

Gender

Women & Politics

Ruqayya Jafri – Two partitions have left Mrs Jafri with Mixed feelings

Ruqayya Jafri, 83, has suffered two geographical partitions in her lifetime. One, in 1947, left her with a sense of partial triumph and a dream that somehow soured too soon. The other, in 1971, gave her a shock from which she is still recovering. Between the two events, she progressed from a student leader to a member of Pakistan's national parliament, where she was instrumental in organizing opposition to General Ayub Khan, Pakistan's first military ruler in the 1960s. But she feels her career as a high achiever has done little to ameliorate her own plight as the forgotten matriarch of a divided house.

Born in 1925 to a lawyer in Sirajganj town of Rajshahi in East Bengal, Mrs Jafri spent the prime of her youth organizing the women students' wing of the All India Muslim League in Calcutta, where she went to college. She studied up to high school at home, in keeping with the Muslim sensitivities of the time. But then opportunities opened up to her. The nearest girls' college was in Calcutta, and there was no separate hostel for Muslim girls. To her good fortune, the Bengal government set up what was then called a purdah (veil) college, the Lady Brabourne College, which also had a hostel. The college was established in 1939, the year Mrs Jafri finished her high school studies. Permission from her parents to attend was not long in coming.

She considers the following eight years as the best part of her life. During this period, she emerged as a student leader, social worker, newspaper columnist, election campaigner and a broadcaster. She also fell in love with a fellow student leader from West Bengal, whom she married in 1946. The partition of India in 1947 brought triumph, but there was a sad subtext to it. Her group had to shift to Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan (later to become Bangladesh), which few of them had seen before. Mrs Jafri was a student leader, social worker, columnist, broadcaster and MP. She feels the seeds of secession were sown as early as 1948, when united Pakistan's first governor-general, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, told a students' gathering in Dacca that only Urdu would be the national language of Pakistan. This gave birth to the Bangla language movement, and agitation erupted in 1951, causing political re-alignments that led to the complete elimination of the Muslim League from East Pakistan. Mrs Jafri, then running a school in Dacca and raising a family, joined Suhrawardy's Awami League and was also quietly working in the background for this new movement. In 1962, she was able to beat Gen Ayub's restrictions on political parties and was elected to a women's seat in the national parliament, where she emerged as a firebrand campaigner for Bengali rights.

When Bangladesh seceded, she suffered a nervous breakdown and was in hospital for several weeks. Mrs Jafri was a member of Pakistan's national parliament. As a member of parliament, Mrs Jafri had her first chance to visit West Pakistan, where all the infrastructure of state she had fought for was located. The parliament then used to meet in the city of Rawalpindi. She didn't like the place much. But this is the land where she has remained. She was widowed in 1956, and married a West Pakistani journalist 10 years later.

A widow again, she now lives in Karachi with two daughters, while her only son and the rest of the family live more than 3,000 miles away, in her native Bangladesh.

More Women in Commonwealth Parliaments Urged

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) committee has finalized recommendations for enhanced representation of women in parliaments throughout the Commonwealth. The recommendations were finalized at a steering committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur on August 3. Pakistan's Kashmala Tariq, the Chairwoman of CWP, presided over the meeting held in connection with the on-going 54th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, which will continue till August 10. The recommendations – which will later be submitted to the CWP executive committee's meeting – include ensuring 30 percent female representation at all levels, the provision of a secretariat for women portfolio holders of the Commonwealth, and increasing the representation of women in all delegations of Commonwealth conferences. The CWP has representation from nine regions and 53 countries. The aim of CWP is to work towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations and to facilitate networking between the women parliamentarians of the Commonwealth as well as the women's wings of international organizations.

Women & HR

Five Women buried Alive in Name of Honour

Three teenage girls along with their two close elderly relatives were shot at before being buried alive in a desert of Balochistan by their tribesmen in the name of honour. The shocking reports of this horrible incident reaching the capital from different quarters revealed that the girls studying in classes 10 to 12 intended to marry men of their choice through a civil court by defying the centuries-old tribal traditions. When the fuming elders of Umrani tribe came to know about the intentions of these girls to appear before a local court, they picked them up from their homes along with two of their elderly women relatives. The crying girls were pushed into official cars and driven to a deserted area. There they were pushed out of the cars, made to stand in a queue and volleys of shots fired at them. As the bleeding girls fell on the sand, the tribesmen dragged them into a nearby ditch and levelled it with earth and stones before the girls could breathe their last. As the two shocked elderly women tried to rescue the hapless girls, they too were gunned down and buried in the same manner. The killers after burying these women returned to their tribe like conquerors without any action against them. The step taken was to send a loud message to the rest of the tribe's girls. Father of these girls lodged an FIR with the police against his own brother, who was said to be the architect of this crime. But after some family pressure, he withdrew the case and so the blood of those girls was forgiven in the name of centuries-old tradition, which does not allow any girl of the tribe to contract marriage of her choice.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Watch has accused Abdul Sattar Umrani, the younger brother of PPP Housing Minister in Balochistan Government Mir Sadiq Umrani, of being directly responsible for this shocking act of barbarianism. The Housing Minister, Mir Mohammad Sadiq Umrani, confirmed that this was true that three girls and two other women were buried alive by men of the Umrani clan. But he strongly denied that his brother had to do anything with this act. He claimed that these girls were actually buried alive by their uncle — Sardar Fateh Mohammad Umrani — against whom even an FIR was lodged with the local police. But the FIR was later withdrawn by the father of these girls, after he was put under pressure by those who had buried his daughters alive in the desert. He said the alleged killer Sardar Fateh Mohammad was his political enemy since 1985 and his brother Abdul Sattar Umrani was being maligned only to settle political scores otherwise everybody knew in the area as to who had buried the women alive in the desert.

Burying Women Alive for Honour is Tribal Tradition': Balochistan Senator Israrullah Zehri informed the Senate on August 29 that the killing of women for honour is a demand of the tribal traditions. Zehri was responding to Senator Yasmeen Shah's statement in which she had drawn the House's attention towards reports that five women had been buried alive in Balochistan in the name of honour. She called it a sheer violation of human rights. Zehri asked the members not to politicize the issue, as it was a matter of safeguarding the tribal traditions. Leader of the

Opposition in Senate Kamil Ali Agha condemned the killing of women in the name of honour and demanded the issue should be referred to the Human Rights Standing Committee of the House.

Fathers, Brother Arrested for burying Five Baloch Women Alive: Naseerabad police, on September, 1 arrested seven suspects after the government ordered an investigation into the killing of three girls and two women who were allegedly shot and buried alive around two months ago in Babakot village, 320 kilometres east of Quetta. Investigators have exhumed three of the five bodies and sent them for autopsy. The arrested include the fathers of the three girls, a brother of two of the girls, a cousin of one of the girls and two others whose identities have not been disclosed. The two sisters, Fozia and Janat, along with the woman, Fatima, had been buried in the jurisdiction of the Baba Kot Police Station after they had gone to Osta Muhammad, the Jaffarabad district headquarters, to marry men of their choice.

Provincial Police Chief Asif Nawaz Warraich told that the federal government is also sending a top police official to Quetta to investigate the murders. He said that we have no evidence so far which may substantiate media reports about the killing of the five women. Adviser on Interior Rehman Malik said he had ordered an inquiry into the killings and deputed a top police officer to conduct the investigation. He said he wanted a report within a week, adding, "We want facts. This isn't a European society. We're a different society, but violence against women cannot be tolerated either in the name of culture or religion."

Rights groups, including the Women's Action Forum, have demanded immediate action. "Are Pakistani women not human beings? Or are they not considered citizens, deserving equal protection under the constitution and law?" asked the group, adding, "The government needs to provide immediate answers and to take urgent action." More than 4,000 people, mostly women, have been killed in the rural areas of Pakistan in recent years in the name of family honour. In 2005, former President Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf signed a bill into law, introducing the death penalty for honour killings.

South Asian Women more Vulnerable to Gender Discrimination – SAARC Gender Database

Women in South Asia are more vulnerable to discrimination, social injustice, gender equity and equality as compared to those living in western countries. This consensus was reached at the meeting of the SAARC Gender Database convened to discuss prioritized indicators on violence against women in the South Asian region. The participants were of the view that South Asia was a home of nearly one-thirds of humanity, half of which were represented by women, however opportunities provided for their progress and development were very limited. The South Asian women are usually considered amongst those having the least access to development while men with strong basis in culture and traditions continue to constrain women in every face of their lives. Women are less likely to have access to health services, enjoy civil, political and legal equality with men and benefits from economic and social security, they observed.

Chief Census Commissioner Khizar Hayat Khan on the occasion said that Population Census Organization of Pakistan would make all out efforts to involve about 50 percent female enumerators in the upcoming population and housing census to encourage respondent women provide correct information about their livelihood. This would help the PCO collect accurate data to analyze the situation of the women in the country. The SAARC Gender Database meeting discussed and reviewed several prioritized indicators, which are to be utilized in data collection on Violence Against Women in South Asian Countries. The indicators were categorized in several types including, sexual violence, trafficking, domestic violence, violence at workplace, abortions, custodial violence, acid throwing and suicide. In addition, the prioritized indicators also include several issues related to women's health including life expectancy and sex-ratio, HIV status, disability, occupational health or health in work settings, reproductive health, family planning, pre-natal pre-natal, post-natal services, infection control, micro-nutrient supplements and safe water and sanitation.

Over 10 million Women Workers engaged in Home Based Work

Over 10 million women workers in Pakistan are engaged in home based work without any social and legal cover. These views were expressed at a launching ceremony of the 'First Women Workers' Union Home Based Aurat Workers Union Pakistan (HBAWUP)' organized by Action Aid, on August 19.

While briefing media personnels, Aqsa Khan, Manager Social and Women's Right, Action Aid, said that Home Based Workers' Union will be organized, which will include trade unions, people's rights movements, NGOs, parliamentarians. The main objectives of the union is to provide a platform to the home based workers, so that they can raise their voice for their rights effectively, which can help strengthen their ability for collective bargaining with the middle agents/investors and also give them power to advocate with the government for signing and rectifying UN ILO C-I 77 and Social Protection. She said. She further said that the home based workers are demanding their own registered union at the national level through which they can negotiate more strongly for the improvement of their wages and social protection. This is going to be a national level union and representation from Punjab, NWFP, Balochistan and Sindh would be ensured at local, provincial and national structures. These workers would be the members of this union. All co-operative members of home based workers from all districts have formed their Primary Associations with 20-25 members in each of these Associations. Consultative meetings were organized in the following districts and cities like Karachi, Thatha, Sanghar, Tando Adam, Naushero Feroze, Mirpur Khas, Hub, Quetta, Multan, Faisalabad, Lahore etc that will be the part of this union. A national Congress will be held in Lahore on August, 22, 2008 and Convention in Islamabad in the first week of September. The union involves 25 members and the National Executive Committee will be comprised nine office bearers. Whereas 16 members would be elected from each province and AJ&K. These organizations initiated establishing co-operative centres in the Industrial Zones of Karachi, Lahore and Hyderabad, provided capacity building and skill development training and organized meetings with investors to bring about improvement in wages.

Women Soldiers to get Permanent Commissioned Status in Indian Army

Indian women are set to turn career soldiers. Breaking a 300-year-old tradition, the armed forces have agreed "in principle" to secure their careers by granting them permanent commission — but without combat duties. The move comes after media reports highlighted gender bias in the forces and triggered a debate. It will finally give women officers their rightful place in a male-dominated military culture, some 15 years after they were allowed into the armed forces. Air Marshal Sumit Mukerji, Air Officer-in-charge Personnel, said: "The COSC (Chiefs of Staff Committee) is fine-tuning modalities and identifying non-combat arms that women officers could be assigned to." Permanent commission will allow lady officers to climb command echelons and assume higher responsibilities, a privilege that did not come with their limited tenure ranging from five to 14 years (outside the Army Medical Corps). With this, the National Defence Academy and other service-specific training institutions will no longer be the exclusive domain of male cadets. Mukerji did not rule out the possibility of the NDA, the cradle of military leadership, churning out an all-women batch if they outperform the boys in the entrance exam and interviews. Lieutenant General Punita Arora (Retd), the first lady to don the three-star rank in India's military history, said that the girls have proved their worth in the armed forces. They deserve it. However, women will continue to be accepted only in responsibilities more in tune with generally accepted notions of gender. Close combat would essentially imply serving in the infantry, armoured corps, flying a fighter aircraft or sailing on a warship. A senior army officer said the existing cadre of women officers is unlikely to benefit as permanent commission would come with its own terms and conditions. Defence ministry figures show there are just 945 women out of 35,377 officers in the army, 739 out of 10,563 officers in the air force and 236 out of 7,336 officers in the navy. HT had recently reported that several lady officers were opting for corporate sector with the government dithering on permanent commission.

Status in other nations

- United States: Women are excluded from combat jobs but they are granted permanent commission.

- Pakistan: In March 2006, four women pilots received their flying wings, breaking into an all-male bastion.
- United Kingdom: 17,900 women serve in all positions where the primary duty is “to close with and kill the enemy”.
- Israel: First female combat pilot received her wings in 2001. Combat duty is voluntary for women.

Women & Media

Media Persons can Change Stereotyped Concept of Women’

It was unanimously agreed, by the participants of an informal meeting on ‘gender style guide for media’ organized on August 2 by Rozan for the sensitive portrayal of gender based crimes in media, that consistent and sustained capacity building of all members within media institutions including reporters, editors or producers on gender issues could not only raise awareness on the complexities and implications of gender dynamics and power relations within this field, but also enable them to work with these issues meaningfully.

Talking on the occasion Munsalik Programme Coordinator Shabana Arif said that media has immense power to change the stereotype concept of women. “The perpetuation of stereotypes in images and representation solidifies women’s traditional roles and unequal gender relations in multiple ways should be abandoned,” she said. She said that consistently throughout Asia, women have been portrayed in the media as victims, subservient, nurturing, and sacrificing and objectified sexualized beings. “This not only inaccurately represents the diversity of women’s lives, roles and experiences within this complex and rich region, women’s contributions to the socio-political and economic development of society are often neglected,” she said. She said that media not only represent women as helpless subjects without agency, it also fails to emphasize men’s role as perpetrators in instances of violence against women. Shabana stressed the need for adopting gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language that aims at minimizing assumptions regarding the gender or sex. “Instead of calling ‘policemen’ the word ‘police officer’ should be preferred as women could also be in the profession,” she suggested. She urged media to use proper words for the survivor of victims while the confidentiality of a survivor should be the top priority. “No report of sexual assault should file the name or photo of the survivor, unless she expresses willingness,” she said.

The participants of the meeting urged media to increase the portrayal of women as significant contributors to society as leaders, workers and thinkers, not just as carers, sex objects or victims. They said that the development of appropriate alternative and community media could also enable the dissemination of diverse expressions and experiences, particularly from marginalized groups who are better able to own and manage them at the community level.

A number of media personnel from electronic and print media attended the meeting besides the students of Mass Communication from different universities who condemned Women’s portrayals in an increasingly consumer-driven culture and the commoditization of women’s bodies in advertising, pornography and conflict situations.

Gender Related Projects of MoWD

Delay in Approval of Rs511m Project creates Unrest

Inordinate delay in approval of a Rs511 million project for women’s empowerment is creating unrest within the Ministry of Women’s Development, which fears that the delaying tactics of the Planning Commission would not only lead to an increase in the project’s previously calculated cost but also change its strategic and operational scope. An official of MoWD told on August 9 that the five-year project titled ‘**Awareness of Women’s Development through Media,**’ was scheduled for launching on July 1, 2008. “We have sent many reminders to the Planning Commission but to no avail.

The project’s stated objectives are to enable women to understand and exercise their rights across social, economic, political and legal streams; sensitize rural and urban communities, especially men, about gender issues and women’s rights; and enlighten the public about the

government's programmes and gender related commitments. The prime focus on the project is on alleviation of women's social and economic deprivation; gender stereotypes and biased perception of the society about women's roles and status; employment issues; inadequate participation in decision making; sexual harassment at workplace and public places; violence against women; gender insensitive cultural practices such as Vani, Sawara; domestic violence; trafficking in girls and women; girl child abuse; lack of awareness of government's commitments and policies on women's empowerment; and absence of information on protection against violence services. The project will cover all districts of the four provinces, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Northern Areas (NAs) and Azad Kashmir. Once approved, the project will take up research and baseline surveys to gather data on the level of public awareness on women- related issues across various socio-economic groups.

Drawing from the data, the project will develop a media strategy for rural and urban communities, with the emphasis being on print and electronic as well as radio campaigns, street theatres, conferences, seminars, workshops, and printing and dissemination of advocacy material. Each consecutive year's activities will be planned after conducting an assessment of results obtained from the previous year. The project will be monitored by a committee headed by the secretary of MoWD and comprising a project director, MoWD DG (Development), deputy secretary (Empowerment), and one representative each from the Press Information Department and an NGO working on women issues.

Phase-I of GRAP to be completed with little Achievements

The stipulated time of a three-year development project of Ministry of Women Development, Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) is going to be ended on August 27 featuring a few success stories. The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) had approved the Implementation of National Gender Action Plan Phase-I on July 20, 2005 with a cost of 418.563 million to help improve the status of women and to enhance participation of women across the governance spheres at the federal, provincial and district levels.

The first phase of the project will be completed on August 27, 2008 according to PC-I but the Ministry has very few achievements on its credit, official documents disclosed. The Ministry for Fiscal Reforms transferred an amount of Rs. 250 million to the districts with guidelines but due to lack of internal monitoring by the ministry 72 districts have not been able to utilize the amount. The Ministry not only lacks capacity to implement the project activities as envisaged in the PC-I, the performance of the districts is not evaluated as well to ensure the utilization of funds on appropriate projects. The officials of the Ministry believe that expenditure of Rs 316. 193 million transferred to the 111 districts under Fiscal Reforms during the financial year 2005-06. But factually 72 districts have not utilized the amount in two financial years. The amount allocated to districts is still available with them in their non-lapsable account. It has also been learnt that, though, the districts have mostly prepared the projects to facilitate the lady councillors by the construction of rest rooms, resource centres, purchase of sewing machines and distribution through councillors, up gradation of existing vocational institutes and establishment of computer centres. But a very little efforts have been made to sensitise the general public about gender issues and low priority has been assigned to education and health needs of women.

The role of other ministries has not been very cooperative with the Ministry of Women Development in contributing positively towards the goal of gender mainstreaming as well. They did not implement the activities according to the approved work plan. An amount of Rs. 1.597 million was reserved for pre-budget seminars but they did not conduct such seminar. The work allocated to 12 ministries towards implementation of various activities during 2007-08 has not been completed so far. The main responsibility of the six ministries including Finance, Labour, Information, Planning and Development, Law and Establishment Division were to create institutional mechanism for sectoral policies and plans by creating Gender Development Sections (GDS) besides taking a number of affirmative actions for women's development and empowerment. Except Labour Division, all five ministries have established GDS but these sections have not achieved any target. Only Planning and Development Division has arranged Gender training from June 15 to 28, 2008. The staff recruited by the ministries and divisions in the sections has not been assigned any task and the employees have been getting only salaries from the project.

Manual Guide for Women's Concerns Launched

August 29, 2008

Putting together theoretical framework and practical guidelines for gender sensitive media advocacy strategies, the first of its kind manual titled “**A best practice guide on raising women’s voices and concerns through radio**” was launched on August 28. The manual was launched by Uks Research Centre, which is intended to provide broadcasters an in-depth and thought-provoking practical guide of how to produce issue-based programmes for public service broadcasting. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sherry Rehman was the chief guest on the occasion. She lauded efforts of Uks Research Centre for compiling the manual and expressed the hope that media persons would take benefit of this guideline. Speaking on the occasion, she said radio is the most accessible mean of communication in rural areas and through this medium, women issues can be addressed in effective manners. She emphasized on reviving the use of radio as a mean of communication as it can help end gender prejudices against women that prevail in our male dominating society.

Iftikhar Arif, Chairman of Pakistan Academy of Letters, and vice-chancellor of Fatima Jinnah Women University Dr Syeda Asad briefly reviewed the manual. Iftikhar Arif opined that the manual could be used as a source for information not only by the broadcasters but even for a layman, who could take advantage of it. The manual in a very simple way has pointed out the gender-biased approach adopted in our society against women. Dr Syeda Vice Chancellor Fatima Jinnah Women University commented that the initiatives taken by Uks in producing this manual is a very practical and timely step. Earlier, before launching the guideline manual a round table conference was also held by Uks Research Centre. Tasneem Ahmar, Director, Uks Research Centre, highlighted important features of the manual. She said Uks also planned to distribute free copies of this manual in colleges and universities.

Women Parliamentarians & Legislative Business

Private Members’ Bills

- **Ms. Marvi Memon**

- **Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2008, (Article 251)**

- *A Bill further to amend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*

- **Objectives:** Since the popular languages of Pakistan which are Balochi, Punjabi, Pushto, Shina, Sindhi, Siraiki, and Urdu have not been given their due status in the Constitution of Pakistan, and a number of popular movements are going on in the country demanding grant of National status to these languages, therefore, it has become imperative to give those languages the status of National Languages of Pakistan. Moreover, the teaching of Arabic and Persian at school level needs to be enforced so that Islam is better understood by our population and so that regionally we remain connected to our age old literary traditions of Persian. Additionally it is important that all these National Languages are developed through a Federal level fund as well as provincial resources. Language promotion makes a country’s culture and history richer. The official language should continue being English till Urdu’s substitution is made possible within next 15 years.

- **Mrs. Belum Hasnain**

- **Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2008**

- *A Bill further to amend the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908*

- **Objectives:** Depriving of female child and women from their legal rights of inheritance on different pretexts is becoming a custom in our county. Females and women are being deprived of their Islamic and legal rights of inheritance which is not only the violation of fundamental rights but also creating some other social and economic problems in our country and particularly in rural areas where illiterate women are at the mercy of male relatives. They are being married with the

Holy Quran and also sometimes suffering from allegations like karo kari, etc., just to exclude them from their right of inheritance. The Bill seeks to ensure the provision of Islamic and legal rights of women in inheritance and to save them from such other miseries in their social life.

- **Mrs. Asiya Nasir**

- **Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2008 (Article 51, 59)**

- *A Bill further to amend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan*

- **Objectives:** Seats have been reserved for the non-Muslims in the National Assembly and in the four Provincial Assemblies, but these are not allocated for the Senate. Through the present amendment, in Article 59 of the Constitution, seats are proposed for the non-Muslims in the Senate also. Seats reserved in the National Assembly are also proposed to be increased from ten to fifteen. This Bill seeks to achieve the aforesaid objectives.

- **Mrs. Belum Hasnain, Mrs. Shakeela Khanam Rashid**

- **Removal from Service (Special Powers) (Repeal) Act, 2008**

- *A Bill to repeal the Removal from Service (Special Powers) Ordinance, 2000*

- **Objectives:** Prior to the 12th October, 1999, different matters relating to civil servants were being dealt in accordance with the provisions of the Civil Servants Act, 1973 (Act LXXI of 1973). However, after imposition of unconstitutional rule, the Removal from Service (Special Powers) Ordinance, 2000 (Ordinance XVII of 2000) was being promulgated to punish and prosecute the civil servants which is in fact a draconian and black law and meant to constantly harass the civil servants to force them to obey the orders of the unconstitutional authority. Thus it is necessary to repeal and abolish such a draconian and black law.

- **Pakistan Postal Services Management Board (Amendment) Act, 2008**

- *A Bill to amend the Pakistan Postal Services Management Board Ordinance, 2002*

- **Objectives:** The Bill seeks to amend the Pakistan Postal Services Management Board Ordinance, 2002 (Ordinance No. CXXVI of 2002), to provide for regulation, control and supervise the functioning and operations of the courier companies and also check the mushroom growth of such courier companies which are not providing quality services to masses. At present no regulatory regime exists for proper regulation and control of activities of the courier companies. Such companies are exploiting the people without any restraint and check on their activities.

- **Dr. Donya Aziz**

- **Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation (Amendment) Act, 2008**

- *A Bill further to amend the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act, 2005*

- **Objectives:** In the spirit of ensuring the supremacy of Parliament and transparency of the Government, it is imperative for the Federal Government to make clear its intention to acquire further debt and/or acquire grants. Bilateral and Multilateral agreements on loans and grants are made with the intention of bettering the lives of Pakistan's people; the representatives of the people, therefore, need to be taken into confidence before incurring further burdens that will eventually be paid back by the citizens.

- **Dr. Donya Aziz and Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman**

- **Medical Devices Act, 2008**

- *A Bill to regulate the manufacture, import, export, sale, quality and use of medical devices*

- **Objectives:** The lax supervision of the quality of medical devices, and the repackaging and reselling of used devices has led alarming spread of infectious diseases like Hepatitis B and C and HIV/AIDS in Pakistan. The current high prevalence and incidence of diseases like Hepatitis B and C have become a serious public health issue. Furthermore, Pakistan's status as a "high risk" country for HIV/AIDS prevalence indicates that mechanisms need to be put in place to reduce such risk. It is therefore proposed to regulate the manufacture, import, export, sale, quality and use of medical devices to protect the public from the aforementioned infectious diseases.

* Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada is the third member to present bill in Assembly

- **Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman, Mrs. Shakeela Khanam Rashid, Mrs. Bushra Rahman, Dr. Donya Aziz***

Publication of the Holy Quran (Elimination of Printing and Recording Errors) (Amendment) Act, 2008

A Bill further to amend the Publication of the Holy Quran (Elimination of Printing and Recording Errors) Act, 1973

Objectives: This Bill seeks to ensure the disposal of martyred/damaged Holy Pages and copies of the Holy Quran in a proper manner as well as to stop the publication of the Holy Quran on the sub-standard paper.

*Ch. Muhammad Berjees Tahir is the male MNA to lay down the bill along with aforementioned female MNAs.

- **Dr. Attiya Inayatullah, Begum Shahnaz Sheikh, Ms. Marvi Memon, Mrs. Bushra Rahman, Dr. Donya Aziz**

Prevention of Harassment at Workplace Act, 2008

A Bill to provide for prevention of harassment at the workplace and to provide a secure working environment for men and women workers

Objectives: The purpose of this Bill is to ensure a work environment where women and men can feel safe at work and to have fair accountability system for any gender harassment or abuse at the workplace.

- **Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman, Mrs. Shakeela Khanam Rashid**

Special Citizens Act, 2008

A Bill to make provisions for the rights of special citizens

Objectives: This Bill seeks to provide the accessibility to disabled citizens at every public place, with regard to allocation of seats in public transports, provision of facilities on footpaths for wheelchairs and blind persons. Similarly while crossing the roads, special citizens must be given priority.

Islamabad Wildlife (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) (Amendment) Act, 2008

A Bill further to amend the Islamabad Wildlife (Protection, Preservation, Conservation and Management) Ordinance, 1979

Objectives: For the preservation and Conservation of Wildlife, flora and fauna for sustainable development to comply with the concept of National Parks Internationally.

Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, 2008

A Bill to make provisions for the protection of women, children and the family

Objectives: To protect vulnerable peoples, especially women, children, domestic workers, elders and disabled persons from violence in the context of personal relationships. Whereas Articles 25 and 35 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan guarantee a right to protection and making provisions for protecting women and children and whereas it is expedient to protect vulnerable persons from violence, be it physical or psychological due to its debilitating impact on the victims of such violence.

*Ch. Muhammad Berjees Tahir is the male member to lay down aforementioned three bills along with Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman and Mrs. Shakeela Khanum Rashid.

- **Mrs. Samina Khalid Ghurki, Dr. Donya Aziz**

Compulsory School Attendance Act, 2008

A Bill to make law for compulsory school attendance of every child Compulsory

Objectives: Right to education is the birth right of every child. Education promotes understanding, tolerance and development of human personality. In Islamic teachings, it is provided that education/knowledge is precious thing in the universe. Compulsory school

attendance will reduce the child labour ratio. In developing countries, this type of legislation is very much needed, and it will get good support from all international forums. Since the object of the compulsory school attendance would be that all children be educated.

*Ch. Muhammad Berjees Tahir

- **Mrs. Kashmala Tariq**

The Offence of Qazf (Enforcement of Hadd) (Amendment) Act, 2008

A Bill further to amend the Offence of Qazf (Enforcement of Hadd) Ordinance, 1979

Objectives: The women who are subjected to rape or similar offences under the Offence of Qazf (Enforcement of Hadd) Ordinance, 1979 or are made to suffer the false allegations of Qazf face great hardship in getting their cases registered against the offenders. The police drags its feet in completion of investigation and its indifferent attitude increases the agony of the victims. The lukewarm attitude of Prosecutors in conclusion of the trial further add final to their sufferings. The Bill seeks to provide for direct access to court by the victim of rape and Qazf to approach directly to the Courts in addition to recording of FIRS and police investigation.

*The bill was jointly laid down by Kashmala Tariq along with Khawaja Sheraz Mehmood, Dewan Ashiq Hussain Bokhari, Shahzada Mohiuddin, Mr. Nasrullah Khan Bijarani, Malik Nauman Ahmed Langrial, Sardar Muhammad Israr Tareen, Ch. Nazir Ahmed Jatt.

Details can be accessed through following URL: http://www.na.gov.pk/leg_business.htm

Government Bills

Among the Government Bills, **Ms. Sherry Rehman** was the woman Minister who laid down following bill in the National Assembly:

Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Act, 2008

A Bill further to amend the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance, 2002

Objectives: The Prime Minister in his first policy statement given on the floor of the National Assembly, after receiving unanimous vote of confidence, on 29th March, 2008, expressed the resolve of the new government to dismantle restrictions and curbs placed on the media and announced the repeal of the amendments made in the Pakistan Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration Ordinance, 2002 on 3rd November, 2007. The draconian laws that threatened coercive actions against the press will be removed via this bill to begin the process of providing for a free press in Pakistan. This involves, as a first step, the withdrawal of the provisions of Ordinance XCVIII of 2002 inserted through Ordinance LXIV of 2007.

Details can be accessed through following URL: http://www.na.gov.pk/leg_business.htm

Calling Attention Notices

- Women Parliamentarians called attention notices towards various issues ranging from textile, health, inflation, trade and transportation. Following are the details of attention notices which were either called by women parliamentarians alone or along with their male counterparts:
- Ms. Marvi Memon and Mrs. Bushra Rehman invited attention of the Minister for Textile Industry to a matter of urgent public importance regarding non-extending of research and development support to the Textile Industry by the Government.
- Mrs. Shamshad Sattar Bachani, Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman invited attention of the Minister for Health to a matter of urgent public importance regarding likely wastage of vaccine worth billion of rupees in the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad due to load shedding.

- Ms. Fauzia Wahab, Mrs. Shamshad Sattar Bachani invited attention of the Minister for Commerce to a matter of urgent public importance regarding loss of \$80 billions to Pakistan due to Afghan Transit Trade Agreement.
- Begum Naseem Akhter Chaudhry, Mrs. Beelum Hasnain and Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman invited attention of the Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources to a matter of urgent public importance regarding in-sufficient number of gas meters supplied to the residents of major cities of the country.
- Mrs. Shagufta Sadiq invited attention of the Minister for Health to a matter of urgent public importance regarding not allowing reimbursement of OPD Medicines to the non-gazetted Government employees (BPS 1-15) despite assurance by the Government causing.
- Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman invited attention of the Minister for Communications to a matter of urgent public importance regarding delay in the construction of G.T.Road from Gujranwala to Lahore by National Highways Authority (NHA).
- Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman invited attention of the Minister-in-Charge of the Cabinet Secretariat to a matter of urgent public importance regarding delay in the investigation against the Bankers' City Housing Society Islamabad/Rawalpindi by the National Accountability Bureau.
- Mrs. Nosheen Saeed and Mrs. Kushbakht Shujaat invited attention of the Minister for Finance and Revenue to a matter of urgent public importance regarding increase in the prices of edible items during the holy month of Ramzan, causing grave concern amongst the public.
- Mrs. Shamshad Sattar Bachani, Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho and Mrs. Yasmeen Rehman invited attention of the Minister-in-charge of the Cabinet Secretariat to a matter of urgent public importance regarding supply of contaminated drinking water to Islamabad and non-availability of filtration plants.

Details are available on following URL: <http://www.na.gov.pk/orderoftheday.htm>

Democracy Watch

Government Watch

Federal & Provincial Governments

Magsi agrees to Continue as Governor

Balochistan Governor Nawab Zulfiqar Ali Magsi, while talking to the Chief Minister at the Governor House, on August 22, gave a positive response to the request of Chief Minister Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani on holding the office of the Governor of the Province. Soon after his arrival from Islamabad, the Chief Minister went directly to the Governor House and held a brief meeting with the Governor. They said the Chief Minister again requested the Governor to

withdraw his resignation, adding the Governor gave a positive response to the request of the Chief Minister.

Magsi first indicated to quit as the governor on August 14 citing the poor law and order situation in the province as the reason for his resignation. Later, news circulated about his resignation on August 20. At present, Nawab Magsi is considered to be the most suitable person for holding the office of the governor in the province. The Balochistan Chief Minister and members of his cabinet had requested the governor not to resign and the PPP-led government at the Centre said it would not accept his resignation.

Major Reshuffle in Cabinet after Presidential Election: Gilani

Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on August 26 said there will be a major reshuffle in the Federal Cabinet after the presidential elections. He said the cabinet was not expanded as the resignations of PML-N ministers were not accepted. The Prime Minister said it was because of the joint struggle and cooperation of all democratic forces including PML-N, that President Musharraf, who was the biggest hurdle in the way of democracy, resigned.

Economic Issues

Debt Swells by Rs740b due to the Devaluation of Local Currency

Pakistan's public debt, in rupee terms, has increased by more than Rs 740 billion in less than half an year due to devaluation of the local currency against the US dollar. Pak Rupee shed its value by more than a fifth against the US dollar during the last few months. Pakistan's total public debt reached US \$ 46.3 billion by end June, 2008. A Finance Ministry official told that every single rupee decline in the value of Pakistan currency against the US dollar was adding up to an amount of Rs 46.3 billion in its public debt. Though Pakistan's foreign debt is denominated in dollars, the decline in the local currency's value against the American currency is pulling more domestic resources to pay off huge foreign liabilities.

According to Economic Survey of Pakistan, in July 2007, every US dollar was equal to 60.4 Pak rupees. In March 2008, the rupee fell down to 62.5 against one US dollar. It took a deep dip after March and traded at Rs 69 in June 2008. During first week of July, one US dollar was traded above Rs 70 in the open market. On Friday dollar reached to the peak of Rs 76.35 in the open market. The economic experts see expensive imports, decline in foreign investment, less exports than imports, fast decline in the central bank foreign exchange reserves and highly speculative exchange market as the main reasons of falling Pak rupee against the US dollar.

Dr Kaiser Bengali, an economist, said due to inflationary expectations people were going towards dollarization, preferring American currency over Pak rupee. He suggested to take long term measures, rationalization of imports and shifting of goods transportation from roads to railways, which would reduce oil import. A Finance Ministry official said that this time the State Bank of Pakistan, which in the past supported the falling rupee by throwing dollars in the market, was not in a position to hold up the local currency. In October 2007, the foreign exchange reserves with the central bank stood at US \$ 16.4 billion that declined to below US \$ 10 billion. The central bank yesterday reported foreign exchange reserves at US \$ 9.92 billion, out of which US \$ three billion are lying with the commercial banks.

Inflation unlikely to ease in 2-3 Years

The Investor's Relation Service at the Ministry of Finance said on August 19 that it is unlikely that inflationary pressure would ease, at least not in the next two to three years owing to the continuing increase in global food and fuel prices, Other factors that would prevent high inflation rate from easing are the second round effects of previous food/energy price shocks, a gradual removal of fuel and power subsidies, a weaker rupee, higher import prices and monetary overhang from the unprecedented government borrowing from the SBP for budgetary financing. A very low base of last year as well as massive increases in both oil and commodity prices have augmented this extreme inflationary trend in Pakistan.

Inflation for the current fiscal year 2008-09 has been targeted at 11 percent. Global food and fuel crises have impacted Pakistan heavily, resulting in a massive surge in inflation in general and food inflation in particular. The overall CPI-based inflation registered a sharp increase in July 2008 as against the corresponding month of last year. The overall inflation increased to 24.3 percent in July 2008 as against 6.4 percent in the corresponding month of last year (July 2007). When viewed in the long-term perspective, inflation in July 2008 was the highest since the decade of the 70s. The record breaking surge in the overall inflation of 24.3 percent in July 2008 is largely attributed to a sharp pick-up in both food and non-food inflation. During 2007-08, the average inflation stood at 12 percent as compared to 7.7 percent in 2006-07. Food inflation: It is a well-known fact that food inflation has emerged as a major source of concern for policy makers around the world, including Pakistan.

Food Inflation: Food inflation surged to 33.8 percent in July 2008, an increase of 8.5 percent from July 2007. Food inflation averaged 17.6 percent in 2007-08 as against 10.2 percent in 2006-07. It is clear that the last two years inflation was driven by higher food inflation. Food inflation in Pakistan has been fuelled by a combination of domestic demand driven factors (rising per capita income), local supply shortage and global trends in the prices of essential commodities. Higher prices of edible oil (palm oil and soybean) and dependency on their imports transmitted higher international prices to domestic prices. Similarly, the domestic prices of wheat and rice also followed the global trend and witnessed sharp increases. To encourage farmers to grow more wheat and check cross-border smuggling the government has increased the procurement price of wheat from Rs 425/40kg to Rs 625/40kg – an increase of 47 percent. Livestock and dairy products (meat and milk) also registered sharp increases because of their rising domestic demand on the one hand and increase in the prices of feedstock on the other.

Non-Food and Non-Energy Inflation: Exhibiting the same increasing trend, non-food and non-energy inflation stood at 16.8 percent in July 2008 against 13.8 percent in June 2008 and 5.2 percent in June 2007. Non-food and non-energy inflation averaged at 8.1 percent in 2007-08 as compared to 5.5 percent in 2006-07. In July 2008, non-food inflation stood at 17.3 percent, an increase of 4.9 percent from July 2007. It averaged 7.8 percent during 2007-08 against an average of 6 percent in 2006-07. The sharp pick up in non-food inflation owes heavily to transport (37.1 percent), fuel and lighting (20.4 percent), cleaning/laundry (18.1 percent), education (14.1 percent), and house rent (13.5 percent) etc. Fuel and lighting and transport sub-indices have surged mainly on account of the pass through of higher international oil prices to domestic consumers and are likely to increase even more with the gradual removal of subsidies on these items.

Release of PSDP Funds Reduced by 40pc

The government has reduced the pace of release of funds for the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for 2009 by almost 40 per cent to bridge the gap between expenditure and revenue and to contain the rising fiscal deficit. Federal ministries, divisions and departments had been asked after the approval of the federal budget to submit work and cash plans that should not exceed 15 per cent of their annual development programme allocations. This year's allocations for development projects had been increased to Rs550 billion from last year's Rs520 billion. Even Rs350 billion spent on development programmes would be a big thing. They said the second and third quarter utilization of PSDP funds usually slowed down because of harsh winter conditions in northern parts of the country. Historically, the Planning Commission used to allow release of 25 percent of the total allocation during the first quarter without cash and work plans to ensure speedy start-ups. The releases in the second quarter used to be made on the basis of first quarter's actual fund utilization and cash and work plans for the remaining part of the fiscal year. The sources, however, said there was no major initiative in sight to control the current expenditure that has been rising for decades. The governments usually sought supplementary grants every year after they consumed budgetary allocations, but the axe normally fell on development programmes in the event of financial constraints. Planning Commission's spokesman Asif Sheikh said that the first quarter releases had been reduced from 25 to 15 per cent but he did not agree that development expenditure had been cut.

Political Problems can hit Pakistan's Credit Rating: S&P

Standard and Poor's Global Head of Sovereign Ratings based in London David Beers said on August 18 that Pakistan's pressing economic problems could take a back seat as officials are caught up in the succession of General (R) Pervez Musharraf, and this could have credit rating implications. He said that Musharraf's stepping down solved one dimension of the political crisis, but the country still had to grapple with a host of issues, including who will replace him.

Pakistan's escalating budget deficit and a large current account deficit in the balance of payments drove S&P in May to cut the country's credit rating to "B", with a negative outlook, which tells the market the rating could go lower. Musharraf resigned to avoid impeachment charges, nearly nine years after taking power in a coup. He had been politically isolated since his allies lost parliamentary elections in February. The opposition coalition that took over the legislature seemed to have no unified economic policy. Moody's rates Pakistan at B2, one notch above

Argentina. Lower credit ratings can raise a country's borrowing costs and hamper its efforts to tap international credit markets. Asked about the prospects for a rating change for Pakistan, Beers said: "We'll see whether the government in the coming weeks or months puts together a credible package of economic policies and that will tell us whether the rating is OK where it is or not." Prolonged jockeying and uncertainty over Musharraf's position has hurt financial markets in the nuclear-armed country of 165 million people. The current account is a country's broadest measure of foreign transactions and a deficit can spell lower reserves if there are no offsetting capital inflows. S&P estimated the budget deficit in the just-ended fiscal year ballooned to 8 percent of the gross domestic product — double that budgeted by Musharraf, Beers said.. His resignation "solves one dimension of the political crisis which has been underway now for many months," he added.

NFC Award

NWFP wants NFC Award under Multi-Factor Formula

The ANP-led coalition government in the NWFP will pursue the policy of the MMA government about distribution of resources on the basis of a multi-factor formula in the reconstituted National Finance Commission (NFC). As constitution of the seventh NFC was still pending, the financial managers of the Frontier government were fine-tuning their strategy. Acting President Mohammadmian Soomro is expected to approve soon a summary about reconstitution of NFC. All the provinces have submitted their nominations to the Federal Government for working out an agreed formula for distribution of resources between the centre and the federating units. The NWFP government has nominated Senator Haji Muhammad Adeel, who is also Senior Vice-President of ANP, as its member in replace of Dr Muhammad Zubair Khan.

The official said all the provinces were sticking to their old stance and therefore the NWFP wanted distribution of resources on the basis of multi-factor criteria, instead of only on the basis of population. The sixth NFC award, still in place, was announced by former president Pervez Musharraf in June 2006 after provinces failed to reach a consensus over distribution formula and he was authorized by all the chief ministers to do so. Horizontal distribution of resources made on the basis of population benefited Punjab and it got 52.54 per cent of the resources distributed in 2006-07. Sindh got 25.2 per cent, the NWFP 14.91 per cent and Balochistan 7.35 per cent under different heads. Punjab insists that the new award should be based on population; Sindh wants weightage for revenue collection, while the NFWP and Balochistan demand distribution on the basis of population, backwardness and area.

Haji Muhammad Adeel told that the current formula of resource distribution was uneven and it was a cause for disparities among the provinces. He said that since the current criterion only suited Punjab, other provinces had been seeking its revision. He said that the provincial government would chalk out its plan for the seventh NFC award, but it would mainly focus on

distribution of resources on a multi-factor formula. Haji Muhammad Adeel said that the NWFP was the poorest province in the country and it had also been the frontline province in war on terror, besides hosting over 3.5 million Afghan refugees. He said that the next NFC will have to look at these factors, which contribute to the backwardness of NWFP province. He added that he will try to convince the representatives of other provinces to give due weightage to poverty, infrastructure and presence of Afghan refugees in the NWFP.

New 10-Member NFC Notified

Acting President Mohammadmian Soomro has notified the much-awaited new 10-member National Finance Commission (NFC) to ensure the equitable distribution of financial resources between the Centre and the four federating units. Under the Constitution, the authority lies with the President to notify the constitution of the NFC. The new NFC will be headed by Finance Minister Naveed Qamar and comprise the four provincial finance ministers, four private members each from every federating unit and one special member. The four representatives are Dr Gulfray Ahmad, who is to represent Balochistan, Saeed Qureshi, Punjab, Kaiser Bengali, Sindh and Senator Haji Mohammad Adeel will represent NWFP. Hina Rabbani Khar, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Economic Affairs, will be the special member of the new National Finance Commission.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Naveed Qamar said that the government would soon convene a meeting of the commission to resolve the issues to evolve new financial resources distribution formula. The poor provinces, such as Balochistan and NWFP, are pinning hopes on the new NFC to get their due share in the financial resources of the country, as the new coalition government seems keen on resolving the long-standing issues of the provinces.

The Mushrraf regime constituted the last NFC on July 21, 2005, but it failed to achieve consensus among the members on a mechanism for judicious resource distribution. The president was requested by the provinces to intervene and under Article 160(6) of the Constitution, he amended the "Distribution of Revenues and Grants In Aid Order, 1997" and implemented the new NFC award with effect from July 1, 2006. Punjab expects that the new formula should be based on population. The other provinces are against the Punjab's stance and they want to include revenue generation, poverty, population density, income distribution and backwardness as the basis for the new formula for the distribution of resources.

Functioning of NAB

PM Okays placing NAB under Law and Justice Division

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani has approved the proposal of Law and Justice Division to place National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and National Accountability Ordinance 1999 under the administrative control of Law and Justice Division. Before approval of this proposal, the federal government functions with regard to NAB and National Accountability Ordinance 1999

were allocated to Cabinet Division. The Law and Justice Division approved that under the rules of Business 1973, the legal matters were dealt with the Law and Justice Division, including the legal proceedings and litigation concerning the federal government. The Accountability Courts established under the National Accountability Ordinance 1999 were already administrative concern of the Law and Justice Division. Therefore, for effective coordination and to improve their working, the NAB and National Accountability Ordinance should be placed under the administrative control of Law and Justice Division.

Revival of Student Unions

Students want Unions but not Politics – Survey

According to a nationwide survey, a big majority of students approve the new coalition government's decision to lift the ban on student unions but not the return of politics to campuses because of bitter past memories on that count. Conducted by a national youth forum, Bargad, scientific survey on Student Politics 2008 has been conducted in all 23 nationwide public universities with 909 respondents. Seventy percent of the respondents welcomed the lifting of the ban on student union imposed by the then ruler, Gen Ziaul Haq, in 1984. But, a majority of the students (61.2 per cent) are not in favour of student politics. Almost half of the respondents said students should not take part in national politics and political movements individually.

But, over 42 per cent, however, are in favour of politics on campus. While, the encouraging thing is that about one-fifth of female students are ready to participate in political movements in individual capacity too. Almost 63 per cent of the students have no knowledge of earlier structure or working of campus politics and student unions. About 16 per cent think positively about the student politics before the ban, while 13 per cent view it in a negative way. "We can easily see that the prejudice against student politics is highly uninformed and has been taken for granted." More than half of the respondents support politics should be confined to campus. But, over 41 per cent report that such restriction is unreal. An overwhelming majority comprising over 72 per cent respondents opposed the affiliation of student organizations with political parties, while only about 22 per cent favoured it. Majority of the respondents did not want political parties to have student wings, as only 28 per cent supported the idea. Nearly half of students are skeptical about similar political loyalties of teachers and students in a certain campus and say that it would not have positive effect on the educational institutions.

Other News

CEC asks Parties to File Accounts by August 29

Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Retd) Qazi Mohammad Farooq on August 27 directed political parties to file their statements of accounts by August 29. The Chief Election Commissioner has once again drawn the attention of political parties, which have not submitted

their party accounts statements, to the provisions of Article 13 of the Political Parties Order 2002 whereby it is provided that every political party shall submit to the election commission, within 60 days from the close of each financial year, a consolidated statement of accounts of the party, duly audited by a chartered accountant. An ECP statement said that the last date for filing the accounts statement is August 29, 2008. A certificate signed by the party leader must accompany the statement, stating that (a) no funds from any source prohibited under the Political Parties Order 2002 were received by the party and (b) the statement contains an accurate financial position of the party.

PA Legislators more 'Accessible' through New Website

Punjab Assembly (PA) Speaker Rana Muhammad Iqbal Khan, on August 22, launched the updated website of the PA, www.pap.gov.pk. United States Agency of International Development (USAID) Democracy and Governance Director Michael Hryshchyshyn and Lahore US Consulate Principal Officer Bryan D Hunt also attended the ceremony held at the PA building in connection with the launch of the website. Information: "The website will help people learn about the activities going on in the assembly, allowing them to understand the challenges and responsibilities of their provincial parliamentarians," Hryshchyshyn said while addressing the ceremony. He said the website would also provide information in English and Urdu about the assembly's history, its members, bills, acts and resolutions forwarded and passed, and the ongoing proceedings. The USAID official said that there are e-mail portals on the website allowing citizens to directly query the assembly, encouraging more people to send their inputs into the deliberations. He added that the website also offers virtual tours of the assembly buildings.

The development of the website is a part of the USAID's \$9.3-million Pakistan Legislative Strengthening Project to strengthen the country's parliamentary institutions. The PA Speaker said that the government was committed to broadening the people's access to the House. A large number of MPAs and secretariat officers also attended the ceremony.

Other updated versions of Provincial Assemblies websites are also supported by USAID which are:

Sindh — www.pas.gov.pk

Balochistan --- www.pabalochistan.gov.pk

NWFP ---- www.panwfp.gov.pk

Coalition or Collision

Nawaz pulls out of Coalition at Centre

The five-month old ruling coalition suffered a setback on August 25 after PML-N pulled out of the four-party alliance in the Centre and announced it will sit on the opposition benches in National Assembly. The split comes only a week after former President General (R) Pervez Musharraf

resigned. He parried questions regarding his party's strategy in Punjab, where it rules in alliance with the PPP.

Agreements: Nawaz blamed PPP Co-chairman Asif Zardari for the break-up. He criticized Zardari's recent statement that agreements were not holy and could be modified as circumstances changed, and his decision to run for the September 6 presidential election. He said the PPP Co-Chairman had breached all the agreements he had made in the recent months, including the Murree Declaration and the Islamabad Communiqué. He also read out what he called an agreement Zardari had made with him on August 7, in which the PPP Co-Chairman promised the restoration of the sacked judiciary within 24 hours after Musharraf's resignation and a consensus replacement for the retired general. He said the pact allowed the PPP to field its own presidential candidate only if the 17th Amendment was repealed and the President's powers cut.

Following events during the month of August led towards the break-up of coalition:

- August 4: PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif said that he would push for a resolution of all issues facing the country during a decisive and comprehensive meeting with PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari today (August 4). Addressing a press conference, he said that he had written a letter to Zardari 19 days ago, stating that the sacked judiciary should be reinstated according to the Murree Declaration. He said the letter had also requested that the Charter of Democracy signed by Benazir should be given practical form and should bind the president to consult the prime minister before taking any decision.
- August 5: PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari agreed in principle to impeach President Pervez Musharraf, provided that all coalition partners assured their support for this endeavour. He conceded this conditional agreement to Nawaz Sharif during a "make-or-break" meeting that was meant to resolve contentious issues between the two coalition partners, including the sacked judges' reinstatement and the impeachment of the President
- August 6: Talks between coalition partners continued for second day which were successful.
- August 7: The four-party ruling coalition said it would move to impeach President Pervez Musharraf for plunging the country into political and economic crises and warned him against any attempt to dismiss the government. The coalition also announced it would reinstate the judges sacked for not taking oath under a Provisional Constitution Order after Musharraf promulgated a state of emergency on November 3, 2007.

Key Points of Islamabad Communiqué: According to the communiqué, the coalition felt that the people had given a clear mandate in the Feb 18 elections in favour of democratic forces and voted for a change through the ouster of General (R) Musharraf by defeating his 'King's party'. In spite of his clear commitment that he would resign if his party was defeated in the elections, he continued to cling on to the office of the president. Notwithstanding the constitutional position of his election on Oct 7 (last year) from an outgoing parliament, he made a clear-cut commitment through his attorney before the Supreme Court that he would get a vote of confidence from the newly-elected assembly, which he failed to do. The Coalition further decided that it will immediately initiate impeachment proceedings. The coalition leadership will present a charge sheet against General Musharraf. The coalition leadership further resolved to restore all the judges removed through extra-constitutional means by General Musharraf on November 3, 2008 strictly in accordance with the Murree Declaration immediately after the impeachment of the

President.

- August 8: PML-N rejoined the cabinet after an agreement with PPP on President Musharraf's impeachment and restoration of judiciary pre Nov-3rd. In the first step total four PML-N members rejoined the cabinet as Ahsan Iqbal will be Minister of Education, Sardar Mehtab Abbasi Minister of Railway, Khawaja Saad Rafiq Minister of Culture and Youth and Rana Tanveer Hussain Minister of Defence production.
- August 14: The coalition government offered indemnity and security to President Pervez Musharraf if he resigns. Nawaz Sharif agreed to change his rigid stance against the President.
- August 18: General (R) Pervez Musharraf resigned as the President of Pakistan to avoid an impending impeachment, ending weeks long political standoff and bringing the curtain down on eight years and ten months of turbulent rule.
- August 19: The four-party ruling coalition failed to reach an agreement on the restoration of the sacked judiciary to the pre-November 3, 2007 position within the 72-hour deadline expiring August 20. "[PPP Co-chairman] Asif Zardari insisted on the minus-one formula – which is, restoration of all sacked judges except Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry," an insider said, adding that representatives of FATA legislators also attended the meeting held at Zardari House.
- August 20: PML-N threatened to quit the ruling coalition as a stalemate persists on the restoration of the judiciary and the alliance's candidate for President. PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif told ANP Vice President Azam Hoti and former Punjab governor Ghulam Mustafa Khar he wanted PPP
- August 22: PML-N extended the deadline for the restoration of the judiciary yet again. PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif wanted the judges to be reinstated by August 20, but JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman declined to give a specific date saying results were likely in a week. Addressing a joint press conference, Nawaz said PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari had made a written agreement with him that the sacked judiciary would be restored to its pre-November 3 position within 24 hours of General (R) Pervez Musharraf's ouster, but did not fulfil his commitment.
- August 23: Asif Ali Zardari said in an interview that agreements with the PML-N "are not holy like the holy Quran and the Hadith" and can be modified if circumstances change, He said that political parties do not make promises, they only arrive at understandings, adding that political understandings are "sometimes 50 percent successful, and sometimes more than that, but are still considered successful. Zardari's response to questions regarding the restoration of the judges and a timeframe for the measure were not elaborate. Asked if the judges would be restored, he said: "Inshallah! (God willing!)". Asked when they would be restored, Zardari said he did not believe in "countdowns or count-ups" and could not give a timeframe.
- August 24: PML-N boycotted a meeting to draft the resolution on the lingering issue of the restoration of judiciary, as its five-month-old alliance with the PPP seemed to be breathing its last.

Presidential Elections

Procedure for Presidential Elections

Counting Procedure for Presidential Elections

According to the Constitution of Pakistan, following is the counting procedure for Presidential Elections:

18 (1) The Chief Election Commissioner shall determine the result of the election in the following manner, namely:-

- (a) the number of votes cast in the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) in favor of each candidate shall be counted;
- (b) the number of votes cast in a Provincial Assembly in favor of each candidate shall be multiplied by the total number of seats in the Provincial Assembly for the time being having the smallest number of seats and divided by the total number of seats in the Provincial Assembly in which the votes have been cast; and

- (c) the number of votes calculated in the manner referred to in clause (b) shall be added to the number of votes counted under clause (a).

Explanation: In this paragraph, “total number of seats” include seats reserved for non-Muslims and Women.

Quota for Each Assembly

National Assembly	= 1 person	= 1 vote.
Senate of Pakistan	= 1 person	= 1 vote.
Punjab	= 371 / 65	= 5.70 persons = 1 vote
Sindh	= 168 / 65	= 2.58 persons = 1 vote
NWFP	= 124 / 65	= 1.90 persons = 1 vote
Balochistan	= 1 person	= 1 vote.

Example:

Suppose Person “X” obtains 100 votes in **Punjab Assembly** his calculated votes would be:

$\frac{100 \times 65}{371}$	= 17
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Suppose person “X” obtains 100 votes in Sindh Assembly his calculated votes would be:

$\frac{100 \times 65}{168}$	= 39
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Suppose person “X” obtains 100 votes in **NWFP Assembly** his calculated votes would be:

Results of Presidential Elections

Asif Ali Zardari Won the Presidential Elections

Asif Ali Zardari secured a large win in the Presidential Elections, capping a remarkable rise from jail, exile and his wife Benazir Bhutto’s assassination.

Zardari secured 281 out of 426 Senate and National Assembly votes and won a thumping majority in three of the four provincial assemblies, ending up with 481 of the 702 votes of the Presidential Electoral College. The 53-year-old has become the 14th President of Pakistan, defeating Nawaz Sharif-backed retired Chief Justice Saeeduz Zaman Siddiqui who received 153 votes, and the PML-Q-backed Mushahid Hussain who received 44. Of the 436 votes in the Senate and the National Assembly, Zardari received 281, Justice Siddiqui 111 and Mushahid received 34. Chief Election Commissioner Qazi Muhammad Farooq declared 10 votes invalid. Six votes were not cast.

Party Position in NA, PAs and Senate

Party Name	National Assembly	Senate	Punjab Assembly	Sindh Assembly	NWFP Assembly	Balochistan Assembly
PPP	124	10	107	93	30	12

PML-N	92	4	170	0	9	0
PML-Q	54	40	84	9	6	19
MQM	25	6	0	51	0	0
MMA	6	18	2	0	14	10
ANP	13	2	0	2	48	4
BNP-A	1	2	0	0	0	7
PPP-S	1	3	0	0	6	0
NPP	1	0	0	3	0	0
PML-F	5	1	3	8	0	0
PkMAP	0	3	0	0	0	0
NP	0	1	0	0	0	1
JWP	0	1	0	0	0	0
Independent	18	9	4	0	11	12
Total	340	100	370	166	124	65

Results of Presidential Polls

Following table shows the result:

	Asif Ali Zardari		Saeeduz Zaman Siddiqi		Mushaid Hussain Sayed	
	Actual Votes	Electoral Votes	Actual Votes	Electoral Votes	Actual Votes	Electoral Votes
Parliament	281	281	111	111	34	34
Balochistan	59	59	2	2	2	2
NWFP	107	56	10	5	3	2
Sindh	162	63	0	0	0	0
Punjab	123	22	201	35	36	6
Total Votes Polled	732	461	324	153	73	44

Asif Ali Zardari will take oath as President of Pakistan on September 9, 2008.

Alliance Mistrust Exposed in NWFP Assembly

The Presidential Election in NWFP Assembly exposed the existing mistrust among the coalition partners and gross mismanagement inside the Provincial Assembly where all the ruling alliance legislators had to show their marked ballot papers to the appointed monitors before casting their votes in the ballot box. All this practice continued in the presence of the Presiding Officer who was none other than Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC).

Despite all the arrangements and pledges, the ruling alliance lost two votes. The alliance nominee, Asif Ali Zardari secured 107 votes out of the 124-member house while the existing strength of the ruling alliance in NWFP is 109 including ANP 48, PPP 30, JUI 14 and PPP-S 5 and 12 independents. The ruling alliance forced its legislators to show their marked votes despite making tall claims to maintain sanctity of the election.

ECP closes its Eyes to Ballot Show: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has no plan to take action against the reported violation of the secrecy of vote in the polling for Presidential contest in the NWFP Assembly and its Secretary is of the view that Peshawar High

Court (PHC) could have taken notice as the Presiding Officer of the process. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has already issued the notification regarding the election of the President and the Commission would take no further action in this regard as the process is complete.

The ECP Secretary Kunwar Dilshad showed his ignorance about the reported defiance of secrecy of vote by some members of NWFP Assembly in Presidential Polls. The Secretary ECP said that he could not watch TV footage due to loadshedding. He said that any such stated incidence could have no bearings on the outcome of Presidential election. The members of Assembly are fully aware of the norms and ethics of the secrecy of the vote. It must be observed but the ECP has no knowledge of such thing and Chief Justice of the Province was fully competent to take action if reported to him.

Chronology of Events Leading Towards Presidential Elections

18th August

Resignation of Musharraf: President Pervez Musharraf, who often vowed never to run away from a fight, surrendered to his political foes on August 18 by tendering his resignation from office to escape the humiliation of impeachment, making way for Pakistan's transition to a full parliamentary democracy after a lengthy military dictatorship.

22nd August

Nomination of Zardari as Next President by PPP CEC: The Central Executive Committee of Pakistan People's Party has nominated the PPP Co-chairman, Asif Ali Zardari for the post of President of Pakistan. This was stated by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Sherry Rehman.

Sindh Assembly Passed Resolution in Favour of Zardari: Sindh Assembly on August 22 unanimously voted for a treasury backed resolution declaring PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari as "the most suitable candidate for the office of President". The resolution, which was tabled by Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Muhammad Ayaz Soomro, at a hurriedly called session with Speaker Nisar Ahmed Khuhro in the chair, was moved under rule 211 of the Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh.

24th August

Zardari Called for Ban on Taliban: Asif Ali Zardari, in an interview to BBC said that the Taliban have the upper hand and should be put on the list of banned organizations in Pakistan. He said that the world and Pakistan are losing the war on terror. "It is an insurgency and an ideological war, he said, adding, "It is our country and we will defend it. The world is losing the war. I think at the moment they (Taliban) definitely have the upper hand." "The issue, which is not just a bad case scenario as far as Pakistan is concerned or as Afghanistan is concerned but it is going to be spreading further. The whole world is going to be affected by it." He also dismissed reports that the Swiss authorities were still considering whether they should pursue a money-laundering case against him there.

25th August

NWFP Assembly passed Resolution Supporting Nomination of Asif Zardari: The NWFP Assembly, on August 25, passed a resolution with majority supporting nomination of PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari for Presidential elections. The resolution got 76 votes in favour and four votes of PML-Q in opposition. While MPAs of PP-S, PML-N and JUI-F walked out of the house to abstain from voting. The resolution was jointly moved by Senior Ministers of NWFP, Rahim Dad Khan and Bashir Ahmad Bilour. The resolution, while welcoming nomination of Asif Ali Zardari for presidential slot, read that being the majority party of PPP, it was its right to field its candidate. In the resolution, it was also hoped that after election as President, Asif Ali Zardari will take measures for freedom of judiciary, press and strengthening of democracy in the country.

26th August

32 Candidates filed papers for Presidential Poll: Thirty-two candidates entered the race for the country's top constitutional office and submitted a total of 67 nomination papers. The

Presidential Election is scheduled for Sept 6. Chief Election Commissioner Qazi Mohammad Farooq received nomination papers in Islamabad and the Chief Justices of High Courts in the provincial capitals on August 26. Nomination papers of the main candidates — Asif Ali Zardari of PPP, Saeeduz Zaman Siddiqui of the PML-N and Mushahid Hussain Sayed of the PML-Q — were submitted in Islamabad. In all, 35 nomination papers of 10 candidates were filed in the Federal Capital — 14 for Mr Zardari and two for his covering candidate Faryal Talpur. The PML-N fielded Roedad Khan as the covering candidate. Fourteen nomination papers of 13 candidates were filed in Lahore, 17 of eight candidates in Karachi and one in Peshawar. No papers were submitted in Quetta. Election Commission's secretary Kanwar Mohammad Dilshad told that nomination papers of nuclear scientist Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan had not been submitted.

Parliamentarians belonging to the PPP, MQM, ANP, JUI-F and other coalition partners proposed and seconded the name of Mr. Zardari. Ministers and leaders of the PPP and its allies who were present at the time of the filing of the papers included Asfandyar Wali Khan, Raza Rabbani, Sherry Rehman, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Qamaruzzaman Kaira, Najamuddin, Rehmatullah Kakar, Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar, Farooq H. Naek, Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah, Aftab Shabaan Mirani, Mufti Ajmal Khan, Shagufta Jamani, Naseem Chaudhry, Rukhsana Bangash, Dr Farooq Sattar and Haider Abbas Rizvi. The PML-N leaders who filed nomination papers of Justice (R)Saeeduz Zaman Siddiqui included Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan and Makhdoom Javed Hashmi. The PML-Q leaders who accompanied Mr. Mushahid Hussain included Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi.

26th August

US Envoy Faulted for Contacts with Zardari: Zalmay Khalilzad, Afghanistan-born American ambassador to the United Nations, is under fire for “unauthorized contacts with Asif Ali Zardari”. A report in the New York Times, quoting a senior US official, alleges that Khalilzad spoke to Zardari several times a week for the past month until he was confronted about the unauthorized contacts. Khalilzad had planned to meet Zardari privately on September 4 while on vacation in Dubai, a meeting that was cancelled only after Richard Boucher, the assistant secretary of state for South Asia, learned from Zardari himself that the ambassador was providing him with “advice and help”. The fact that such a damaging story has been leaked to the press, duly authorized it appears, shows that there are highly placed people in the Bush administration who are out to get Khalilzad, whose name has been mentioned as a possible contender for the Afghan presidency. Officially, the NYT story claims, the US has remained neutral in the contest to succeed Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf, and there is concern within the State Department that the discussions between Khalilzad and Zardari could leave the impression that the US is taking sides in Pakistan's chaotic internal politics. Khalilzad's spokesman told the newspaper that the Ambassador had been friends with Zardari for years. “Ambassador Khalilzad had planned to meet socially with Zardari during his personal vacation. But because Zardari is now a presidential candidate, Khalilzad postponed the meeting, after consulting with senior State Department officials and Zardari himself.” A senior American official said it was not clear whether he would face any disciplinary action. An unnamed “senior Pakistani official” told the New York Times that the relationship between Khalilzad and Zardari went back several years, and that the men developed a friendship while Zardari was spending time in New York with his wife. The Pakistani official said the consultations between the men were an open exchange of information, with each one giving insight into the political landscape in his capital.

However, Zardari House spokeswoman Farah Naz Ispahani said that while we engage global leaders for Pakistan's benefit, it is incorrect to attribute any domestic political function to Zardari's personal friendship with eminent diplomats such as Khalilzad,

27th August

Presidential Election: JUI-F linked Support to Changes in Women's Protection Bill: The JUI-F, on August 27, demanded amendments to the women protection bill in exchange for its support to Asif Zardari in the Presidential Election. JUI-F Chief Fazlur Rehman said that his party has presented four demands to the PPP government in view of recommendations of the Council of Islamic Ideology. He said the JUI-F would support Zardari only if the demands were met before September 6. Fazl said that the demands include the reconstruction of Jamia Hafsa, an

immediate end to military operations in the Tribal Areas, reviving Friday as the weekly holiday and amendments to the women protection bill.

30th August

Final Candidates for Presidential Elections: Three main candidates left are: Asif Ali Zardari, Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui and Mushahid Hussain Syed. Zardari has been fielded by PPP and its allies, Saeed-uz-Zaman Siddiqui by PML-N party of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Mushahid by pro-Musharraf's PML-Q. Faryal Talpur, sister of Mr Zardari, who had field papers as covering candidate, withdrew her papers. Roedad Khan, a former bureaucrat, had field papers as covering candidate for Mr Siddiqui also withdrew his papers. Polling will be held on September 6th in the national parliament, the Senate and National Assembly in Islamabad and four provincial assemblies.

1st September

Balochistan Assembly Resolution Backed Zardari: The Balochistan Assembly unanimously passed a resolution on September 1 supporting PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ail Zardari for the office of the President for the September 6 Presidential Election. Balochistan Chief Minister Aslam Raisani moved the joint resolution on the floor of the Balochistan Assembly, which had been signed by leaders of various parties. Raisani said the Assembly supported Zardari's candidature for the office of the President because he was the most suitable candidate in the present circumstances.

4th September

NALA Supported Zardari: Almost the entire Northern Areas Legislative Assembly (NALA) trampled their years long association with PML-Q and passed a resolution not in favour of their own Presidential candidate Mushahid but in support of Asif Ali Zardari. Only two members of PML-N --- Hafizur Rehman and Sultan Madad stood their grounds firmly and declined to support the house poised to pass a unanimous resolution.

5th September

AJK Assembly backed Zardari: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Friday adopted a resolution supporting the election of PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari as the President of Pakistan and termed his election vital for the federation. The AJK Legislative Assembly, in its special session, met here with Speaker AJK Legislative Assembly Shah Ghulam Qadir in the chair. The session was summoned on the requisition of the AJK government. Deputy Speaker Sardar Farooq Ahmed Tahir, on behalf of the AJK government, presented a resolution before the House in favour of the PPP co-chairman supporting his nomination as the president of Pakistan. The resolution was adopted. Leader of the House Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, speaking on the occasion, said that after the martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari had played an important role for the unity of the country. "This is our moral obligation to approve the resolution in his support to be elected as president."

Speculations about Zardari's Success

Zardari garners Support in all Four Provinces

PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has secured support from elected representatives and several political parties in all four provinces of the country in the forthcoming presidential election whereas PML-N candidate Justice (R) Saeeduzzaman Siddiqui has so far been supported only by Jamaat-e-Islami in addition to his own party.

Mr. Zardari's PPP is not only the largest political party in the National Assembly, it is also part of coalition governments in all the four provinces. The PML-N, on the other hand, has electoral representation primarily in the Punjab and from the Hazara Division in the Northwest Frontier Province. Pashtun, Baloch, Muhajir and Sindhi representation eludes the party led by Mr. Nawaz Sharif, which makes it difficult for his presidential candidate to claim that he realistically could be the symbol of the Pakistani federation — a key constitutional requirement for Pakistan's President. In addition to his own PPP, Mr Zardari has so far publicly received support from all major Baloch parties, ANP representing the Pashtun and MQM which dominates the urban areas

of Sindh. JUI-F can rightly assert representation for the religiously inclined Pashtun from NWFP's southern belt and the JUI, too, is supporting Mr Zardari. The declaration of support for Mr Zardari by FATA MNAs and senators as well as the PPP-S led by Aftab Sherpao completes Mr Zardari's right to claim the mantle of the symbol of the Pakistani federation.

The Jamaat-e-Islami's support for Mr Siddiqui brings back memories of the erstwhile Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) created with invisible support to undermine democracy in 1988. The IJI combined the Nawaz Sharif faction of the Pakistan Muslim League and the Jamaat-e-Islami and was the recipient of illegal funding siphoned from the Mehran Bank through a clandestine agency in 1990. Justice (R) Siddiqui, while serving on the Supreme Court, never heard or decided the petition by Air Marshal (R) Asghar Khan against the covert agency's funding of the IJI. He became chief justice after then Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah was removed from office after the storming of the Supreme Court by PML-N workers and did nothing to order punishment for those involved in the Supreme Court storming. The PML-Q presidential candidate, Mushahid Hussain Sayed, served as Mian Nawaz Sharif's Information Minister at the time of the storming of the Supreme Court.

Apart from having support in all the four provinces, Asif Zardari's other distinction is that he is the only presidential candidate who has not been closely identified with the discredited Pakistani establishment. Some observers feel that it is this qualification, more than anything else, which has united all the traditionally anti-establishment parties in a pro-Zardari alliance. The PPP and its allied parties have been on the wrong side of Pakistan's establishment and have a consistent record of fighting for democracy. Both factions of the PML, on the other hand, have served as the political arm of the establishment at one time or another. The PML led by Mian Nawaz Sharif emerged as a political party after General Ziaul Haq dismissed Muhammad Khan Junejo from the Prime Ministership in May 1988. The party remained the King's Party until 1993 when Mian Nawaz Sharif broke ranks with bureaucrat President Ghulam Ishaq Khan. PML-N's return to power in 1997 was facilitated by the dismissal a few months earlier of the second Benazir Bhutto government by President Farooq Leghari, a former bureaucrat. After General Pervez Musharraf seized power in a military coup in 1999, the PML-N revised its stance and committed itself to restoration of democracy. At this point PML-Q emerged as the King's Party. The parties supporting Mr Zardari - the PPP, ANP, MQM, and the Baloch nationalist parties - have never served as King's parties and have been consistently engaged in political struggle.

Numbers Smiling on Zardari

Numbers are smiling on PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and he looks set for an easy sail through the presidential contest when voting takes place on Sept 6 unless the apple-cart gets upset at the last minute. Given the party position and affiliations in the four provincial assemblies, the National Assembly and the Senate, if all members vote in accordance with the party lines, no candidate has the potential to create a hurdle in the way of Mr. Zardari's becoming the next President. A projected outcome shows that Mr Zardari should secure 424 votes, against 150 by Saeeduz Zaman Siddiqui, who is backed by the PML-N, and 126 by PML-Q's Senator Mushahid Hussain.

Statistics show that even if the two PML factions join hands, they cannot stop the PPP Co-Chairman from entering the presidency because their combined votes will not cross the 300-mark. The votes will be calculated according to a formula that gives equal representation to the provincial assemblies. The Presidential Election Rules of 1988, devised in the light of Article 41 of the Constitution, provide for a 1,170-member electoral college of both houses of parliament and the four provincial assemblies. But the total number of votes, according to the formula, is 702. As two seats are vacant in the National Assembly, the number of votes will be 700. The winner must get a majority of the votes polled. The Electoral College comprises 342 members of the National Assembly, 100 of the Senate, 371 of the Punjab Assembly, 168 of the Sindh Assembly, 124 of the NWFP Assembly and 65 of the Balochistan Assembly. As the Balochistan Assembly is the smallest house with 65 members, votes in the three other provincial assemblies are to be divided by 65: so 5.7 MPAs of Punjab, 2.58 of Sindh and 1.9 of the NWFP will be equivalent to one vote.

The PPP-led ruling coalition dominates all the houses, except the Senate and the Punjab Assembly. In the National Assembly, the coalition comprising the PPP, ANP, JUI-F and other

smaller groups enjoys the support of 193 MNAs, compared to 147 opposition members. In the Senate, the coalition has 44 members and the opposition 56 — 40 belonging to the PML-Q and the rest from the PML-N, JI and some independents. The PPP and its allies have 112 MPAs in Punjab Assembly, 146 in Sindh Assembly, 99 in NWFP Assembly and 58 in Balochistan Assembly. Mr Zardari is ahead of all other candidates in all the houses of the electoral college, except the Punjab Assembly where Mr Siddiqi is expected to get more votes.

Projected Outcome of September 6 Presidential Election							
Candidate	NA	Senate	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP	Balochistan	Total
Asif Ali Zardari (PPP)	193	44	20	57	52	58	424
Saeeduz Zaman Siddiqi (PML-N)	92	16	31	00	10	01	150
Mushahid Hussain (PML-Q)	55	40	14	08	03	06	126
Total	340	100	65	65	65	65	700

Former President General (R) Pervez Musharraf – From Impeachment to Resignation

Chronology of Events leading towards Musharraf’s Resignation

August 05, 2008

PPP and PML-N agreed to formally ask President Pervez Musharraf to step down and to impeach him through parliamentary measures if he did not obliged. PPP Co-Chairman Asif Zardari and PML-N Chief Nawaz Sharif led their respective teams in the six-hour talks amid growing concerns over the future of the ruling coalition because of the differences over the issues of reinstatement of judges and the future of an increasingly isolated President. Immediately after the meeting, a team of PPP and PML-N negotiators, headed by Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, flew to Karachi to brief ANP President Asfandiyar Wali Khan and JUI-F leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman about deliberations.

August 06, 2008

Pervez Musharraf discussed with his political allies and legal aides his options to counter a possible move by the ruling coalition to oust him from office. PML-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi called on the President and assured him of support in case he was impeached. They said the President appeared confident and said he would defend himself. Musharraf urged the PML leaders to solicit support for him in Parliament. The Chaudhrys assured the President that the coalition would fail to muster the required strength of legislators in the Senate and National Assembly for the impeachment. Musharraf also met Attorney General Malik Qayyum and Sindh Governor Ishratul Ebad, and talked to PML-Q leader Hamid Nasir Chattha on the phone.

August 07, 2008

The four-party ruling coalition announced that it would move to impeach President Pervez Musharraf for plunging the country into political and economic crises and warned him against any attempt to dismiss the government. The coalition also announced it would reinstate the judges sacked for not taking oath under a Provisional Constitution Order after Musharraf promulgated a state of emergency on November 3, 2007.

Charges against Musharraf

The President has worked to undermine the transition to democracy through collusion with the 'King's party'

His policies have weakened the federation

His economic policies during the last eight years have brought Pakistan to the brink of economic impasse

His policies have thrown the country into the worst power shortage in its history

He did not get a vote of confidence from the new assemblies despite a commitment made with the SC

He failed to address new parliament

He did not resign after his allies were defeated in the February 18

It's Pakistan's internal matter: US

On the same day US State Department said that Moves towards the impeachment of President Pervez Musharraf are Pakistan's "internal matter" and it is for the Pakistani people to decide their political issues. State Department spokesman Gonzalo Gallegos said that it was to be hoped that any actions taken would be consistent with the constitution. Gallegos said it is the responsibility Pakistani leaders to decide on the way forward to succeed as a "democratic, modern and moderate country".

August 08, 2008

The ruling coalition began lobbying for support for their move to impeach the President, and claimed "positive response" from various independent groups. Leaders of the ruling coalition talked to Pukhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party Chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai and Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Syed Munawar Hassan on the telephone, and Balochistan National Party-Awami Senator Mir Israrullah Zehri visited Zardari House. Number of opposition legislators had assured the ruling coalition of support but the coalition leaders did not disclose their names.

August 09, 2008

Four independent senators from FATA and a PML-Q MNA asked President Musharraf to quit instead of facing impeachment. The FATA senators assured the ruling coalition of their support in a statement issued on August 9, but also asked the president to quit before the move was initiated.

August 10, 2008

PPP Co-Chairman Asif Zardari accused President Pervez Musharraf of misappropriating millions of dollars of United States aid given to Pakistan for supporting the war on terror. Zardari made the charge in an interview published in The Sunday Times on August 10. He claimed that "our grand old Musharraf has not been passing on all the \$1 billion a year that the Americans have been giving for the armed forces. The army has been getting \$250m-\$300m reimbursement for what they do, but where's the rest? They claim it's been going in budget support but that's not the answer. We're talking about \$700m a year missing. The rest has been taken by Musharraf for some scheme or other and we've got to find it".

August 11, 2008

The Punjab Assembly has overwhelmingly passed a resolution demanding President Pervez Musharraf to seek vote of confidence or resign from the office, and in case of failing to do so, it urged the Parliament to impeach the President. Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah tabled the

resolution before the House and in the presence of Punjab Chief Minister a total of 321 votes supported the resolution whereas only 25 went against.

Army, ISI to stay away from impeachment: Army Chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani conveyed to President Pervez Musharraf that the military does not want to be dragged into any political controversy and prefers to remain focused on its professional and constitutional responsibilities.

August 12, 2008

NWFP Assembly passed a resolution of no confidence against President Pervez Musharraf. A total of 107 votes supported the resolution whereas only four went against it while 13 members didn't cast their votes. NWFP assembly comprises of 124 members. Earlier, NWFP senior minister Bashir Ahmed Bilour presented the resolution and the members chanted 'Go Musharraf Go'. PPP-Sherpao had announced to support the ruling coalition's impeachment motion against President Musharraf.

August 13, 2008

The Sindh Assembly on August 13, asked the President to take a vote of confidence or resign under Article 44(3) of the Constitution. MQM legislators stayed away from the session as did the opposition members. However, three PML-Q MPAs voted with the government. The resolution called upon Parliament to impeach President Musharraf under Article 47 in case he failed to win a confidence vote for subverting the Constitution twice, derailing the transition to democracy, undermining the Federation and bringing the country to the brink of a critical political and economic impasse and inflicting unprecedented miseries on the masses through his policies.

August 14, 2008

The coalition government offered indemnity and security to President Pervez Musharraf if he resigns. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif agreed to change his rigid stance against the President. They said the United States, the United Kingdom and Arab rulers had been pressuring the government for a safe exit for Musharraf, who seized power in a bloodless coup against Nawaz in 1999 and has been a US ally in the international war on terror since September 2001. American and British diplomats reportedly discussed the matter directly with Nawaz Sharif after other parties in the ruling coalition told them Nawaz was not willing to show flexibility. PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari and ANP Chief Asfandyar Wali said they gave more importance to the moral aspects than the legal ones, according to the sources. Wali told Aaj Kal the outcome of impeachment would be no different from those of previous military rulers, but did not elaborate the statement.

August 15, 2008

The Balochistan Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution on August 15 asking President Pervez Musharraf to seek a vote of confidence from his electoral college or quit. The resolution called upon parliament to impeach the President if he was hesitant to resign. All the 57 members attending the assembly session stood up in support of the joint resolution calling upon the President to seek a vote of confidence, step down or face impeachment. Jaffar Khan Mandokhel, Sardar Yar Mohammad Rind, Sardar Masood Luni, Mir Tariq Masuri, Babu Amin and Nasreen Khetran of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q and Mir Asghar Rind of the Balochistan National Party-A did not attend the session. Rubina Irfan of the PML-Q tabled the resolution which said the President had twice violated the Constitution, committed mismanagement, fuelled mistrust among the provinces and caused deprivation that had weakened the federation.

PML-Q leader Tariq Azim said on August 15 that talks are underway to avoid the impeachment of President Pervez Musharraf. He said that this impeachment process, which can last months, will

be very damaging especially for the country's economy. The purpose of these talks is to settle the issue and there are many options under consideration.

Saudi Spys Chief meets Musharraf, Nawaz Sharif: According to a private TV channel, Saudi Intelligence Chief Prince Muqrان reportedly met President Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad and delivered him an important message from Saudi King Abdullah. Saudi Arabia wanted to play its role in Pakistan's present political circumstances and it sent Muqrان to Islamabad for reconciliation between Musharraf and the ruling coalition. Muqrان also met with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Chief Nawaz Sharif and asked him to show flexibility regarding a safe passage for Musharraf. However, Nawaz did not give a clear response on the issue. Muqrان also met Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain as well as the heads of sensitive organizations. The channel quoted the presidential spokesman as denying any meeting between Muqrان and Musharraf.

August 16, 2008

A satellite television channel reported that President Pervez Musharraf told his legal advisers that he would rather fight impeachment in accordance with the democratic spirit than step down. The President shared the views during his separate meetings with Attorney General Malik Qayyum and veteran lawyer Abdul Hafeez Pirzada at his Camp Office in Rawalpindi.

August 17, 2008

The draft of the charge-sheet for the impeachment of President Pervez Musharraf was finalized. The draft was given the format of a legal document by Minister for Law and Justice Farooq H Naek. The final review meeting of the committee was held at the residence of Information Minister Sherry Rehman on August 17, in which Law Minister Farooq H Naek presented the charge-sheet after giving it legal shape. According to sources, the committee in its charge-sheet listed more than 30 charges against President Pervez Musharraf of constitutional violations and gross misconduct.

August 18, 2008

Resignation of Musharraf: President Pervez Musharraf, who often vowed never to run away from a fight, surrendered to his political foes on August 18 by tendering his resignation from office to escape the humiliation of impeachment, making way for Pakistan's transition to a full parliamentary democracy after a lengthy military dictatorship.

Politicians' Perspective on Musharraf's Resignation

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain – PML-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said that impeachment of General (R) Pervez Musharraf could have had dire consequences and his resignation should be taken positively. He said his party would have supported Musharraf if the impeachment motion had been moved in the Parliament.

Pervez Elahi – Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf has resigned in the "best interest of the nation", Leader of the Opposition in National Assembly Pervez Elahi said. He said that the coalition government should now reinstate the sacked judges to fulfil the promise it has made with the nation.

Farooq H Naik – "The resignation is the triumph of Benazir Bhutto who sacrificed her life but did not compromise over principles," he told reporters. He said the sacked judges would soon be reinstated.

Mian Raza Rabbani – Leader of the House in Senate Mian Raza Rabbani said that the resignation of Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf is a victory for the nation. The resignation is also the first victory for the ruling coalition, He said the coalition government would decide on giving safe passage to Musharraf.

Liaquat Baloch – The Jammat-e-Islami's Liaquat Baloch said that Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf's resignation as the President is a success for the nation and democratic forces. Commenting on Musharraf's departure, he said democratic forces were united against undemocratic powers. He said Musharraf should feel guilty for abrogating the constitution.

Nisar Ali Khan – The resignation is “not sufficient” and Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf should be held accountable for “crimes” he had committed in the last eight-and-half years,” the PML-N's Nisar Ali Khan. He said that the list of crimes committed by Musharraf is very long, adding that the “black chapter of dictatorship” had closed.

Fazalur Rehman – JUI-F Fazlur Rehman said that Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf should have resigned a lot earlier. Rehman told JUI Secretary Information Amjad Khan that not only the ruling coalition, the nation also deserves to be congratulated on Musharraf's resignation.

Aftab Ahmad Sherpao – PPP-S Chief Aftab Ahmad Sherpao said Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf has made a “wise move” by resigning from the office of President. He told that the resignation would help end political uncertainty in the country. He predicted “hard times” for the government in days to come.

Mushahid Hussain Syed -- PML-Q Secretary General Mushahid Hussain Syed said that Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf has followed the “constitutional process” and unlike Field Marshal Ayub Khan he did not hand over power to the army. He praised Musharraf's address to the nation, saying that the resignation speech was “positive and forward looking”.

Kashmala Tariq -- After resigning as the President Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf should now lead the PML-Q, party MNA Kashmala Tariq said. She said that Musharraf had organized the PML-Q and now he should steer it out of crises.

Muhammad Ali Durrani -- PML-Q Vice President Muhammad Ali Durrani said that the resignation of Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf is a “bold and prudent decision taken in the larger public interest. He further said that this is a bold and prudent decision.

Farooq Sattar – The MQM's Farooq Sattar said that Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf has followed his slogan “Pakistan First” by resigning from the Presidency. He said that Musharraf has responded with dignity to the charges levelled by ruling coalition, adding that the process of national reconciliation started by Musharraf should continue.

Mehmood Khan Achakzai -- Pakhtunwa Milli Awami Party Chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai said that the resignation of Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf is “insufficient” and it is not the solution of problems Pakistan has. He told that the reformation of a new democratic Pakistan is inevitable to pull the country from the crisis.

Makhdum Javed Hashmi – PML-N leader Makhdum Javed Hashmi said that Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf should be tried as he has twice abrogated the constitution and mismanaged the country's economy and foreign policies. Hashmi further said that “the era of darkness, mismanagement and hegemony of a person is now over”.

Shah Mehmood Qureshi -- Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that General (R) Pervez Musharraf's resignation as the President will bring political stability in Pakistan. "You can see an immediate reaction in the stock market. It has risen immediately," Qureshi told. He said that the resignation will remove uncertainty in the country.

Syed Naveed Qamar -- Federal Finance Minister Syed Naveed Qamar said that August is the month of "joyous moments" and it will be remembered as the season of "dictatorship's burial. He further said that now the democratic process will not be sabotaged by anyone.

Qazi Hussain Ahmad -- The ruling coalition should immediately reinstate the sacked judges after Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf has resigned as the President, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leader Qazi Hussain Ahmad said. In a statement, the JI leader said Musharraf should be tried "for crimes he had committed during his reign".

Asfandiyar Wali -- ANP Chief Asfandiyar Wali commented that people would have praised Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf had he resigned on February 19, a day after the general elections. The ANP chief said the resignation was not a solution to problems the country was facing.

Qaim Ali Shah -- Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah said that General (R) Pervez Musharraf's resignation is the result of struggle made by PPP leader Benazir Bhutto, all democratic forces and the political strategy of PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. In a statement, he said the "real democracy" would now flourish in the country.

Rafiq Tarar -- The nation should offer thanksgiving prayers after the resignation of Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf, former President Rafiq Tarar said. He told the PML-N had a "clear stance" on Musharraf's trial. He said he was not being considered for the office of President.

Imran Khan -- PTI Chairman Imran Khan said The coalition government should reinstate all sacked judges after Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf has resigned from the office of President. Commenting on Musharraf's resignation speech, Khan said the address was not based on facts.

Shahbaz Sharif -- Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Shaif said that the way Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf has stepped down serves as a lesson. He said that the PML-N will have nothing do with the indemnity for Musharraf.

Syed Khursheed Shah -- Minister for Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis Syed Khursheed Shah said that the resignation of Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf is the result of the mandate people had given on February 18. He told that Musharraf had made a right decision.

Masses' Response

63 percent Rejoice Resignation: Gallup

A Gallup survey on August 19 revealed that 63 percent people rejoice over General (R) Pervez Musharraf's resignation, while only 15 percent regret it. The survey added that twenty percent were ambivalent about saying whether they were happy or unhappy. The poll was carried out by Gallup Pakistan (Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion), the Pakistani affiliate of Gallup International, soon after Musharraf announced his resignation. The sample size -- approximately 560 people -- may be argued, is too small to be considered significant. Seventy percent disputed Musharraf's claim that he resigned with the motive of "Pakistan first". Instead, they said, he had resigned in personal interest -- a "Musharraf first" approach. As Musharraf's era came to an end,

55 percent of Pakistanis expected that conditions in the country would improve, 19 percent said conditions would worsen, while another 19 percent expected no change. Sixty-five percent of the population supported holding a proper trial while only 26 percent were in favour of the “forgive and forget” option. Eighty-five percent wanted Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and other judges to be restored immediately, six percent opposed restoration, while nine percent thought the issue should not be taken up right now.

Governance at Large

LG System

LG System to Stay, Senate told

Leader of the House in the Senate Raza Rabbani August 27 said that the local government system (LGS) would continue but with certain changes. Rabbani said in response to a point of order by Leader of the Opposition Kamil Ali Agha that our party has been supportive of this system even when it was introduced. But we had certain reservations. Kamil Ali Agha had drawn attention of the House towards a news report regarding issuance of notification to reinstate divisional commissioners in Punjab and Sindh, and said it was against the spirit of the LGS. Secretary Local Government Punjab has directed the DCOs instead of nazims to take care of the districts' affairs, he claimed and said that under the constitution, the local governments could not be made ineffective. He said that the Punjab is not constitutionally empowered to wrap up the system. If there is any complaint on use of funds, action can be taken against the individual responsible for it instead of slashing the system. Rabbani said when the devolution plan was introduced, the PPP had objected to the taxation system and undermining powers of the provinces since "we cannot ignore the provinces". Rabbani said the creation of this system was included in the sixth schedule providing that if any provincial assembly ever desired to amend it, it had to seek prior permission from the president. "We will scrap the sixth schedule to ensure supremacy of the Parliament," he said but clarified that they would not scrap the LGS in toto. Rabbani said he would seek information from the Punjab government regarding the matter while as far as Sindh is concerned, it was under consideration. "The PPP-led coalition government understand there should be three tiers of the government - the federal, provincial and the local governments," he said. Rabbani said the then PPP government had also prepared a detailed devolution plan but unfortunately its government was unconstitutionally dissolved.

LG System – Latest Developments in Punjab

LG Ordinance, 2008 on the Cards: A senior Punjab government official told on August 21 that the modalities to promulgate the Local Government (LG) Ordinance, 2008 that would repeal the LG Ordinance, 2001, are at the final stage. As per the new ordinance, nazims will be replaced by mayors and chairmen to head the urban and rural local government institutions respectively, as narrated in the LG Ordinance, 1979. The official said that the federal government had constituted a high-level committee headed by the federal local government minister, and provincial ministers and local government and community development secretaries as members to discuss the issue. The NWFP government had been entrusted with the task of drafting the new ordinance, which would be discussed in the committee's next session. There was a consensus among the provinces to restore the mayor and chairman offices and abolish the district nazim office.

The official said that the new ordinance would focus on restoring the offices of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Assistant Commissioner (AC) with judicial powers to control the district administration. The mayor would look after the municipal limits and the chairman would head the

rural revenue areas. In the administrative set up, the office of District Coordination Officer (DCO) would be replaced with that of the DC, who would head the district police and civil administration, he maintained. The DC and AC offices would be restored initially with administrative powers in revenue limits, but the incumbents would assume judicial powers (as district magistrate) when the Police Order, 2002 is wrapped up to restore the Police Act, 1931 with some amendments. As per the new ordinance, village committees would be empowered to resolve petty issues and the union councils would work independently according to the functions entrusted to them. The Punjab government has expressed its satisfaction over the agreed proposals, as the current system was too ambiguous and confusing, the officer added.

Office of Div Commissioner Restored

With the exit of General (R) Pervez Musharraf, the mastermind of the Local Government System, the Punjab government on August 24 restored the post of the Divisional Commissioner in the province though not violating the Local Government Ordinance as it has been done according to the Land Revenue Act. In a meeting, Chief Minister Punjab Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has formally approved the restoration of the post of the Divisional Commissioner, and as a result of this decision, eight administrative divisions - Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala and Lahore - have also been restored in the Punjab.

Shahbaz Sharif has also ordered that the office of the Commissioner and the divisions should be restored immediately and the financial resources be used with extreme caution, care and economy. He directed that appropriate amendments in different laws be made for making the office of the Commissioner as an effective hub of coordination and control. This decision has been taken to eliminate the difficulties being faced by the provincial government in coordinating with the districts. The primary purpose of this decision is to effectively handle shortage of food items, price checking, profiteering and hoarding of essential commodities and to check increase in encroachment on state land and public places, and to make the performance of the provincial government more effective. Secondly, the Punjab government also intends to remove the existing shortcomings in the system of revenue receipts. Thirdly, local citizens may not have to travel to the provincial headquarters to seek redressal of their grievances against District decisions. Moreover, it will also enable the government to effectively monitor the development projects and the relief measures taken to meet any natural calamity adverse situations or crises.

According to sources, the Divisional Commissioners will be given the revenue powers, which are now with the Executive District Officers (Revenue) after the promulgation of the Punjab Local Government Ordinance 2002, who are in-turn answerable to the District Nazims. However, powers of the EDO (R) cannot be withdrawn until the PLGO is amended or abolished. "However, with the Divisional Commissioners in place, the supervision and implementation spans will shrink substantially, as the PLGO was implemented without deliberating any administrative sense. The present decision will not directly target the fiscal powers of the district, rather the Divisional Commissioner will act as a linkage between the federal, provincial and local governments besides providing impetus to the implementation of the orders from the highest offices," he maintained. Previously, the Divisional Commissioners were responsible for the revenue, development and administration, but with the abolition of the post powers were mainly given to the District Nazims. "The PLGO was neither for a devolution of powers, nor for the genuine decentralisation. However, it did damage administration, as with vested interests, the politicians in a fluid political set-up, mess up with the administration," averred the source adding that the Commissioners would look after the affairs of their respective districts, besides implementing the orders more quickly without the involvement of the CM and the Chief Secretary of the Punjab. There is also a concern among the highest offices of the province that there were no vertical linkages from the Union Councils to the Provincial governments. "When the PLGO was being implemented, the provinces were not ready to accept the LGS, but it was forced upon them. Now there is a realization at every level to mend the system," he said pointing out that all provinces had consensus that there was no room to mend the LGS, and they wanted to go back to the Local Government Ordinance of 1979. "The provincial governments had already demanded of the National Reconstruction Bureau for reviving the Local Government Ordinance 1979, which was far better than the present LGS. Instead of making amendments in this system, it is believed that incorporating a few positives of the PLGO in the 1979 system would be more effective," he said

With the restoration of the office of the Divisional Commissioner, it is expected that a hierarchy for the implementation of the government's policies would be created because, earlier, various tiers of administration never let the government work speedily. Prior to this decision, the Punjab government had already 'nominated' eight administrative secretaries as the Regional Coordination Officers through an administrative order. Its objective was also said to be having better liaison with the District Coordination Officers. Earlier, the Punjab government had also amended the Punjab Maintenance Public Ordinance 1960 where the powers of the defunct District Magistrates (Deputy Commissioners) for detaining any person deemed to endanger the public safety and maintenance of the public order were given to the DCOs. Moreover, under the head of the delegation of power to the DCOs, the provincial government could order the DCO exercise the power - 'to arrest and detain suspected persons' - of the government.

First Move to Dent Dist Nazims' Powers: With restoring the Divisional Commissioner office, it seems to further the cause of denting the powers of the District Nazims, if not the complete rollback of the Local Government System with once-upon-a-time proposed constitutional package to do away with the Sixth Schedule - barring the political dispensation from making any amendment in the Local Government Ordinance - is yet to go through the Parliament for abolishing one of the most controversial plans introduced by the Musharraf regime.

DC and Provincial Secretary Posts still Awaiting Notifications

The Punjab government has not yet notified the creation of posts for the posting of Divisional Commissioners (DCs) and Provincial Secretaries, who have been given the task to co-ordinate among districts, an official posted at the Services and General Administration Department (S&GAD) told on August 26. He said that the step requires some amendments in the revenue rules, which requires time. Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif approved the restoration of the office of the DCs with the aim to eliminate difficulties faced by the provincial government in co-ordinating with districts.

The official said that the main purpose of the decision was to effectively handle the shortage of edible items and the profiteering and hoarding of essential commodities, and checking the increase in encroachments on state land and public places. Another object of the decision was to remove the existing faults in the revenue receipts system. According to sources, officers given the additional task of co-ordinating among districts would work, but with limited powers. They said that it was not feasible to make amendments in the local government ordinance to shift the functions to restored offices. They said that the government would either have to promulgate an ordinance, or table a bill in the assembly, to establish the offices of DCs. They said that the additional-charge officers would not exercise their powers until amendments were made in the local government ordinance. They said that it would take time to empower the officers to exercise the administrative and revenue powers.

LG System – Latest Developments in NWFP

Hoti calls for Revival of DCs: NWFP Chief Minister Ameer Haider Khan Hoti on August 7 said the growing problems of unrest and price hike currently facing the province could be addressed by restoring the office of deputy commissioners (DCs). He said that I am sure that the problem of law and order, price hike and other related matters will be settled with the revival of the old magistracy system. He further said the present coalition government was not against local government system. Hoti said the situation might have been different had there been the old system of magistracy in place. He said administrative reforms were must for ensuring good governance. He said the coalition parties would hold a meeting shortly to discuss the law and order situation in tribal areas. He said loopholes in the local government system should be removed. The federal government had asked the provinces to present recommendations about the local government system and in response all provinces recommended changes, if not abolition, of the system. Flaws in the local government system had ended the role of the provincial government and created confusion, as it seemed two parallel systems were working in the province. He said there should be check and balance on magistrates and DCs. He said fully-

fledged insurgency in FATA was going on and warned that the trouble could spill over to the settled areas if not curtailed at this stage.

Nazims Gear-Up Efforts to Save LG System: The district nazims have stepped up efforts to save the local government system from scrapping allegedly by the present government as the city mayors believe that federal and provincial ministers for local government Ghulam Ahmad Bilour and Bashir Ahmad Bilour have completed homework to derail the decentralization process and restore the century's old magistracy system.

Members of a representative committee of nazims of 24 districts while speaking at a news conference on August 7 said that we will fight for the protection of our system at each forum. We will mobilize people to rise against conspirators and take the issue to court if an attempt is made to scrap the local government system. Members of the committee include Karak Nazim Rehmat Salam Khattak, Mardan Nazim Himayatullah Mayar, Peshawar Nazim Haji Ghulam Ali and Chitral Nazim Maghfirat Shah. They alleged Bilour brothers who were holding local government portfolio in federal government and in NWFP had been conspiring against the new system for long. The two brothers did not want democracy to flourish at grass-roots level, therefore, they decided to wrap the decentralization process up, added the nazims. The nazims sad that we don't understand the logic behind the conspiracies being hatched by Bilour brothers against the local government system as they themselves have once remained actively involved in the local government election process when the son of Bashir Bilour, Haroon Bilour, was contesting for Town-I seat in Peshawar. They added it was on the record that Bilour brothers were indulged in the election process for the district nazim seat when Haroon Bilour was in the run against Haji Ghulam Ali in the provincial capital.

LG officials to get Judicial Powers Soon: The NWFP Governor and Chief Minister have approved a summary about reviving the erstwhile executive magistracy system by assigning judicial powers to executive officers. Despite some objections raised by NWFP Law Department the government went ahead with the plan and the summary was sent to Chief Minister Ameer Haider Hoti who approved it on Aug 11. Following approval by the Chief Minister it was transmitted to Governor Owais Ahmad Ghani who also assented to it. The summary provides for promulgation of an ordinance for assigning judicial powers to different categories of executive officers including the District Coordination Officer (DCO), Assistant Coordination Officer (ACO), District Officer Revenue (DOR), Deputy District Revenue Officer (DDRO) and Assistant District Revenue Officer (ADRO).

The proposed ordinance is named as 'The Code of Criminal Procedure (NWFP), Provincial Motor Vehicle Ordinance 1961, West Pakistan Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance 1960 and Police Order 2002 (Amendment) Ordinance, 2008.' Following promulgation of the ordinance the executive officers would be empowered to deal with different categories of cases including section 107 to 112, 127 to 143, 145, 146, 147, 174 and 176 of CrPC; Motor Vehicle Ordinance; Section 16 of the MPO and Article 144 of the Police Order. The executive magistracy system was abolished on Aug 14, 2001, after President Pervez Musharraf promulgated an ordinance through which the CrPC was amended.

According to official sources, the Provincial Law Department had not vetted the summary and returned it with certain objections to the home department. However, the objections were overruled and the provincial chief secretary also gave a nod to it. The law department had objected that the CrPC was an existing law belonging to concurrent legislative list of the 4th Schedule to the Constitution. It was added that any amendment in it by the provincial legislative inconsistent with existing powers would be void within the meaning of Article 143. Under Article 143 both the federal and provincial governments are empowered to legislate on subjects mentioned in the Concurrent List but province cannot enact a law in conflict with the federal law. As the ordinance to abolish executive magistrates was promulgated by the president, therefore, the provincial government could not legislate contrary to that. NWFP Law Department proposed that it would appropriate to forward the subject proposal to interior ministry for making requisite amendments by parliament. In the summary the home department had cited various grounds for the revival of judicial powers for the executive officers. The department stated that the abolishing

of the previous system had resulted in removal of a vital instrument of the government for implementation of law and order at the district level.

NWFP Home Department claimed that the DCO were found incapable of handling many issues especially those related to law and order, sectarianism, militancy etc. The department has also cited price hike and no check on price control as reasons for reviving the previous system. The law department observed that so far issues like checking price hike were concerned section 14-A was added in the CrPC in the year 2006 vide which dealt with controlling prices. Under the law punishing the violators were conferred on executive functionaries besides, there were numerous TMOs, DCOs, ACOs, who were empowered under Local Government Ordinance, Food Laws etc to check any kind of violations, it added. It was observed that focal institutions do existed, however, their performance was required to be reviewed.

Another interesting point about the summary is about the amendment in the Police Order as under the law the provincial government could not amend it on its own. Legal circles said that under section 184 of the Police Order the provincial government could amend the Order with the approval of the Chief Executive of the country. Moreover, they said, the Police Order was placed in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and now no amendment could be made in it without the approval of the President.

Restoration of Sacked Judges

Minus-One Formula not Acceptable: Nawaz Sharif

Quaid PML-N Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has stated that both PPP and PML-N want the reinstatement of deposed judges but there are differences. Talking to Senior Vice President of ANP Azam Hoti and former Governor Punjab Ghulam Mustafa Khar, Nawaz said he would not back out from his stance that the deposed judges should be reinstated to November 2 position through an executive order. He said that efforts are underway to remove the differences over the modalities of restoration of judiciary. Nawaz said no minus-one formula would be accepted, adding that there would be rule of law in the country after the restoration of pre-Nov 2 judiciary.

Eight Sacked SHC Judges Take Oath

The government reappointed eight sacked judges of the Sindh High Court (SHC) on August 27, and increased the sanctioned strength of SHC judges from 28 to 40. The judges took oath in a ceremony at the Governor's House, after the federal government notified the two measures separately.

Sindh Chief Secretary Fazalur Rahman read out the presidential proclamation for the reappointment. Governor Dr Ishratul Ebad administered oath to new SHC Chief Justice Anwar Zaheer Jamali, who in turn gave oath to acting Chief Justice Azizullah M Memon (as an SHC Judge), Justice Khilji Arif Hussain, Justice Amir Hani Muslim, Justice Faisal Arab, Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, Justice Zafar Ahmed Khan Sherwani, Justice Salman Ansari and Justice Abdul Rasheed Kalwar. They have not been reinstated but freshly appointed, he said, a technicality that allows the government to hold off on any change to the seniority of the sacked judges.

Former President General (R) Pervez Musharraf – who had sacked a large number of judges after imposing a state of emergency on November 3, 2007 – had signed a proposal for the reappointment of the eight sacked SHC judges on August 6, but the measure was delayed after the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz – then a partner in the four-party ruling alliance – objected to it.

Four LHC Deposed Judges Take Oath

Lahore High Court (LHC) four deposed Judges have taken oath again on their posts, as administered by LHC Chief Justice, Syed Zahid Hussain. The Judges, who took fresh oath, included Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed, Justice Saqib Nisar, Justice Umar Ata Bandyal and Justice Asif Saeed Khosa. LHC existing Judges, law officers of the federal and provincial ministries of law, lawyer affiliated with the People's Party, Kazim Khan and the relations of the Judges taking oath attended the oath-taking ceremony held in LHC Judges Lounge. LHC security

arrangements on this occasion were made stringent and unconcerned person was not allowed to enter into the Hall.

NCHD Closure

NCHD Closure - 400,000 Students School-Less

About 400,000 children enrolled in feeder schools, opened by National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), may find their institutions closed down in case the Commission is wound up, it has been learnt. Besides, 550,000 people dependent on the Commission would also suffer in the wake of its closure. As many as 80,000 employees of the NCHD have already been shown the door. The Commission has been facing financial hardships since November of last year after the Federal Government provided it Rs1 billion against the allocated Rs2.3 billion for the fiscal year 2007-08. The remaining amount of Rs1.3 billion was due in January 2008 to cater to the needs of the remaining part of the fiscal year ending in June. But this amount was also not provided and instead the NCHD was asked to reduce its budget requirement. However, against a reduced requirement of Rs874 million, a grant of Rs472 million was provided to clear off the liabilities until June 2008, the source said, adding that the NCHD, after clearing off all its liabilities, would be left with only Rs4 million by the end of August. Under such circumstances the NCHD operations would come to a complete halt. To review the critical state of NCHD funds, especially in the wake of no firm commitment by the government, a meeting of the members of the National Commission for Human Development was held on July 28 which was presided over by its Chairman, Dr Nasim Ashraf. After detailed deliberations, it was unanimously decided that while the government would be approached yet again for provision of required funds, the NCHD must remain legally and financially solvent to avoid future complications in case the funds are not made available. She said that the Commission, therefore, issued termination of service notices to all employees with effect from August 1. The meeting also considered the issue of security and preservation of NCHD assets the cost of which comes to Rs543 million in 122 locations throughout the country. It was observed with concern that if the funds were not provided to the NCHD after September 1, the organization will not be in a position to retain the rental accommodation and services of the necessary staff to take care of its assets, she added.

Governance Issues of FATA & FANA

Northern Areas to get more Autonomy

The National Assembly was told on August 12 that the Northern Areas will get more autonomy very soon. Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas Qamar-uz-Zaman Kaira said on the floor of the House that the government wants to give due status and rights to the people of the Northern Areas. It was our party (Pakistan People's Party) that gave the right of citizenship to the NMA residents in 1974. He said the government plans to give more autonomy and budget to the Northern Areas. He pointed out that the budget of the area which was Rs 4.25 billion last year has been increased to Rs 5.5 billion this year. Making a statement on a constitutional amendment bill sought to be moved by Marvi Memon, Kaira said it is effort of the government to give rights to the people of Northern Areas at par with those available to people of Pakistan.

Referring to the bill, which sought special provisional status for the Northern Areas till resolution of the Kashmir dispute, the minister said the issue is linked to a greater cause that is Kashmir issue. He said this is a sensitive issue and should not be politicized. Kaira also opposed another bill sought to be moved by Asiya Nasir regarding welfare and social security of senior citizens on the ground that the government itself is bringing in a bill on the subject. He assured that the member concerned would be consulted and her recommendations would be taken care of. The mover withdrew the bill after the assurance. The Federal Minister said it is for the first time in the history of the country that the Northern Areas have been given special attention. He said the government has initiated an international study of these areas that would help bring international aid for the uplift of these areas.

Earlier, Marvi Memon criticized the government for opposing the said bill and added that it was the first time that a bill was moved about the Northern Areas. She said the NAs should be given

the provisional status like Azad Jammu and Kashmir, describing it their right. She hailed the steps taken by the previous government including the economic reforms and judicial system.

Cabinet Committee Recommends 'Drastic Changes' in FCR

The Cabinet Reforms Committee on Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) has recommended "drastic changes" in the law, proposing the abolition of sections that violated human rights. The recommendations were made at a meeting of the committee, which was held at the Ministry of Law on August 29. Federal Law Minister Farooq H Naik chaired the meeting. The committee proposed a number of changes in the law, including the renaming of the FCR as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Regulations, 2008. The committee also proposed the appointment of a judicial officer - a district and sessions judge – to hear appeals against decisions made by political agents (PAs).

A three-member FATA tribunal, headed by a retired judge of high court and consisting of a bureaucrat and a lawyer should be set up, which should have the final appellant authority against the decisions of the judicial officer. The prerogative of a political agent to nominate jirga members should be withdrawn and the concerned parties or stakeholders should be given the right to nominate members of a jirga for arbitrating a case, the committee recommended. Under FCR Section 40, a political agent can detain a person for two years without stating a reason. The committee proposed that a change should be made in the FCR, making it binding on the political agent to produce the accused in a court of law within 24 hours of the arrest. The committee also proposed that while arrest of children, women and the elderly should be banned, if a tribe fails to hand over an accused to the government, close relatives and other tribal notables may be arrested. The proposed draft of the FATA Regulations, 2008 will be presented to Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani after its approval by the committee. The draft will be sent to the president after the prime minister's approval. According to Article 247 of the constitution, the authority to make amendments in the FCR rests with the president of Pakistan.

Geo-Political Dynamics

15th SAARC Summit

SAARC Summit

The leaders of South Asia called for fighting terrorism together as the SAARC summit, overshadowed by worsening ties between India and Pakistan, opened on August 2 in Colombo. The leaders of the eight-nation SAARC plan to sign four agreements, including one on legal cooperation to combat terrorism, at the summit. The two-day summit will also frame a declaration on food security for a region which is home to a fifth of humanity and remains one of the poorest in the world.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani urged joint efforts to fight terrorism, poverty and to meet energy needs. He condemned the attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul and said Pakistan had also lost its leader Benazir Bhutto in an act of terrorism. He welcomed the finalization of the SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance on Criminal Matters. Gilani urged the SAARC countries to play their role in curbing terrorism. Threats of terrorism are looming large on the region, he said and added that Pakistan was taking all possible measures to counter terrorism in the region.

He called for developing a comprehensive regional strategy to ensure food security in South Asia. He said the contemporary global food crisis had underscored the need for developing a comprehensive regional strategy to deal with food shortage in the region. The Prime Minister said the SAARC region was blessed with rich natural resources, adding that, one-fifth of mankind lived here. Gilani said SAARC had made considerable progress in the area of regional cooperation in the past two decades. He called for the member countries to deliver the real dividends and create

a win-win situation for all. He specifically mentioned SAFTA as a major achievement in the field of regional cooperation. He said trade-facilitation measures should be aimed at eliminating all the non-tariff barriers in boosting bilateral or multi-lateral trade among the member countries. He called for strengthening the existing transportation and communication links across the region to promote trade among the member countries.

Indian Prime Minister called for defending the value of pluralism from terrorism, and said a united fight was needed against violence if the region was to grow. The atmosphere of the summit was tense with India saying the four-year-old peace talks with Pakistan were at their lowest point after it suffered a spate of bomb attacks last month.

The 15th summit of SAARC concluded in on August 3 with the member states adopting a 41-point declaration. The leaders of the SAARC member states - Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Afghanistan and Bhutan - in a declaration at the end of the two-day Summit reaffirmed their commitment to the principles and objectives enshrined in the SAARC Charter, agency reports said. In the Colombo Declaration, leaders have pledged to continue efforts to boost economic growth, social progress and cultural development which would promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life, thereby contributing to peace, stability, amity and progress in the region. The leaders recognized that SAARC has been making steady progress over the years, in particular since the last Summit held in New Delhi in April 2007, towards realizing the objectives of the charter. They said they were convinced that the process of regional cooperation must be truly people-centered, so that SAARC continues to strengthen in keeping with expectations as a robust partnership for growth for the peoples of South Asia. They accordingly directed all SAARC mechanisms to abide by the objective of the Charter, of promoting the welfare of the people and improving their quality for life. In this regard they directed the Council of Ministers to ensure that SAARC mechanisms identify further areas of cooperation where people-centric partnership projects could be initiated.

A thick security blanket draped Colombo with most parts of the city locked down. Leaders were brought from the airport in helicopters, while roads below were guarded by more than 19,000 police and military guards armed with automatic weapons. Trains were emptied while sniffer dogs looked for explosives. Sri Lankan authorities also cancelled all flights for a week from a northern town, once a stronghold of the Tamil Tiger rebels, who are credited with perfecting the suicide bomb.

The 16th Summit will be held in Male, the capital of Maldives.

Colombo Statement on Food Security

We, the heads of State or Government, participating in the Fifteenth SAARC Summit held in Colombo on 2–3 August 2008, affirm our resolve to ensure region-wide food security and make South Asia, once again, the granary of the world.

In view of the emerging global situation of reduced food availability and worldwide rise in food prices, we direct that an Extra-ordinary Meeting of the Agriculture Ministers of the SAARC Member States be convened in New Delhi, India in November 2008, to evolve and implement people-centred short to medium term regional strategy and collaborative projects that would, among others, lead to:

Increase in food production;

Investment in agriculture and agro-based industries;

Agriculture research and prevention of soil health degradation;

Development and sharing of agricultural technologies;

Sharing of best practices in procurement and distribution; and

Management of the climatic and disease-related risks in agriculture.

We direct that the SAARC Food Bank be urgently operationalized. We also emphasize early drawing up of the SAARC Agriculture Perspective 2020. We further direct that SAARC region should forge greater cooperation with the international community to ensure the food availability and nutrition security in South Asia.

Gilani-Singh Meeting

As tension continues to mount between Islamabad and New Delhi, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and his Indian counterpart Dr Manmohan Singh, in their maiden meeting on August 2nd evening on the sidelines of the 15th SAARC Summit, agreed to continue the peace process. The meeting lasted more than an hour in the Taj Samundra hotel where the Indian Prime Minister was staying. The host Prime Minister did not appear before the media but Prime Minister Gilani told newsmen that his meeting was “good and constructive”. “We have decided to move forward in the interaction,” said Prime Minister Gilani. The Indian side claimed that Prime Minister Gilani had assured Dr Singh that Pakistan was prepared to investigate the bombing incident of July 7 in Kabul where about 40 people, including three Indian diplomats, were killed. They claimed that Gilani had assured Singh that Pakistan would constitute an inquiry commission to probe the gory incident. Indian Secretary for External Affairs Shiv Shankar, while talking to his media, described the encounter of the prime ministers “a candid open dialogue between two people who want to see the way forward.”

Gilani-Karzai Meeting

A joint statement said on August 3 that the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to “re-engage” in the fight against Islamic extremism. Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani met in Colombo on the sidelines of a SAARC summit. The statement said that the two sides agreed to coordinate their efforts to stop cross-border terrorism. It added that at the suggestion of Pakistan, the Afghan side agreed to re-engage on all bilateral and multilateral forums. Karzai and Gilani had also agreed after their “cordial” breakfast meeting that their foreign ministers would meet over ways to build “close and constructive engagement” between the neighbours. The aim was to “build confidence and develop a common strategy at the political, military and intelligence levels in collaboration with their coalition partners and NATO/ISAF.

Bangladesh – Pre-Election Watch

Awami League (AL) wins Local Polls

Unofficial results from local elections in Bangladesh showed that followers of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won almost all the positions in a free, fair and peaceful vote, poll officials said. Bangladeshis voted for mayors and councillors in four city corporations and nine municipalities in the first phase of local elections organized by the interim government in a test run for national elections expected by December. Chief Election Commissioner A T M Shamsul Huda termed the polls a “gateway to democracy” on Monday and hoped the national elections would also be fair and credible.

Hasina, now in the United States for medical treatment, congratulated her party activists for winning the local elections and asked them to work harder to achieve victory in future polls.

Election officials said that local leaders of her Awami League won the four posts for city mayor and eight out of nine municipalities, defeating challengers mostly from the BNP. BNP Secretary-

General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, a staunch Khaleda loyalist, scoffed at the vote, saying it was a “stage-managed game and a shameful exercise by the election commission.” But Emajuddin Ahmed, former Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University and a political analyst, said: “Who won the election was not important. What is important is that the voters have been able to make their choice freely.” Neither party fielded people directly to contest the local polls but backed those who stood as independents because of a government ruling banning direct involvement of parties. The High Court late last week reversed that ruling, allowing parties to take part in forthcoming rounds of local polls.

European, US Envoys Commend Bangladesh Local Polls

European and American diplomats said on August 6 that they were impressed by the high turnout and efficient running of local elections in Bangladesh, calling the polls a step in the right direction ahead of December's national polls. Bangladeshis voted for the first time using digital rolls with photographs in four city corporations and nine municipalities, the first phase of local polls held by the army-backed interim government since taking power in January 2007. Candidates allied to former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is on parole abroad for medical treatment after being detained on corruption charges, swept the polls.

Einar H. Jensen, Denmark's ambassador to Bangladesh that it was first time I observed a Bangladesh election and I was impressed by watching so many people keen to vote. The U.S. Embassy said the local polls were a good step towards December's parliamentary elections.

Sheikh Hasina's Parole Extended till September after Civic Poll Win

Bangladesh's military-backed caretaker government has extended the parole of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina by another month to facilitate her medical treatment in the US, shortly after her party, the Awami League, emerged victorious in the civic polls. Jailed since July last year and facing a number of graft charges, she is free to stay abroad till Sep 6, but the government can cancel her parole without citing reasons, according to media reports. The double blessing for Hasina came at the last minute after her husband, retired nuclear physicist Wazaed Miah, made a formal request.

Khaleda to be freed unconditionally

Top officials in the army-backed interim government said on August 10 that the release of detained former Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia is expected soon, and probably without any conditions attached. Retired Major-General Golam Quader holds an “adviser” rank equivalent to a ministerial post in the interim authority. He told that she (Khaleda Zia) is going to be freed soon, unconditionally. Quader also said the government is considering the issue of release of Tareque Rahman, Khaleda's elder son and likely political heir. Tareque, who was detained for alleged corruption, has been sick in prison, and his mother wants him freed and sent abroad for treatment. A release would end months of backdoor negotiations between Khaleda, detained since last year and facing trial over corruption charges, and the government, as it tries to set the stage for a free and credible parliamentary election in December. Deputy Inspector-General of Prisons, Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui, said that meanwhile, prison authorities are trying to convince Khaleda to enroll herself in the new voters list. Analysts and diplomats say the election would not be credible and acceptable without participation by Khaleda's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League of another former Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina.

Khaleda Zia Refuses to Register behind Bars: Deputy Inspector General of Prisons Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told on August 11 that detained former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has refused to register as a voter while behind bars. The former Prime Minister said she would be a voter, but not sitting in jail. Siddiqui said the BNP Chairperson had been informed of the law relating to voter registration and contesting the national polls. Sheikh Hasina signed up as a voter from special jail on March 10, registering her Dhanmondi address.

Bangladesh Emergency to Stay for Polls'

A Government Minister said on August 7 that Bangladesh's army-backed authorities will not lift the country's state of emergency before holding elections in December. Local Government Minister Anwarul Iqbal's comments came a day after visiting European Parliament member Nirj Deva called for an end to the emergency, which was imposed in January 2007. Anwarul Iqbal told

that the elections will be held amid the emergency and it is expected that the EU will change its stance in this regard. Nirij Deva said on August 6 during a visit to the capital Dhaka that EU rules dictated no representatives could be sent to observe the general elections if the emergency was in place.

The emergency was imposed after one of Bangladesh's main parties, the Awami League, accused the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) - which ran the last government - of rigging elections. The dispute degenerated into strikes and violent protests, prompting the army to step in.

European Commission (EC) questions Bangladesh Polls Plan

The European Commission (EC) wants Bangladeshi political parties to take part in general elections in December but says it has concerns about holding polls while the country is under a state of emergency. EC's Ambassador to Bangladesh Stefan Frowein said that there are some difficulties in holding the elections while the emergency is in force. Frowein made the comments after meeting the country's Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda on August 28. Ordinarily, the European Union does not send representatives to observe a general election if a country is under a state of emergency. However, Frowein said no final decision had been made on whether an exception could be made, adding, "It cannot be predicted right now. We are looking into the matter and the higher authority will take the final decision in time."

Bangladesh creates Police Unit to Monitor Political Parties

Bangladesh police launched a special intelligence unit on August 17 to monitor the activities of political parties, one of which branded the move as "unfortunate and undemocratic". Bangladesh's main political parties have been mounting pressure on the military-backed interim government to end 19-month-old emergency powers. Police Commissioner Naim Ahmed told that we created the Political Intelligence Operation (PIO) to gather advance reports of what they (political parties) plan to do. He said that the PIO will not only keep track on activities by political parties and allied organizations but also have an overall responsibility to help ensure a peaceful public life. Suranjit Sengupta, a former lawmaker and senior leader of the Awami League party, described the unit's launch as "unfortunate, undemocratic and unconstitutional" He said that the main task of the police is to track down and punish criminals, not to put a trail on political parties and their activities. Such a move is possible only where politics is banned. That's why we want politics to be fully restored. The two biggest parties, the Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), want the government to lift the emergency that was imposed in January 2007 after months of political violence.

Nepal – Post-Election Scenario

Nepal Debates who should Take-Over King's Roles in Festivals

As Nepal adjusts to life without a monarchy, the country is now trying to decide who should inherit the role of keeper of its all-important Hindu celebrations. Once a "god king" whose subjects fell at his feet for blessings, King Gyanendra's fall from grace has seen him banished from even a ceremonial role at the festivals. The duties have been temporarily taken over by the interim Prime Minister, but many in the Himalayan nation are now debating whether putting an elected leader in place of the King is the answer. Chunda Bajracharya, a professor of cultural studies at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University said that we cannot end these traditions just because there is no king. Almost every aspect of life in Nepal has its own festival, from the late January celebrations that mark children's first attempts to read and write, to the fruit-marrying festival that is meant to protect girls from becoming widows. But it is those that pay homage to power, which the king previously presided over, that the country is now grappling with.

Although formally stripped of his powers in May, the monarch's role had been gradually decreasing for more than a decade. The abolition of the monarchy not only ended the 240-year-old Shah dynasty, it also turned a man once seen as the incarnation of a Hindu god into a commoner. During last year's Indra Jatra, one of the most important festivals on the Nepalese calendar, interim Prime Minister G.P. Koirala carried out the duties normally reserved for the king.

A practice dating back to 1768, the festival has traditionally allowed the monarch to receive blessings -- and tacit approval of their rule -- from the Royal Kumari, a young prepubescent girl worshipped as a living goddess. Bajracharya says that under the new order, it would have been bizarre to let the king play the ceremonial role because he no longer had any power.

Royal priest Madhab Bhattarai, now out of work, says the end of royal participation in festivals is sad because it was a way of uniting the country. He says that "for centuries Nepal has remained socially harmonious, despite being a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-faith country. It was the king who was a central point of unity". Bhattarai says "putting an elected leader in that role just isn't the same. The government is destroying our culture and tradition. Holding these festivals without the king renders them totally meaningless".

Prachanda Elected Nepal Prime Minister

Maoist Chief Prachanda was elected as the first Prime Minister in post-monarchy Nepal on August 15 as he swept a Constituent Assembly vote trouncing his Nepali Congress rival, four months after leading the former rebels to a surprise victory in the polls. Pushpa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda, 53, Chairman of CPN-Maoist that launched a decade-long armed struggle against monarchy, grabbed 464 votes out of the 577 cast in the 601-strong Constituent Assembly, after he received the backing of another major Left party the CPN(UML) and the Terai-based Madhesi Rights People's Forum. Nepali Congress' candidate and former Premier Sher Bahadur Deuba failed to muster a simple majority, winning just 113 votes in an election that saw the major party which had dominated the country's polity being isolated. The elections ended a four-month long logjam over government formation which saw the mainstream parties locked in a bitter power struggle.

Prachanda's predecessor G P Koirala of Nepali Congress had already resigned under pressure from Maoists and was working in an interim capacity.

Code of Conduct for Ministers

The Nepali party alliance finalized the code of conduct for ministers in the new government. A three-member team of the alliance has been entrusted to finalize the ministerial portfolios for each party and Common Minimum Program (CMP) of the new government among other affairs. The taskforce on August 16 finalized the draft of the code of conduct, but failed to give final shape of the portfolio division and CMP. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) Chairman Prachanda was elected the first Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal on August 15 with support from two other allies, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML) and the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF).

Nepal forms Post-Royal Government under New Maoist PM

Nepal swore in its first post-royal government on 22nd August with Maoist leader Prachanda as Prime Minister. The Maoists -- who waged a decade-long insurgency until a 2006 peace deal -- emerged as Nepal's most potent political force after convincingly winning landmark polls in April. Prachanda led the oath-taking where new ministers pledged "to remain faithful to the nation and my countrymen." The ultra-leftist Maoists, centre-left Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and another political group formed an alliance and agreed on distribution of ministerial posts. Politicians from the UML did not swear in after an 11th hour disagreement over who would be deputy Prime Minister.

Nepalese Premier inducts 15 Ministers in Cabinet Expansion

On August 31, Nepal's Prime Minister, Maoist Chief Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" finally expanded his fledgling cabinet, inducting 15 new Ministers. With the new inductions, Nepal's first Maoist-led government becomes a coalition of six parties with 24 ministers, including the Premier. The new government came into being amidst strife. Prachanda was unable to name his cabinet on Aug 18, when he was sworn in by President Ram Baran Yadav. Subsequently, the second-largest party in the alliance, the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (UML), locked horns with the Maoists over seniority and threatened to sit in opposition unless they were given the post of deputy Prime Minister. Finally, in an unprecedented move in Nepal's history, the parties decided to have three Deputy Prime Ministers from the three major parties: the Maoists, the UML and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF). After the UML, it was the turn of the Maoists themselves to fight over the ministries, which caused the cabinet expansion to be postponed.

Now finally, the coalition government also has the participation of three minor allies: People's Front Nepal, Communist Party of Nepal (United) and Terai party Sadbhavana Party. The Maoists have 10 ministries, while the UML has six, the MJF four, and the three fringe parties one each. **There are four women in the cabinet, two from the Maoists, one from the Communists and one from the MJF.** Another Terai party, the Terai Madhes Loktantrik Party, declined the invitation to join the government but said it would support Prachanda on the basis of issues. Former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's Nepali Congress (NC), the second largest party, also refused to join a Maoist-led government, and said it would sit in opposition.

New Constitution of Maldives

Maldives moves toward Democracy with new Constitution

The Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom ratified the country's new constitution on August 7, aiming to pursue a "modern, multi-party, democratic system" and giving more powers to the judiciary and legislature. Opposition parties welcomed the new constitution, but worried about the implementation stage. The new constitution, developed over the past four years, includes a judiciary run by an independent commission, and independent commissions to oversee elections and fight corruption. New to the Maldives government, these measures and others in the document are billed as bringing full democracy to the nation of 300,000 people, scattered across 1,200 mostly uninhabited islands 500 kilometres from India.

The new constitution reduces the executive powers vested under the President and strengthens the Parliament, which would be chosen through an electoral system giving each 5,000 people one member, replacing a less representative system that also included some seats appointed by the president.

President Gayoom said soon after announcing official ratification of the new constitution that we are not doing this as an illusion ... but for the benefit of the country. He said that the real work is bringing the constitution into effect. Democracy can bind everyone together even if we are different from one another. Asia's longest-serving leader Gayoom has held the reins of the archipelago - a major tourist destination - since 1978. He first pledged the reforms to the earlier constitution following a crackdown on mass protests in 2003 and criticism over his government's human rights record. The country's constitution was last revised in 1998, putting the president at the head of all government bodies.

Presidential elections are due to be held by October 10. President Gayoom is expected to contest in the country's first multi-party Presidential Elections after six terms in which he was nominated by Parliament with the public given the chance to approve or disapprove him.

US Presidential Elections

Obama creates History by winning Presidential Nomination

Senator Barack Obama made history on August 27 night, becoming the first black American to win Presidential nomination of a major US party. Mr. Obama, while urging his supporters to continue to back him all the way to the White House on Nov 4, said that the journey will be difficult. The road will be long. Mr Obama made a surprise appearance before a roaring crowd at the Democratic Party convention in Denver, Colorado, to introduce his **Vice-Presidential candidate Senator Joe Biden**. He received a strong endorsement from his one-time rival, Hillary Clinton, who came close to winning the Democratic nomination earlier this summer.

Ms Clinton said that with faith in our party and our country, let's declare together with one voice right here, right now that Barack Obama is our candidate and he will be our President. Several hours later her husband, former president Bill Clinton, also vigorously supported Mr Obama's candidacy. He said that Barack Obama is ready to lead America and restore American leadership in the world. "Barack Obama is ready to be president of the United States." Other senior leaders of the Democratic Party were equally enthusiastic in backing Mr Obama.

Republican VP Nominee: Young, Conservative, Virtually Unknown

A former beauty queen who has been dubbed "America's Hottest Governor," Sarah Palin has nevertheless demonstrated during a meteoric political career that she is more than just a pretty face. The 44-year-old mother of five, sent shockwaves through the US Presidential Election campaign on August 29 when she was named Republican candidate John McCain's running mate.

Alaska's first woman governor, Palin is a conservative opponent of abortion who hunts regularly and casts herself as an anti-corruption crusader, positions which have helped win her approval ratings of 80 percent. She has only led the vast, oil-producing northwestern state since December 2006, when she became the youngest person ever to hold Alaska's governorship. Now she has become the second woman ever to run on a major-party White House ticket, and in announcing his pick McCain highlighted Palin's conservative credentials and experience in rooting out graft in Alaska. Palin grew up in the town of Wasilla, Alaska - population 6,700 - leading her high school basketball team, winning the local beauty pageant and then placing second in the Miss Alaska contest. A popular car bumper sticker in Alaska reads: "Coldest state, Hottest Governor." Palin studied journalism at the University of Idaho and then worked in Anchorage as a television sports reporter before moving into politics, returning to Wasilla in 1992 to serve on the city council. Later she successfully challenged the incumbent-mayor and held office from 1996-2002. Palin soon moved on to bigger game: Republicans entrenched in state office. After she first lost a run for the lieutenant governorship, she helped expose shady deals linked to the state Republican party's top bosses and finally ousted Republican incumbent Frank Murkowski for the governorship in 2006. On taking office she immediately began a drive focusing on legislative ethics, driving through a reform bill within six months of her election win. Palin has juggled her job as state chief with being a parent, and regularly picked up her daughter Piper from the school bus when it stopped near the state capitol building during 2007. She continues to commute daily from her hometown of Wasilla to the governor's office, where a large sign over her suite reads "Time to make a difference." A giant digital clock nearby counts down the days, hours, minutes and seconds remaining in her term, which ends in December 2010. But Palin's career has not been all plain sailing. She is currently under investigation by the Alaska Legislature for possible abuse of power concerning the dismissal of the head of the Department of Public Safety, Walt Monegan, in July. Internet reports alleged that Monegan had been dismissed because he refused to fire a state trooper who was the ex-husband of Palin's sister. Palin has consistently denied that she put pressure on Monegan to fire the trooper involved, describing the allegations as "outrageous" and "false." However it emerged on August 13 that there had been more than 20 calls, emails and other communications from Palin's office to employees at Monegan's Department of Public Safety. She is married to Todd Palin, 43, a former commercial fisherman who now works in Alaska's oil fields and who is a champion snowmobile racer, a four-time winner of the Alaska Iron Dog competition. A member of the National Rifle Association (NRA), she is a staunch defender of gun ownership and promotes development of the oil and gas reserves in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge against protests of environmentalists. She is also an ardent "pro-life" campaigner who gave birth in April to a boy after earlier testing had led to a diagnosis that he had Downs Syndrome, Texas Senator Kay Hutchison told CNN. She also has a son in the US army scheduled to be deployed to Iraq on September 11.