia the chance to join an interim cross-party government ahead of the vote. "Look, I tried my best, I told you, I offered ministry, I offered to share power with our opposition, I have done as much as I can do but they didn't respond," she told foreign journalists at her official residence in Dhaka. "Now if they realize that they made a mistake in not participating in the election, perhaps then they may come forward to discuss with us or make an offer," she added. "If they come forward to discuss with us, they have to leave all these terrorist

activities behind because what they are doing it is absolutely killing people, killing police, killing innocent people.”

The News - January 04, 2014

Deadly Violence Rages in Bangladesh Vote ‘Farce’

Thousands of protesters firebombed polling stations and at least 18 people were killed as violence flared across Bangladesh during a walkover election boycotted by the opposition. Police said they had opened fire at protesters as they torched more than 200 polling stations and stole and burnt ballot papers to try to sabotage the poll. Two of those killed were beaten to death while guarding polling stations in northern districts but most of the victims were opposition supporters. “We’ve seen thousands of protesters attack polling booths and our personnel at a number of locations with petrol bombs,” Syed Abu Sayem, police chief of the northern district of Bogra. “The situation is extremely volatile,” he added after describing how thousands of ballot papers had been ceremoniously set on fire. Most of the other victims were opposition activists shot by police, while a driver died of his injuries from a petrol bomb attack on his truck. Police put the overall toll at 18 although the opposition said 22 of its supporters were killed. “We were forced to open fire after thousands of them attacked us with guns and small bombs,” said Mokbul Hossain, police chief in the northern town of Parbatipur.

In the capital Dhaka, whose streets were largely deserted apart from thousands of troops, police confirmed three petrol bombings of polling stations. Tens of thousands of troops were deployed across the country after around 150 people had been killed in the build-up to the election. The ruling Awami League has accused the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of orchestrating the violence and has kept its leader under de facto house arrest. The opposition had demanded that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina make way for a neutral caretaker government before the election to ensure no ballot-rigging, a system in force in the past. Although there was no immediate figure on turnout, officials acknowledged that it was poor. Final results are expected in the early hours. But the outcome is not in doubt since voting took place in only 147 of the 300 parliamentary constituencies. Awami League candidates or allies had a clear run in the remaining 153.

Daily Times - January 06, 2014

Pressure Mounts On Bangladesh PM after Walkover Re-Election

The United States led international pressure for a swift re-run that would include all the major parties, brushing aside Hasina’s insistence that a boycott by Zia’s opposition did not undermine her legitimacy. Zia, who has been confined to her home for about two weeks, reiterated her calls for Hasina to stand aside and let a neutral caretaker government organize the new election. “I’m calling on the government to cancel the farcical polls, step down and reach an understanding (with the opposition) to organize a free, fair and neutral election under a non-party government,” she said in a statement released overnight. “The scandalous election on January 5 not only demonstrated the people’s lack of confidence in the government but also proved that free, fair, credible, peaceful and participatory elections cannot be held without a non-party neutral government and credible election commission.” At least 26 people were killed during the bloodiest vote in Bangladesh’s history, while hundreds of opposition supporters set fire to or trashed polling stations. The result was never in doubt, with Hasina’s Awami League and a handful of allies winning all the seats being contested.

The vote's credibility had been undermined even before polling day as 153 Awami League members or allies were declared elected unopposed to the 300-seat parliament. In a defiant appearance before the press, Hasina rejected any idea that her legitimacy had been compromised by the absence of Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and 20 other opposition parties. But Zia, in her first comments since the election, said the Awami League had no "moral or constitutional grounds" to hold on to power. The United States also called for a new vote that would "credibly express the will" of the people. "With more than half of the seats uncontested and most of the remainder offering only token opposition, the results of the just-concluded elections do not appear to credibly express the will of the Bangladeshi people," said State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf. "While it remains to be seen what form the new government will take... we encourage the government of Bangladesh and opposition parties to engage in immediate dialogue to find a way to hold as soon as possible elections that are free, fair, peaceful, and credible."

UN leader Ban Ki-moon was "saddened by the loss of life", his spokesman said. Ban called for the two parties "to resume meaningful dialogue and to urgently address the expectations of the people of Bangladesh for an inclusive political process". There was also criticism from the former colonial power Britain, with junior foreign minister Sayeeda Warsi saying "the true mark of a mature, functioning democracy is peaceful, credible elections that express the genuine will of the voters". In a defiant press conference, Hasina said the opposition election boycott should "not mean there will be a question of legitimacy". "People participated in the poll and other parties participated," she added in reference to a handful of Awami League allies who did stand. Asked about the prospect of sanctions on her government, Hasina was dismissive, saying: "What crimes did we commit that they would impose sanction on us?"

The Prime Minister also made clear she was in no mood to extend any olive branches to Zia, her bitter rival for the last two decades, accusing the two-time former premier of stoking the violence. "If they come forward to discuss with us, they have to leave all these terrorist activities behind because what they are doing, it is absolutely killing people, killing police, killing innocent people." Any agreement on a new vote carries huge risks for Hasina, with an eve-of-election poll showing she would have lost in a straight contest with the BNP. Analysts expect the standoff will fan the flames after the deadliest year of unrest since Bangladesh broke free from Pakistan in 1971. Since late October, around 180 people have died in electoral violence in a country that has experienced nearly 20 coups since independence.

The Express Tribune - January 07, 2014

Hasina Begins Third Stint as Bangladesh's Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Bangladesh's Prime Minister for the third time along with her 48-member cabinet after the controversial polls that were marred by deadly clashes, a low turnout and a boycott by opposition parties. President Abdul Hamid administered the oath - first to Hasina - at the Bangabhaban presidential palace here in a ceremony attended by government and top military officials, foreign envoys, politicians and civil society leaders. "I am, Sheikh Hasina, taking oath...that I will discharge my duties faithfully as the Prime Minister of the government as per the law," Hasina said amid claps from the audience. 66-year-old Hasina's cabinet was also sworn into office during the nationally-televised ceremony. The new cabinet comprises 48 members. Hasina has 29 full ministers, 17 State ministers and 2 deputy ministers, few from Ershad-led Jatiya Party which plans to sit in the opposition but also have a presence in the Cabinet. This is the third time she takes over as the premier in the last two decades since Bangladesh returned to democracy from military rule. Meanwhile, attacks on Hindus in

Bangladesh continued. A Hindu man was stabbed to death and a temple was damaged in two separate attacks in Bangladesh as violence against the minority community continued despite the government's warning of stern action.

The Express Tribune - January 13, 2014

Pakistan & Iran

Iran & EU Make Progress in N-Deal Implementation Talks

Iran and the European Union appeared to make progress in resolving outstanding differences on how to implement a landmark nuclear deal in talks in Geneva but the United States said discussions were not yet finalized. Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi met a senior EU official in Geneva to iron out remaining practical details of the Nov. 24 accord under which Iran agreed to curb its most sensitive nuclear work in return for some sanctions relief. After the meeting, he told Reuters that the sides have found "solutions for every difference" but more consultations were needed before an agreement could be announced. "Now we are taking the solutions ... home, all of us. Hopefully tomorrow we can either confirm or not, but hopefully confirm," he said. The European Union liaises with Iran on behalf of six world powers - the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany - in diplomatic efforts related to Tehran's atom work. A spokesman for the EU said "very good" progress was made "on all the pertinent issues", but added that results of the talks still had to be validated by more senior officials. In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told a news briefing that the technical talks were making good progress but reports that a deal had been finalized were inaccurate.

"There have been a few outstanding issues, but at this point, the reports that everything has been finalized are incorrect," she said. The seven countries need to agree when the nuclear accord goes into effect, meaning when the European Union and the United States ease economic sanctions in return for Iranian nuclear concessions, and how they will verify that Iran is meeting its end of the bargain. During years of on-and-off diplomacy, Iran has rejected western allegations its atom work has military goals, and said it needs nuclear power for energy generation and medical purposes. In a series of implementation talks between nuclear experts and sanctions specialists from the seven countries and the EU, held since Nov. 24, several issues linked to the accord have surfaced. There appeared to be disagreements over the sequence of how the sides implement the deal, and how much prior notice of Iran fulfilling its obligations should be given to western governments before they ease sanctions. The talks have also run into problems over advanced centrifuge research, highlighting the huge challenges facing Iran and the six powers in negotiating the precise terms of the interim agreement. The agreement is designed to last six months and the six powers hope to use the time to negotiate a final, broad settlement over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Daily Times - January 11, 2014

FOOD SECURITY, POVERTY & IDPs**Situation in Pakistan****Increasing Poverty Affecting 40% Population: Report by PSSP**

Increasing poverty levels over the past decade are now affecting 40 per cent of Pakistan's population, according to an independent research studies. With approximately 77 million food-insecure people, poverty is the most important challenge for the government. At the second annual conference of the Pakistan Strategy Support Program (PSSP) held, researchers and economists from across the country joined international consultants to present the findings of some recently conducted surveys. While presenting trends in poverty, Edward Whitney from PSSP said that poverty rates had increased over the last decade, though rural poverty is persistently higher than urban poverty. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), in 2011, Pakistan was among the 26 countries having alarming levels of hunger. IFPRI Visiting Senior Research Fellow Sohail Jehangir Malik gave a presentation on the consumer price index (CPI) and its implications on welfare, saying that increasing unemployment and rising prices were resulting in loss of welfare. Malik said the Food Price Index had been increasing at a substantially greater rate than the General Price Index since 2007-08. He said the recent work confirms that dramatically declining estimates of poverty are a direct result of use of CPI to calculate the poverty line. "Nearly half the population of Pakistan was declared food insecure in 2008," he said.

Malik said that wheat is central to food security in Pakistan but wheat prices have implications for the consumers. He informed that wheat accounts for over 55 per cent of the total caloric consumption and poor households spend 24 per cent of food expenditure on wheat. Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal noted that poverty had gone from 34 per cent in 2007 to 40 per cent in 2012 and was adding to the already-substantial number of development challenges. Iqbal said to combat the menace, Pakistan must embrace a research and evidence-based policy and transform agriculture, enhance the rural economy and ensure food and water security. "We need science to make our food security and poverty reduction policies more efficient and sustainable," he said. While current economic indicators seem to be disappointing policymakers, Iqbal said the government hopes to achieve an average agriculture growth of at least four per cent per annum in the next decade, evolve an equitable system of food procurement and distribution and improve access to affordable food for poor households.

"This is a huge task. It involves a paradigm shift towards pro-poor growth strategies that will change institutions and local power structures in favor of the poor by giving them greater access to productive assets such as land and livestock and facilities for acquired education and skills," he said. Speaking to the media after the session, Iqbal said bilateral economic relations between Pakistan and the US must not be linked to internal affairs. "Aid should not be linked to internal matters." Both the countries must work on mutual conditions and respect the sovereignty of one another, he added. "The United States is supporting vibrant and sustained research and development efforts in Pakistan. The US and Pakistan's joint efforts in the field of agriculture and economic growth will contribute to a stronger, brighter future for Pakistan," said USAID Mission Director Gregory Gottlieb.

The Express Tribune - January 22, 2014

Pakistan Hosts 1.61 million Registered Afghan Refugees

Pakistan still hosts over 1.61 million registered Afghan refugees, the largest and most protracted refugee population in the world, said a document of UNHCR. Since March 2002, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has facilitated the return of almost 3.8 million registered Afghan refugees from the country. An official of UNHCR said thanks to the generous support provided by the Government of Pakistan, some refugee villages in the provinces of Balochistan, KP and Punjab are established on government-owned land; refugee children have access to public schools; and refugees have access to public health clinic. Replying to a question, he said UNHCR assists 1.61 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, 592,648 of whom live in 81 refugee villages.

Daily Times - January 27, 2014
