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Gender

Women & Politics

Election Awareness Campaign for Pakistani Women

The Ministry of Women Development (MoWD) has finalized arrangements to launch an awareness campaign for encouraging participation of women voters in the upcoming general elections. An official of the ministry told that the plan for awareness campaign has been completed and it would be launched soon that will continue till the elections on February 18. She said that the awareness campaign for women to cast their votes independently comprised of two phases. In the first phase, the women belonging to all walks of life will be motivated to use their right of vote. The medium of print and electronic media will be used for the awareness while interactive workshops and seminars will also be conducted in this regard, she added. In the second phase, she said, the women belonging to various fields both living in urban, rural and remote areas would also be addressed to enable them for their active participation in the general elections which is affected by the deteriorating law and order situation.

Women being important segment of the society cannot be overlooked for their participation in the general elections and the awareness campaign will help to ensure their participation in political activities. The establishment of separate polling stations for women would ensure women's contribution in the electoral process and to solve the problem in reaching polling stations. She said that "The campaign is initiated to raise awareness among women voters so that they could cast their vote independently using their own aspirations". The ministry would also conduct a survey to assess the efforts being made to involve women in the political process on the election results, she added. The awareness campaign initiated by MoWD would urge women to vote independently.

Pakistan – Women's More Role in Elections Urged

Pakistan Coalition for Free Fair and Democratic Elections (PACFREL) and its partner organizations Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Ecumenical Advocacy Foruf (EAF), South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK), Aurat Foundation (AF), Strengthening Participatory Organizations (SPO), Sungi Development Foundation (SDF), Interactive Resource Centre (IRC) and Pakistan Institute for Labour Education and Research (PILER) have demanded ECP to take action against the groups averse to women voting.

While reacting to a news published in a section of press titled "Tribal Leaders Vow to Bar Women from Voting", PACFREL recommended to the ECP and the Federal Government to announce that the General Elections 2008 would be null and void in those areas where women would be barred from casting their votes. It said that PACFREL NWFP Chapter had also sent a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner, requesting him to take urgent steps for ensuring maximum participation of women in election 2008. The PACFREL added that the obstruction and hurdles on the part of

some groups depriving women from casting their votes be tackled down according to the constitution and the election rules.

IT Training for 3,000 Women Councillors in Pakistan

An official of Ministry of Women Development said on January 7 that the initiative taken by Ministry of organizing IT training workshops specifically for women councillors is laudable. The program was launched under IT training project for 3100 women councillors to make them competent for playing their effective role at grassroots level, Over 3,000 women councillors have successfully completed computer training under this program. The ambitious project, which involved a total expenditure of Rs 15.410 million, was implemented with help of non-governmental organizations in the four provinces, she added. She said that women representatives are trained in basic computer courses of MS Word, Power Point, Excel and Internet skills to enable them to utilize information technology for their convenience being public leaders and in the long run, the initiative was taken to ensure society's prosperity. By conducting various workshops throughout the country, 1379 women councillors from Punjab, 750 from Sindh, 413 from Balochistan and 542 from NWFP were made conversant with computer training.

Iranian Women Crucial in Majlis Election

More than 7,000 candidates have registered for the Iranian parliamentary election scheduled to be held on 14 March. Almost 600 of them are women. The election for the 290-seat Majlis will be crucial in determining the future of the hard-line conservatives who broadly back President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Two powerful coalitions formed by reformists and moderate conservatives are seeking to change the balance of power and undermine Mr Ahmadinejad's chances of being re-elected in 2009. Women voters could be crucial in tilting the balance against the President.

Reformist promises: Iranian women played a huge role in bringing to power the reformist former President, Mohammad Khatami, for two consecutive terms. They were also instrumental in the parliamentary elections in 2000, which gave the reformists a sweeping majority in the parliament. There are several indicators suggesting reformists with clear policies on women will get their votes. Fatemeh Haghigatjoo, an outspoken former MP, says reformist candidates have had to adjust their election campaigns to attract women voters. "They have vowed to change family laws, Islamic punishment laws and labour laws to ensure more equal treatment of women," she says. The reformists are also promising to employ more women in managerial jobs, and allow more to stand as election candidates.

Gender Justice: Despite such support, the reformists still have a major problem. They are split into several factions and lost many votes in the 2006 local elections, when many of their supporters stayed at home, angered at their internal quarrels. Ms Koolaei admits the rift is serious, but says this time the reformists have done their best to pull together more than 25 groups into one alliance. In fact, the political divisions are so widespread that there are 240 political parties registered by the interior ministry. Ms Koolaei, who is barred from running because she refused to wear an Islamic chador, or full-body cloak, in parliament, says the reformists will create more "gender justice". But how much of an electoral force are women if they back the reformist camp? There are more than 46 million eligible voters in Iran, of which at least half are women. More than 60% of the votes that brought president Khatami to power in 1997 came from women. Now almost 65% of university students are women, and they are angered that only 3% get senior and managerial jobs. Reformists have promised to introduce positive discrimination for women. At present, there are two women in secondary cabinet positions and 11 in parliament. Ms Haghigatjoo says these women are "more fundamentalist than their male counterparts". Ms Haghigatjoo says Mr Ahmadinejad's days are numbered: "The women's movement in Iran is gaining momentum and these elections may be the first step towards having Ahmadinejad pushed out."

Kuwait Woman Minister Wins Confidence Vote

Kuwait's only woman Minister won a confidence vote in Parliament on January 22 after she was questioned this month by deputies who accused her of mishandling the education sector. Education Minister Nuriya al-Subih has been under fire from the start of her tenure after defying Islamists' calls for her to wear a headscarf when she was sworn into the Gulf Arab country's cabinet in April. She also faces accusations that she mishandled an incident in which three boys were sexually assaulted by Asian labourers at a school, and failed to take strong measures against a girl who scribbled on the Koran. She has been blamed for failing educational standards, and criticized for allowing men and women to mix at private universities in a country where education is largely segregated. Subih denied all the charges and won the confidence of Parliament, with 27 deputies voting in her favour, 19 voting against her and two abstaining. The vote split Islamists in Kuwait's parliament, with the main Islamist bloc voting in favour of the Minister. Subih said after the vote that we are all loyal to Kuwait and I will take all the observations into consideration in developing education.

Women & HR

Call for Laws to Stop Violence against Women in Pakistan

The need for a clear policy and legislation to address women issues was stressed in a meeting of the **Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW)** Alliance on 23 January. EVAW is a group of NGOs working for women's empowerment. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) sponsored the meeting. The participants called for coordination between different civil institutions to identify and control violence against women. "The role of police could not be denied as they are connected with domestic violence on daily basis," said a speaker, adding that the police should be made gender-sensitive and more efficient. In addition to the police, academic institutions also have an important role to play and students of gender studies should research the source of domestic violence, speakers said. A speaker said that many universities now have departments for gender studies where students can be assigned various topics for research on violence against women/ Later, EVAW members were divided into three groups to prioritize short-term goals to reduce violence against women this year. Sameena Nazir, of PODA, urged a **national complaint mechanism should be put in place where women could lodge their complaints without any fear**. She said that this **24-hour complaint registering service** will help identify violence cases. Dr Fauzia Saeed, of AASHA, said **legislation should be formed to stop domestic violence** and the procedure for registration of rape cases should be reviewed. She said a system to **guide donors should be set up by highlighting allocations for women issues in the budget**. Dr Naghat Saeed, an NGO activist, called for **deeper research on causes of violence against women**. The group will now meet in March and arrange programmes on International Women Day on February 12. The EVAW alliance was launched on November 29, last year, in collaboration with the UNIFEM, the Ministry of Women Development (MoWD), National Commission on the Status of Women, UNAIDS and several other NGOs.

Gender Equality & Women Rights

Asian Women Facing New Challenges in Getting Rights

Women in Asia are increasingly facing new challenges, including religious fundamentalism, violence and women's rights, over land that prevented them from realizing their rights.

According to a report recently released by Actionaid stated that increase in religious fundamentalism has become a big challenge that curtails women's freedom. With its anti-women agenda, patriarchal expression and rigid religious codes, women are often brutalized and harassed. For example in Southern Island of the Philippines, the fundamentalist group called Abu Sayyaf since its inception in the early 1990s has carried out bombings, assassinations, kidnapping and extortion. As a consequence, women have suffered economic dislocation (loss of livelihood and their husbands). The report added that widows and children also suffered emotional trauma. It said that unfortunately there is an increasing trend of countries falling to authoritarian regimes and military rules in different parts of Asia. Consequently there is an absence of democracy and democratic space in many countries of the South Asia and South East Asia, which among others prevents women from their political participation. It described that millions of women across Asia have little or no rights over the property owned by their families. The inheritance law of a country usually favours men. Some studies have shown that land conflicts in Indonesia, post Tsunami are increasing because a significant number of women have been denied the right to own and inherit land since the tsunami. Women deprived of land rights become more vulnerable and insecure as they lack economic options and opportunities for a sustainable livelihood. The recent research has shown a direct link between the landlessness of women and physical violence against them. In Pakistan, about 70 percent of female labour force is engaged in agriculture yet women farmer's contribution is not recognized. The report declared that the poverty pushes a lot of women into dangerous situation, including sex work to feed their families. This has led to a great risk of sexual abuse and HIV infection. The risk of sexual abuse is also high among girls who are primary targets of the traffickers and militia groups.

Saudi Women's Rights Body in the Pipeline

Saudi activists are working on setting up a group that will promote women's rights in ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia, one of them said in remarks published 28 January. The Social Affairs Ministry has given preliminary approval to the creation of "**Ansar al-Maraah**" (**Supporters of Women**) after two years of negotiations, Suliman al-Salman told the English-language daily Arab News. Twenty-one men and women — including researchers, academics and activists — are involved in setting up the new body, which aims to help women improve their social, educational and cultural levels. Salman said that the majority of women today are under the dominance of men in Saudi Arabia and cannot be active members of society because of the restrictions imposed on them. Saudi women activists have petitioned King Abdullah twice in recent months to demand the lifting of a ban on women driving, one of a host of constraints imposed on them in the kingdom which applies a rigorous doctrine of Islam known as Wahhabism. Women are forced to cover from head to

toe in public, and cannot mix with men other than relatives or travel without written permission from their male guardian. Salman said that helping women to get their rights, which are ignored or suppressed by law or customs, does not conflict with Islam, which does not prevent women from utilizing their own money, driving or choosing their own husbands.

The United Nations independent expert on women's rights said that she will visit Saudi Arabia after the oil-rich Gulf country came under fierce scrutiny from a UN committee over its gender equality record. Yakin Erturk, the UN special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, will visit Saudi Arabia from February 4 to February 13 at the government's invitation, according to a statement from her office in Geneva. She will report her findings to the UN Human Rights Council.

Women and Land – Critique

Syed Mohammad Ali in his article "Women and Land" analyses that land reforms can empower women by increasing their bargaining power and enhancing their status. It can also help boost familial welfare, including children's, since research proves that women generally pay significantly more attention to the well-being of their families than men

According to Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to own property alone, and in association with others. Moreover no one can arbitrarily be deprived of property rights. Despite this explicitly stated human rights principle however, vast multitudes of poor people — women in particular — around the developing world continue to face unequal opportunities in owning this empowering asset, due to highly skewed patterns of land ownership. Unfortunately, the past two decades have led to the dominance of laissez-faire orthodoxies and a marked ambivalence towards the role of the developmental state. It was the debt crises of the early 1980s, and the subsequent significance of multilateral lending programmes that led to an overt focus on fiscal restraint, open trade, and privatization with regards to economic development. Issues of agrarian and rural development reforms have also been affected by these policy priorities. Agricultural production has thus been proposed to be boosted through measures such as devaluing exchange rate, abolishing export taxes, and reducing trade barriers. Tenure insecurity was meant to be tackled through increased land titling, largely to the neglect of the environmental impact of this strategy. Such standard measures, it was argued, were capable enough to restore agricultural export growth and to improve rural incomes and livelihoods. At the same time however, cutbacks in public expenditure for agricultural input subsidies, research and extension services were advised, even using justifications to the effect that the benefits of these measures are primarily captured by big farmers, or else squandered by state officials. The elite capture of such allocations is hard to deny. But, the fact remains that public expenditure outlays were cut at a time when they were most needed. This was the time when developing countries were being simultaneously urged to pry open their economies to global agricultural markets, leading to an influx of imports from countries that provide generous agricultural subsidies to their farming sectors.

Within this context of agricultural reforms, protection of property rights has been encouraged to help promote economic growth based on the postulation that private ownership is a vital precondition for stimulating investment and technological innovations. It was feared that individuals would face disincentives to invest if their investments could potentially be captured by others, due to which the need for land reforms was not conventionally endorsed. Instead, it was pointed out that robust land markets would enable using land as collateral, which in turn could enhance a range of other useful economic activities. It has been argued by the proponents of this predominant approach that the transferability of rights, due to transparent land markets supposedly reduces transaction costs for renting or selling land, making the need for land reforms unnecessary, since the market will compel land to be eventually owned by the most efficient producer. These arguments did not take into account the phenomenon of absentee landlordism, or of the use of land to assume political power, which is so evident in countries like our own.

The sole use of economic growth to measure development goals is in fact quite misleading. The Nobel-prize winning economist, Amartya Sen, has instead stressed the need to assess welfare using indicators like infant mortality rates, which are more sensitive than GDP to distributional effects. University of Cambridge researchers have recently used infant mortality rates to identify the impacts of enhancing (private) property rights, which makes it difficult to escape the conclusion that increasing such rights has at best no significant effect, and at worst, a significantly adverse impact on populations in diverse contexts ranging from the Soviet Union to Eastern Europe. Even in African countries like Ghana, there is documented evidence to indicate that protecting property rights of the rich only has led to increasing inequality. Given this inability of the trickle down effect of agricultural policies to address development goals, more proactive policy measures seem vital. Else, due to the lack of secure access to land and means of production, the paradigm of daily survival will continue to compel the poor, due to circumstances beyond their control or influence, to live within short term horizons that will degrade natural resources, and further fuel their downward spiral of poverty, livelihoods and food insecurity. In the context of conservative agrarian countries like Pakistan, the issue of rights to, and control of, land by

women also deserves serious attention. The development focus for women seems to have been primarily on employment, education and health, which is obviously important, but it is not enough.

There are convincing arguments to strengthen women's access and control of land, since this can provide them with a sense of security they cannot derive from elsewhere. Land reforms can empower women by increasing their bargaining power and enhancing their status. It can also help boost familial welfare, including children's, since research proves that women generally pay significantly more attention to the well-being of their families than men. Although there are some variations, women's access to land in our own country is largely mediated by fathers, husbands, brother or sons. While Islamic law stipulates that women be accorded a share in inheritance, this injunction remains ignored. Even religious parties keen to implement Sharia throughout the country have never really focused on this aspect. Also, neither does the state see it necessary to interfere with inheritance rights, nor has it seemed to be too concerned with women's right to property while implementing its lacklustre land reform and redistribution policies. At more immediate levels, local leaders cite cultural norms to claim that women's land rights will threaten family and kinship structures. In turn, the landed class further counters the need for any reforms to affect their power base citing arguments of land fragmentation and the supposed inefficiency, which will then ensue. The fact that increased tenure security will help increase productivity does not bother them much, but it should bother our development planners — at least — given that economic deprivation is inversely correlated to land ownership. Provided a bit of support in the form of access to agricultural inputs etc, it makes common sense that poor farmers, working on their own piece of land, would be motivated to boost agricultural productivity much more than a farmer working under a landlord would ever be.

Books/Reports on Gender

Pakistan Almost at the Lowest Ranking – Global Gender Gap Report

Pakistan is almost at the lowest in the world ranking in the labour force participation of women and opportunity for women. In the Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum, Pakistan occupied the 126th position among 128 countries, Minister for Women's Development, Social Welfare and Special Education, Barrister Shahida Jamil was informed here on Monday by the chief executive officer of the of Competitiveness Support Fund (CSF), Mr Arthur Bayhan. He provided to the minister details about the latest indicators on Economic Participation and Opportunity for Women. On the **Labour Force Participation of Women**, he said **Pakistan ranked 121st among 128 countries**. Mr. Bayhan said that both the women and labour force indicators were very weak although Pakistan was doing well on the Political Empowerment of Women, where it ranked at 43th among 128 countries. The CSF, which is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Finance, the Government of Pakistan and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the partner institution of the WEF in Pakistan.

Barrister Shahida Jamil asked the CSF to assist the Ministry of Women Development in identifying policy initiatives and projects which could contribute to increasing national competitiveness, while empowering women. To improve the quality of gender data available in Pakistan, she urged the CSF to help her ministry in creating linkages with international sources relevant to the women issues, such as OECD's Gender, Institutions and Development Database, the United Nations' Statistics Division, the World Health Organisation, Unesco's Institute of Statistics and World Bank's World Development Indicators etc. The CSF will be launching the state of Pakistan's Competitive Report 2008 in March with a special section on gender issues in Pakistan. The CSF will include a chapter on gender in the state of Pakistan's Competitiveness Report 2008, which will identify the gender gaps affecting competitiveness in Pakistan, especially the areas identified by the WEF in its Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008 and the Global Gender Gap Report 2007.

The rankings could be accessed through URL: <http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/rankings2007.pdf>

While the detailed report is available on following link:

<http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2007.pdf>

Democracy Watch General Elections 2008

ECP News

EC to Employ 570,000 Personnel to Assist Voters

Secretary Election Commission, Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad said on January 14 that ECP would employ more than 570,000 individuals to assist the voters in the polling stations during the upcoming elections. He told the participants of IFES Monitoring Review Conference held in connection with the Training of Election Officials for 2008 polls that the Election Commission would open almost 65,000 polling stations containing more than 170,000 polling booths to serve the 81 million electorate,

ECP Receives 1,460 Complaints

The Election Commission of Pakistan has so far registered 1,460 complaints from contesting candidates, majority of them against violation of code of conduct, transfers and postings of officials and use of state machinery to benefit a certain candidate. Following are the details of complaints according to ECP till January 28, 2008:

Province/Area Wise Complaints

Complaint Type	Balochistan	FATA	Federal Capital	NWFP	Punjab	Sindh	Total
Announcement of Development	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Civil Servants	11	0	2	9	81	89	192
District Nazim	2	0	0	14	52	43	111
Electoral Rolls	5	0	4	8	10	17	44
Law and Order Situation	5	0	0	2	20	74	101
Nomination Papers	4	0	0	1	3	4	12
Polling Staff	6	0	0	7	7	21	41
Polling Stations	26	0	2	43	87	110	268
Postal Ballot	0	0	0	1	6	0	7
Tehsil Nazim	2	0	0	3	36	10	53
Transfers of Civil Servants	8	1	2	15	55	47	128
Union Nazim	1	0	0	3	5	5	14
Use of state Machinery	5	0	1	2	26	22	56
Violation of Code of Conduct	14	0	9	13	127	48	211
Violence of Any Kind	12	3	6	20	67	113	221
Total	101	4	26	141	585	603	1,460

Polling Scheme Prepared by ECP

ECP has prepared the polling scheme for National and Provincial seats. 64,176 polling stations would be established throughout the country. According to the Polling Scheme available on the EC website, 64,176 polling stations (170,174 polling booths) have been set up for 80.9 million voters in the February 18 elections. In the 2002 elections, 64,470 polling stations (1,64,697 polling booths) were set up for 71.9 million voters. EC rules (Guidelines for the Preparation of Lists of Polling Stations) require a polling station for every 1,000 to 1,200 voters, and therefore 67,425 polling stations for 80.9 million voters. The EC set up 380 polling stations for 383,606 voters in Islamabad in the 2002 elections. It will set up 382 polling stations for 482,801 voters this year.

In **Punjab**, 37,504 polling stations were set up in the 2002 elections for 148 National Assembly seats and 37,431 for 297 Punjab Assembly seats. The number of voters has risen from 4,126,8876 in 2002 to 44,485,896 in 2008, and the ECP plans to set up 37,636 polling stations.

In **Sindh**, there were 13,957 polling stations for 16,188,528 voters in the 2002 elections. The EC plans to set up 13,406 polling stations for 19,506,473 voters in the February elections.

In **NWFP**, there were 8,055 polling stations for 8,854,393 voters in the 2002 elections. This year, 8,173 polling stations will be set up for 10,661,212 voters.

In **FATA**, there were 1,134 polling stations for 1,283,974 voters in 2002. The number of polling stations will drop to 1,122 this year for 1,410,326 voters.

In **Balochistan**, 3,440 polling stations served for 39,26,058 voters in 2002 and 3,457 polling stations will be set up for 43,636,610 voters in the February elections.

Detail of registered voters and polling stations is available on the following URL of ECP:

<http://www.ecp.gov.pk/content/GE2008.htm>

Over 25,000 Polling Stations to be declared Sensitive

The Election Commission (EC) has estimated that some 25,000-27,000 polling stations are to be marked as sensitive with NWFP and FATA in the lead, it was learnt January 28. Sources told that there is every likelihood that in some constituencies such as those of Swat, Kurram Agency and Malakand Agency, election may not be held on February 18. Though, the commission has not given so far any hint of postponement of elections in any area, there is a strong possibility of delaying the same till the situation normalizes. According to the ECP polling scheme, some 65,000 polling stations are being set up across Pakistan, and 98 per cent of these would be at various government buildings, including schools and colleges, as the commission said.

The commission Secretary Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad confirmed to this correspondent that at least 25,000 polling stations would be declared sensitive. However, he said in reply to a question that Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan had dispatched their reports on polling stations to the commission. But they were yet to receive reports both from NWFP and Fata.

Provinces Ordered to Reverse Reshuffling

Police Personnel in Sindh: The Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Retd) Qazi Muhammad Farooq January 12, taking stern notice of the transfer postings of police personnel in the Sindh province, directed the Inspector General Police, Sindh to reverse all transfers and postings as soon as possible. The Chief Election Commissioner also directed the Inspector General of Police Sindh province to submit a detailed report on the reshuffle in the provincial administration within two days. According to an ECP press release, "Justice (R) Qazi Muhammad Farooq, Chief Election Commissioner of Pakistan, has taken serious notice of the large scale postings/transfers of Police Officers in the Province of Sindh after issuance of Election Schedule, despite the ban imposed by the ECP in that regard and has directed the Inspector General of Police, Sindh to intimate to the Commission as to how many transfers/postings of Police Officers have been made till to date after the issuance of the Schedule and the ban".

DPO Sukkur: Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Retd) Qazi Muhammad Farooq January 23 directed the Inspector General of Sindh to cancel the transfer orders of DPO Sukkur Mazhar Nawaz Sheikh and appoint him on the same post. The spokesman of ECP further said that CEC had also issued notice to the Executive District Officer (Revenue) Gujrat for making transfers and postings of revenue staff despite the ban on postings and transfers imposed by the Election Commission of Pakistan. CEC has directed him to appear before him on 24th to explain his position in this regard.

Revenue Department Gujrat: The ECP cancelled the order for postings and transfers in the Revenue Department, rejecting the plea by the Executive District Officer (Revenue) Gujrat. The CEC had asked the EDO through a notice to appear and explain the position on the matter in Islamabad as to why he had made the move despite a ban on transfers and postings of civil servants.

EC Seeks no Extra Funds for Conducting Elections

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) would not seek more funds for conducting February 2008 general elections despite suffering heavy losses, particularly in Sindh, in wake of Benazir's assassination. After assessing initial damages caused by the angry protestors after Bhutto's killing, the ECP has decided not to ask the

government for supplementary grants, the reliable sources told on January 11. Secretary ECP Kanwar Dilshad, when approached, said though the ECP has suffered losses worth hundreds of thousands rupees during the devastation, it has enough resources to arrange the elections smoothly. He said that major losses were in Sindh where the miscreants smashed the infrastructure in eleven districts. He added that the computers, printers, fax and printing machines and the furniture were damaged.

The government allocated an amount of Rs 1,280 million in federal budget 2007-08 for holding elections from the federal divisible pool. While participating in the debate on the charged expenditures included in demands for grants and appropriations for the year ending on June 30, 2008, the legislators belonging to the opposition parties grilled the government on earmarking such a 'meagre amount' for holding general elections. At that time, the then MNA Syed Naveed Qamar argued that by fixing only Rs 1,280 million for elections, the government showed its intention of not holding the elections.

Pre-Poll Rigging/Violation of the Code of Conduct

Benazir's Dossier, Startling Revelations about 'Rigging Plan'

The dossier which the assassinated PPP Chief, Benazir Bhutto was going to hand over to two US lawmakers minutes after addressing her election rally at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi, contains startling revelations about the alleged rigging plan of the Government's intelligence agencies. It embodies a district-wise account of the said plan in detail. The alleged pre-poll rigging highlighted in this document is based on over 1,100 complaints, innumerable Press Conferences, awareness through national as well as international televised talk shows, repetitive calls upon the ECP and interaction with the foreign election monitoring agencies.

The report titled 'Another Stain on the Face of Democracy', has been compiled by the Election Monitoring Cell of the PPP, headed by Senator Latif Khosa. The dossier was also intended to be submitted to ECP for action. Following are the main points of dossier:

- Relatives of Nazims Contesting Elections
- Polling Schemes Still Awaited
- 5000 Bogus Votes in PPP Chairpersons Constituency
- Police Partisan
- Harassment of Candidates Police Harassment
- Former Foreign Minister still has Protocol
- Police Interference and Harassment
- Frontier Corps Interference
- Transfers and Postings
- Administrative Interference
- Misuse of Authority by CDA
- Zila Nazim Chakwal Canvassing for Ch. Pervaiz Elahi
- District Nazim Ghotki Canvassing Openly
- Purchase of Ballot Boxes
- Illegal Transfers
- Pre-Poll Rigging at Various Districts
- Pre-Poll Rigging by Nazims
- Pre-Poll Rigging by Administrative Officers
- Pre-Poll Rigging by Caretaker Ministers
- Pre-Poll Rigging by Government Officials
- Rigging Cell formed at Punjab Governor House
- Distribution of Ushr, Zakat Funds to the Voters by Ch. Pervaiz Elahi
- Recruitment of Police Personnel on Contract
- Postal Ballot Collections
- Interference by Intelligence Agencies
- Threats and Manipulation by Military Intelligence
- Complaints against EDO Khairpur, Syed Skiander Ali Sha
- Transfer of Assistant Election Commissioner Jacobabad
- Bogus Voter Lists

- Threats to PPP candidates
- Misuse of Official Resources by Ex-Chief Minister Punjab
- Inaccessible Polling Stations
- Ghost Polling Stations would be used to Rig the Elections
- Murder of Three PPP Workers in Naseerabad
- Election Day Rigging by BMP
- Electoral Fraud
- Electoral Irregularities
- Misuse of Banned Weapons
- Objection on the Allocation of Symbol Book
- Composition of ECP is still Incomplete
- Voters Lists in Electronic Form still not Available
- Misuse of Authorities and Aiding of PML-Q candidate by Tehsildar
- Jobs Being Sold In Exchange For Votes
- Pre-Poll Rigging by Former Chief Ministers and their appointees DCO's/DPO's etc

Vehari Admin Dances to Tunes of King's Party

Violations of the Election Commission of Pakistan's instructions to the political parties have become the order of the day as the entire official machinery was mobilized on January 10 to accord a befitting welcome to former Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi in Mailsi. Information gleaned by Dawn revealed that the district administration had directed schoolteachers, patwaris and other government employees to ensure their participation in the public gathering at Fadda Town. The entire Vehari administration and police would be present at the venue to seek votes for the PML-Q. A day before the Ex-Chief Minister's expected visit, the district government officials were seen busy displaying election banners and posters at the public gathering venue. This correspondent saw a number of official vehicles carrying the PML-Q flags and announcing on loudspeakers in rural areas the planned visit. The DCO, however, denied having been involved in preparations for Pervaiz Elahi's visit. He was in Burewala to review the arrangements.

PPP Condemns PML-Q's 'Vote-Buying' Spree

PPP strongly condemned PML-Q for allegedly continuing its polls-rigging exercise, adding Pervez Musharraf's supporting political party is making the most of the time allotted to it by way of the delayed polls. PPP Central Information Secretary Sherry Rehman, in a statement issued January 9, said that shortly after the tragic assassination of Benazir Bhutto, PML-Q candidates resumed their polls-rigging tactics. She said that this gives credence to the worst fears repeatedly expressed by the PPP that PML-Q has been receiving all official support for violating the electoral rules to crush the democratic aspirations of the people of Pakistan. According to the latest reports in the media, residents across the Punjab are being contacted by PML-Q men for getting scanned copies of their ID cards in return for Rs 1,500. It is obvious that the scanned copies of the ID cards would be used by the PML-Q candidates as votes cast by the citizens. She added that this is shameless rigging, which reflects the length the PML-Q is capable of going to for ensuring its victory in the polls, Sherry said there had never been any doubt about the fact that the only way the PML-Q had made and would make it to the parliament was rigging and the caretaker regime as well as the Election Commission of Pakistan was aware of the fact that the PML-Q was influencing the voters.

PML-N Moves EC against Alleged Fraud

The Election Commission awaits reports from its four provincial chapters about allegations that up to 5,000 postal ballots were issued for several Pakistan Muslim League candidates. Taking notice of the complaint by the PML-N, the Chief Election Commissioner Justice (Retd) Qazi Muhammad Farooq called for reports from the provincial Chief Election Commissioners. On behalf of the PML-N, senior lawyer Muhammad Akram Shaikh met the Chief Election Commissioner on January 7 and apprised him of the matter and sought his intervention. He said that the Election Commission must rise to the occasion and help stop such glaring instances of irregularities and win credibility among the political parties and the public.

Five Leaders of Banned Groups Contesting Polls

Contrary to the election rules, five candidates belonging to outlawed extremist organisations are contesting the elections in Jhang District alone. Their names are included in the 4th schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Jhang city, the hotbed of sectarianism, had earlier over 10 elected union council Nazims from this category, notwithstanding the government claim that such people would not be allowed to contest the election. Orders were also issued in this regard. The PML-Q district President, Sheikh Yaqoob, has cobbled together an alliance with the banned outfit's leader there and he had no hesitation in admitting this. And ironically, there is another PML-Q candidate for the National Assembly seat, Waqas Akram Sheikh, contesting against the banned outfit's leader under serious security threats. He has written a letter to the President, the Prime Minister and the provincial administration in a bid to draw their attention towards the violation of the election rules and the declared agenda of President Musharraf, but the letter fell on deaf ears, leaving Waqas prone to serious death threats. Although, it is the job of the Election Commission of Pakistan and the police to stop them from contesting elections, both are engaged in the blame game by throwing responsibility on each other.

Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Ludhianvi, the provincial head of proscribed Sipah-e-Sahaba, is contesting against Waqas Akram Sheikh, the PML-Q candidate from NA-89. Ludhianvi has formed an alliance with the PML-Q District President, Sheikh Yaqoob, under which the banned SSP would support his candidature for provincial assembly seat (PP-77). Yaqoob confirmed to The News about this alliance and said his main worry was how to win the seat, no matter who his ally was and he defended his decision. Asked that his party and President Musharraf had been issuing statements against religious extremists with the banned SSP leadership on the top in this regard, he said he was doing all this to bag votes and for no other purpose. DPO Jhang Amjad Saleemi, who was transferred from Sialkot after jail riots there that also claimed the lives of two civil judges, also confirmed that Ludhianvi's name was in the 4th schedule of the Anti Terrorism Act and he was not even allowed to go to public meetings, even to hospital. But he said it was the duty of the Election Commission of Pakistan to bar them from contesting as per the election order that strictly prohibited such elements from contesting. He said Ludhianvi's contender, Waqas Sheikh, objected to it but the District Returning Officer, who was hearing the case, said they did not accept the 4th schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act and that the objector should go to the high court in appeal if there was any problem. The DPO said the Home Secretary had also written a letter that said that Waqas was under serious threats to his life, according to intelligence reports. Even DIG Special Branch (Sargodha) also said that Waqas was on the hit list of the members of a banned outfit that had earlier rammed an explosive-laden bike into a bus carrying Air Force officers on November 1 last year in Sargodha that had killed nine people and injured 14 others.

There are four other persons included in 4th schedule, whose nomination papers were approved by the District Returning Officer of Jhang. They are **Sheikh Hakim Ali, Abdul Ghafoor Jhangvi, Munir Kalia, Sana-ul-Haq Tirmizi and Muhammad Saleem Butt**. The DPO Jhang confirmed that the names of these figures were included in 4th schedule of the Anti-Terrorism Act but said the police were unable to do anything.

Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Kanwar Dilshad shifted the blame on the government. Dilshad said had the Interior Ministry provided them the list carrying the names of all those included in the 4th schedule, they would not have allowed them to contest. However, he had no answer to the decision of DRO of allowing them to contest notwithstanding the fact the police confirmed this in front of him.

PPP Hopeful Alleges Pre-Poll Rigging

Pakistan People's Party nominee for National Assembly Constituency 130 Samina Khalid Ghurki has also come out with allegations of pre-poll rigging against the former ruling party and its provincial President, Pervaiz Elahi. At a press conference on January 11, she alleged billions of rupees from the Baitul Mal's Khud Kafalat (self-employment) Scheme were being spent on PML-Q's electioneering. She said the party collected voters' addresses from the list prepared by the Election Commission and Pervaiz Elahi began mailing money orders worth Rs1,500 to each family as the 'Chief Minister' despite not having the office after Nov 15, 2007. She said that the money orders were being received by the families in the constituencies where the Chaudhry himself or some one from his family was contesting the polls. She also alleged that 10 million pamphlets had recently been published at the government printing press and were being distributed among students through schoolteachers. She regretted the caretakers were utilizing state resources for PML-Q's electioneering contrary to President Musharraf's claim that the polls would be free, fair and transparent. Also alleging violation of EC's code about transfers and postings of government employees ahead of elections, she said Pervaiz Elahi was still getting posted his favourite functionaries whom he could not appoint before Nov 15, 2007. Quoting an instance of what she called PML-Q's hold on civil bureaucracy, she said low-paid employees of the revenue, education and sanitation departments were bussed to the public meeting addressed by former Chief Minister in Youhannabad locality a couple of weeks ago. The PPP nominee also alleged that the Chaudhrys were the patrons of some top

police officers who got terrorism cases registered against thousands of party activists after assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

Nazims Involved in Campaigns

Several local government representatives, including union council nazims, have been involved in the election campaigns of candidates of different parties and groups here. District Nazim Shahram Khan had held a convention of UC nazims and councillors after the announcement of the election schedule to gain support for his two uncles — Usman Khan Tarakai, who is contesting for NA-12, Swabi-I, and Javid Iqbal Tarakai, for PF-32, Swabi-II. This rejuvenated the Swabi Jamhoori Ittehad (SJI) which had been formed by Shahram Khan before the local government election in 2005. Sources told on January 10 that at least 17 UC nazims were supporting the district nazim's uncles and running their campaign. Awami National Party leaders alleged that the district nazim was announcing development projects which would influence the voters in favour of his uncles. Swabi Tehsil Nazim Hanif Gul Jadoon, who is district senior vice-president of the ANP, is supporting the party's candidate Sarfaraz Khan Jadoon for PF-36, Swabi-IV. He has also announced development projects in the mountainous belt of Gadoon Amazai and addressed local people's demands.

MQM Condemns PML-Q's Ad Campaign

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has condemned PML-Q's advertisement campaign as "it has given rise to hatred against non-Sindhis". MQM Coordination Committee Member Mustafa Azizabadi said that He said the Muttahida had always stood for the rights of Sindh and opposed the construction of Kalabagh Dam while the PML-Q was in its favour.

EC Seeks Shujaat's Explanation on Ads

The Election Commission of Pakistan has directed PML-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain to submit a reply to a complaint against his party for allegedly promoting ethnicity through its newspaper advertisements. According to the channel, EC Secretary Kunwar Muhammad Dilshad said the Commission had directed the PML-Q President to file his reply to the complaint, but he did not clarify that what action would be taken against the party if it were found guilty. Caretaker Federal Human Rights Minister Ansar Burney has asked the CEC to take notice of the advertisement campaign by the PML-Q. Under the code of conduct for elections, no candidate or party is allowed to project policies that promote ethnicity.

PPP Concerned Over Printing of 1.4 Million 'Extra' Postal Ballots

The Pakistan Peoples Party has sought explanation from the caretaker government and the Election Commission of Pakistan for alleged printing of over 1.4 million extra postal ballots for February 18 elections, which it believes would be polled in favour of the PML-Q candidates. The ECP published around 0.03 million postal ballot papers for government employees and prisoners for 2002 elections, but alarmingly enough, the number has now touched the figure of 1.8 million postal ballots for coming polls," PPP's Punjab Secretary Information Farzana Raja raised this point while addressing a news conference on January 29 after chairing a meeting of party's district information secretaries.

The PPP leader sought explanation from the ECP and the caretakers as to the exact number of prisoners, teachers and other government employees engaged for election duty to account for the publication of 1.4 million extra postal ballot papers for the February 18 elections. She maintained that number of government employees assigned election duties and the prisoners was quite small as compared to the number of postal ballots printed by the ECP for these voters. Farzana feared that all postal ballots including those printed in excess of the actual requirement would be polled in favour of the PML-Q candidates.

Complaint against Chaudhry Amir

PPP Urges CEC to Disqualify Chaudhry Amir: Senator Latif Khosa along with PPP Vice Chairman Mir Baz Khan Khetran and Media Coordinator Nazir Dhoki addressed a press conference and demanded of the CEC to disqualify Speaker National Assembly Chaudhry Amir Hussain for becoming acting President and asked the Government to withdraw reshuffling of 40 district officers in Sindh. Acting President restrained from electioneering

Acting President Restrained from Electioneering: In a significant move, the Election Commission (EC) on January 23 asked the Acting President Chaudhry Amir Hussain to suspend his election campaign as long he was the acting head of the state. The CEC, Justice (Retd) Qazi Muhammad Farooq, through an order issued here said that Amir Hussain might refrain from visiting his area of constituency and suspend his election campaign during the period he was holding the charge of the acting President.

Amir Hussain, who is also the Speaker of the National Assembly, is a candidate for the lower house of the parliament's constituency NA-11 Sialkot. The EC Secretary, Kanwar Muhammad Dilshad, told that the order had been issued in the light of a **complaint by another candidate from the same constituency Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan**, who is a PPPP candidate. He parried a question about the EC looking into other demands made by the rival candidate, who visited the Election Secretariat and handed over a petition in this connection to the chief election commissioner. She had accused the acting president of violating the election rules and the Election Commission's code of conduct, which included the alleged misuse of state resources for his personal gains

Amir Defied CEC, Claims PPP: PPP has alleged that defying the orders of the CEC, the Acting President and the Speaker of the National Assembly Chaudhry Amir Hussain continued using whole paraphernalia attached with the President. The PPP approached the Supreme Court praying that Chaudhry Amir Hussain be disqualified from contesting the election. Although the Supreme Court sent back the petition.

Women & Elections

63 Vying for 22 Women Reserved Seats in NWFP Assembly

According to a report by the ECP, sixty-three female candidates from various political parties in the NWFP are contesting in the elections for 22 reserved seats for women in the Provincial Assembly. The former ruling MMA has nominated 12 female candidates on the reserved seats. The mainstream Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has given tickets to nine female candidates, PPP-S to eight and PML-N to six.

§ The **ANP** nominees are Yasmeen Pir Mohammad, Sitara Ayaz Khan, Shagufta Malik, Yasmeen Zia, Tabassum Shams, Musarrat Shafi, Dr. Yasmeen Jaseem, Munawwar Sultana, Zubaida Ihsan, Dr. Arbab Bashir, Shabana Saifullah, Parveen Akhtar Shinwari, Zainab Bibi and Basmina Bibi. Yasmeen Pir Mohammad, who belongs to Swat, served as MPA in the previous term also.

§ The **PML-Q** has fielded Nighat Yasmeen Orakzai, Begum Tahira Bukhari, Dr. Simin Mahmud Jan, Farhat Iqbal, Shazia Ambreen, Rukhsana Sagheer, Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Shahida Parveen, Nighat Nawab, Shahida Mohabbat, Sobia Shahid, Shabnam Rukhsana, Riffat Hameed Qazi and Zahida Parveen Malik. Both Nighat Orakzai and Dr. Simin Mahmud Jan are former MPAs. Dr. Simin is also contesting election for the NWFP Assembly on a general seat, PF-4 Peshawar. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani has served as Provincial Minister in the past Government.

§ The 12 **MMA** candidates include Uzma Khan, Nafeesa Shirazi Begum, Zarqa, Syeda Batool Nasira, Afaf Rehman, Rozina Nawaz, Fozia Taj, Amina Haider, Qaria Khudijatul Kubra, Farhim Ghazala Aziz and Sadia Firdos.

§ The nine contestants put up by the **PPP** are its provincial female wing President Mehraunisa Afridi, Shazia Tehmas Khan, Dr. Faiza Rasheed, Farhat Amir Mohammad, Sanjeela Yousaf, Noorul Sehr, Nasima Nisar Sajida Tabassum and Syeda Fauzia Batool.

§ The eight **PPP-S** female candidates include Begum Nargis Samin, Salma Babar, Shakira Abbas, Sumaira Shaheen, Nasreen Khattak, Ghazala Habib Tanoli, Rukhsana Naz and Riffat Akbar Swati. Both Shakira Abbas and Sumera Shaheen are lawyers. Nasreen Khattak, Riffat Swati, Ghazala Tanoli and Salma Babar are former MPAs though the last-named was elected in 2002 on the PPP ticket and was later expelled from the party for allegedly selling her vote in the Senate elections. Ghazala Tanoli was the lone female MPA in NWFP, elected on the general seat in the last general elections.

§ The **PML-N** has nominated Shazia Aurangzeb Khan, Mehr Sultana Advocate, Raheela Sohail, Nusrat Ara, Saiqa Nausheen and Maryam Javed Gandapur as its candidates. The Party didn't give ticket to its lone female MPA in the previous Assembly, Dr. Imtiaz Sultan Bokhari.

83 Nominated for 29 Women Reserved Seats in Sindh

Different political parties have nominated 83 female candidates for their election against 29 reserved seats for women in the Provincial Assembly of Sindh. According to ECP, out of these 83 women candidates, 17 have been nominated by PML-Q, 23 by MQM, six each by PML-N and PML-F, 20 by PPP, two by ANP and one by SUP and three each MMA and NPP. Two women candidates have not mentioned their party affiliation Mrs. Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto

Following is the party wise list:

PPP: Humera Alwani, Rainaz Bozdar, Rashida Akhtar Panwar, Rukia Khanum Soomro, Rukhsana Parveen Alias, Rukhsana Shah, Mrs Zahida, Syeda Shehla Raza, Shagufta Jumani, Shamim Ara Panhwar, Shama Arif Mithani, Ayesha Khoso, Farah Naz Isphani, Farzana Hanif, Firdous Hameed, Farheen Mughal, Kulsoom Akhtar Chandio, Mahreen Razaque Bhutto, Nargis N. D. Khan, Najma Saeed Chawla.

PML-Q: Bibi Shahnaz, Rehna Yasmeen, Zahida Thebo, Saima Waheed Murad, Sajeela Laghari, Sakina Bano, Syeda Bano Siddiqi, Syeda Sofia Alias Maqbool ul Nisa, Dr. Saeeda Malik, Ms. Shagufta, Ghazala Shaheen, Fareeda Maqbool Baoch, Nasreen Riaz, Nuzhat Pathan and Yasmeen Farrukh.,

MQM: Irum Azeem Farooqi, Ms. Amber, Mrs. Anwar Fatima Farah, Bilqees Mukhtar, Tahseen Mashkooor, Husna Aftab, Rabia Jamal, Riffat Khan, Zareen Majeed, Shabina Talat, Ms. Shahnaz, Sabira Khatoon, Saba Syed, Farkhanda Jabeen, Quratul Ain Khan, Ms. Mahreen, Mussarat Bano Warsi, Mumtaz Anwar, Nadia Gabol, Naheed Begum, Naila Munir, Nighat Tauqeer, Heer Soho

PML-N: Zeenat Shaikh, Shahnaz Begum, Saima Syed, Farah Awan, Mona Leeza, Naseem Akhtar

PML-F: Syeda Marvi Rashdi, Shazia Phulpoto, Ghazala Mushir, Faqir Shehnaz Taj, Naila Inam, Nusrat Bano, Seher Abbasi

NPP: Beenish Mustafa, Samina Khalil, Fariha Lodhi

ANP: Shazia Batool, Saima Syed

MMA: Bilqees Muzaffar, Rafia Azam, Kaneez Raza Rizvi

SUP: Naima Baloch

31 Women in Run for Balochistan PA Reserved Seats

Thirty-one women candidates are in the run for 11 reserved seats of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly. Out of these candidates nine belong to the PML-Q, two are backed by the BNP-Awami, three from BNP-M, one from the PML-N, two from the NP, two from the PPP and one from MQ, three from ANP, one from Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) and seven from MMA. Following are the party-wise names of the candidates:

PML-Q: Samina Baloch, Rahila Hameed Khan Durrani, Sobia Kiran Kibzai, Nuzhat Iftikhar, Shama Parveen Magsi, Rubina Irfan, Jamila Sultana, Shazia Naz and Ruqayya Saeed Hashmi.

MMA: Shahida Rauf, Azra Syed, Mrs. Rabia, Ambar Adnan, Hafza Qazi, Noor Bano, Husun Bano

PPP: Samina Raziq, Ghazala Gola Begum

ANP: Uzma Ahad, Fareeda Kakar, Salima Panezai

PML-N: Nazish Ayaz

MQM: Rukhsana Gul Kakar

NP: Samina Khan, Dr. Shama Ishaque

BNP-A: Dr. Fozia Naseer Marri, Bibi Zareena

BNP-M: Zeenat Baloch, Professor Naela Qadri, Saba Raisani

HDP: Halima Changezi

PML Fields First Female on General Seat in NWFP

Dr. Simin Mehmood Jan, PML-Q candidate from the NWFP Assembly Constituency PF-4 Peshawar is the first female Muslim Leaguer in the province to contest on a general seat. She remarked in an interview that since Pakistan's creation in 1947, I am the first female PML member fighting on a general seat against male candidates in the NWFP. Ironically, two of her rival candidates are also women. They are MQM's Khalida Nasreen and independent candidate Shazia Asif Khan Baghi. Dr. Simin was elected MPA in the 2002 general elections also but that was on the seats reserved for women. This time the PML-Q has again included her name in its list of 12 female candidates for the reserved seats. However, her focus right now is on winning election on a general seat and that too from a highly politicized, mostly urban constituency comprising the whole of Peshawar Contonment, Nauthia, Gulberg, Landi Arbab, Manakrao, Naway Killay and Swati Phattak.

PPP Revises Women Reserved Seats List

In a major development after the demise of PPP Chairperson Muhtarama Benazir Bhutto, PPP NWFP Chapter has reshuffled the names of the women candidates against female reserved seats both for National and Provincial Assembly and issued a revised final list in this regard. The number of female candidates against reserved seats had been reduced to three for National Assembly and the name of Asma Arbab Alamgir, wife of Arbab Alamgir had been placed on first priority for National Assembly from NWFP quota whereas in the old list, Mehru Nisa Afridi, Provincial President of the PPP Women Wing was on the top priority.

However, one of the female aspirants on PPP women reserved seats when contacted on phone, while contradicting the press release said that the Central Executive Committee and Central Secretariat of the Party could take such important decision and issue press release. She added that the final list being submitted by the Party to the Election Commission had been posted on the official website of the ECP and after its submission no one can revise the final list or change the priority for women on special reserved seats.

Seat Adjustments

PPP, PML-N Reach Seat Adjustment in Haripur

Provincial President Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Rahimdad Khan has said that his party has already made election adjustment with PML-N on various constituencies in Haripur and on one constituency each with ANP in Swabi and Bannu.

MMA-PML Agreement on Seat Adjustment

The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q) have entered into a seat adjustment agreement on a national and a provincial assembly seats in Karachi, apparently in violation of an earlier accord between the latter and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. PML-Q leader and candidate from PS-126 Haleem Adil Shaikh told on January 6 that we have reached a seat adjustment accord with the MMA candidates on NA-253 and PS-126, An announcement in this regard was made at a joint meeting held on Abul Hasan Ispahani Road in Gulshan-i-Iqbal on January 6. A central leader of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F), local leaders and the candidates of both parties and their supporters were also present. The PML-Q candidate on national assembly seat NA-253, Raja Sultan Shahab, announced his retirement in favour of MMA candidate Maulana Abdul Karim Abid while the MMA candidate on PS-126 Qasim Shah would stand down in favour of PML-Q candidate Haleem Adil Shaikh. Both MMA and PML-Q candidates were reluctant to call it an adjustment between their parties as they insisted that it was purely a "local seat adjustment" for which they had permission from their respective leaderships.

Election Observers

EC Issued 1,500 Cards to Election Observers

The process of issuance of accreditation cards to foreign election observers is going on and 1,500 local and foreign observers have so far been issued these cards by the Election Commission. The ECP official told that a group of around 20 observers from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will reach by February 16 under the auspices of the **South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA)** and will visit polling stations across the country. PILDAT has requested the EC to issue accreditation cards to its 20,000 observers. The official disclosed that the Japanese and US embassies have approached EC Coordinator for Foreign Observers Rasul Baksh Jan Wahidi. He said that the **US Embassy** has requested for issuance of accreditation cards to its 1,500 diplomats based in Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi. He said that the **Japanese Embassy** has sought accreditation cards for around 20 diplomats. The Official said that the Commonwealth has so far not decided about sending its observers to monitor the February 18 General Elections. He further said that if the Commonwealth did not restore membership of Pakistan, the Government might refuse to issue accreditation cards to its observers. The official said that 150 observers from the Washington based **International Republic Institute (IRI)** have returned after their stay in the country and have informed the EC Coordinator in this regard. He added that 200 observers from the **European Union** are observing arrangements for elections in the four provinces and holding meetings with leaders of political parties to get their feed back.

The Researchers (TR)

191 Women Contesting on 175 National & Provincial General Seats

The Researchers, a non-profit research based organization is undertaking observation of 65 selected national and provincial assemblies' constituencies (37 National, 28 Provincial) being contested by women in General Elections-2008. As per the final list issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan, the Executive Director Mr. Aazar Ayaz said that 72 women candidates are contesting in 63 National Assembly constituencies while 119 women are in the run for 112 Provincial Assemblies' general seats. The province-wise breakup of women candidates of National Assembly seats in Punjab is 49 in 46 constituencies, in Sindh 15 candidates would be contesting from 12 constituencies, whereas in NWFP & Balochistan there are 3 women each in 2 constituencies each of both provinces respectively, while for 1 constituency of Islamabad 2 candidates are contesting. The province wise breakup of women contesting for Provincial Assembly seats is 11 Women from 10 Constituencies of NWFP, 73 women from 68 constituencies in Punjab, 27 contestants in 28 constituencies and 8 women candidates from 6 constituencies of Sindh and Balochistan respectively, he added.

International Republican Institute (IRI)

US Election Observer Group Pulls Out Over Violence Concerns

The only US observer group planning to monitor the February 18 elections in Pakistan has cancelled its involvement over election-day security concerns, according to a Washington Post report published on January 31. International Republican Institute (IRI)'s election expert Thomas E Garrett on Pakistan said that we don't believe the security environment is such that we could do the things we'd like to do. **The IRI said the potential for suicide bombings and general acts of violence made it impossible to monitor the vote or evaluate the outcome with credibility.** The report said international presence in the February elections was now limited to 100 observers from the European Union, a few foreign politicians, and "small teams pulled together from embassies in Islamabad". The report said the Bush administration had acknowledged that **"the voting procedures are flawed"**. The report said US and Pakistani experts were concerned that the election could be manipulated when votes were aggregated at the district level, "where there are no standard rules or provisions for observers".

PPP to Resist Ban on IRI Operations

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Information Secretary Sherry Rehman said on January 31 that the PPP would resist the government's restrictions on the operations of the IRI in Pakistan. Condemning the non-renewal of visas for senior IRI officials, she called for ensuring free movement and activities of the IRI in Pakistan. She said that we are very clear that the regime is trying to confuse the issue by saying that the IRI itself wants to leave. She added that this is absolute nonsense, as IRI officials have been seeking permission to stay in Pakistan. She further said that PPP will resist all such bans on freedom of movement, operation and action by a regime which is bent on manipulating the polls and will challenge such curbs and bans on democracy by contesting even the rigged elections under protest at every polling station.

European Union (EU)

EU Launches Full Poll Observation Mission

On 4th January, the European Union (EU) launched its full election observation mission (EOM) to monitor the coming elections while pressing President Pervez Musharraf's government to do more to ensure transparency in the February 18 election process. Michael Gahler, who will head the mission, told a news conference that European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner had decided to upgrade the EU limited mission to a full election observation mission in light of the elections re-scheduling. He said that some 50 observers would be deployed in Pakistan for a long period of time and additional observers would later join them for a shorter period. He said that the EOM would issue a preliminary report 72 hours after the elections were complete, adding that a final report would be released two months later, consisting of a comprehensive assessment of the entire electoral process.

Mission's focus: Gahler said the mission would focus on the electoral process rather than their outcome. He called for enforcing instructions to ensure that detailed results were immediately displayed at polling stations and all levels of result consolidation, as well as on the Internet, to enable an independent audit. He said that steps

should be taken to ensure that all counting and tabulation processes were fully open to scrutiny by candidates, agents and observers.

EU Mission Seeks More Security: Michael Gahler, the head of European Union (EU) Observer Mission, has raised concern over the security of the mission members during his meeting with Interior Minister Hamid Nawaz on January 6. "The head of the EU monitoring team has expressed concern over security of the observers during their stay in Pakistan because of worsening law and order in the wake of Benazir's assassination," said the ministry sources. They said Gahler requested for enhanced security of EU election observers during his meeting with Nawaz, who had made an assurance to this effect. Nawaz briefed Gahler on arrangements for free, fair and peaceful elections.

EU Poll Mission Briefed on Government's Rigging Plan

A four-member European Union Election Observer Mission called on PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif at his Raiwind residence here on January 8. Mission head Michel Galle told the media after the meeting that opposition parties had provided them some evidence of the alleged rigging plan which had been forwarded to the "competent authorities". He told a questioner that he had briefed the European Union mission about the rigging plan as well as his reservations over the ability of caretakers to redress the rigging complaints. He said that although the government had banned all types of transfers and postings across the country till the polling day, it was being grossly violated. He claimed that over 100 civil servants and 64 judicial officers had been transferred only in Sindh which, he alleged, were aimed at making the rigging plan a success.

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Women Politicians Seek Protection from Government

Women politicians from all political parties have demanded of the government to take extra security measures to protect the women voters during elections and political workers due to the deteriorated security situation in the country. Representing all major political parties, including PPP, Pakistan Muslim League (PML), PML-N, ANP, JUI-F and MQM, women politicians expressed their concern at a seminar on **'Women's Participation in Elections'** organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) on January 4. They said in current situation male political workers have been conveying serious fears and women are afraid of going outside of their homes to cast vote on polling day.

Shehla Raza from PPP said after the brutal killing of Benazir Bhutto, women supporters of the party are scared and seem to be reluctant to cast their votes. They alleged there are fake identity cards of women all over the country, which would be used either to deprive women of voting or be used to cast fake votes. They demanded safe transport facility for women to reach polling stations safely and also insisted the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to ensure for restricting entry of men to the women's polling stations. Samina Malik of PML-N regretted that in many areas women voters are not allowed to cast their votes which would reduce their participation in the democratic process which should be discouraged and political parties should work to increase women participation in political process. In many areas of NWFP men will not allow their women to cast votes due to the ongoing military operations, feared Shagufta Malik of ANP. In this critical security situation how would government ensure to conduct peaceful elections, she questioned. The women stressed launching of an intensive voter awareness campaign, especially targeting women voters, to motivate them and urged the media to take steps in this regard. From JUI-F Shahida Akhtar Ali believed only legal amendments in the policies can ensure women's rights. Ambassador of Sweden, Anna Karin Enestrom said women should be given equal opportunities in political environment of the country and the requirement of graduation for candidates in Pakistan should be abolished which is affecting more women than men. Political Counsellor of US Embassy Candace Putnam said that women in Pakistan did not enjoy all their due rights and they need to struggle jointly to get their rights through the political process.

Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN)

FAFEN to Recruit 20,000 Poll Observers

The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) is appointing about 20,000 Polling Station Observers (PSOs) to monitor the election process in every district of Pakistan on February 18. The FAFEN will observe all the stages of polling on the election-day including the voting process and counting as well. It will also observe the process of consolidation of polling station results by the returning officers in 264 constituencies. All its workers will abide by

the code of ethics set by the organization and monitor the election without any partisan bias. The FAFEN's Long Term Observers (LTOs) in 264 constituencies have been monitoring election process since October 2007 and sending weekly reports to the Secretariat and Data Center in Islamabad. The network has issued eight 'election updates' in addition to its many other public statements about the electoral environment and preparations during 2007. The goal of all the efforts of FAFEN is to help improve the quality of elections in Pakistan through analysis based on empirical information gathered from across the country.

Election Update 8 – Political Party Candidates: Election Campaign Strategies and Activities

Media Advertisements: FAFEN has said that although candidates from all political parties are using media advertisements for electioneering, PML-Q is getting maximum benefits from this tool of communication. In its latest report, FAFEN observed PML-N had advertised in newspapers for 75 constituencies, PPP for 86, PML-Q for 89, JUI-F for 19, MQM for 16, ANP for 15 and PPP-S for 9 constituencies. According to FAFEN observers, very few parties opted for campaigning through advertisements on local radio channels. PML-N candidates opted for this method in 18 constituencies, PPP 25, PML-Q in 32, JUI-F in 5, MQM in 9, ANP in 3 and PPP-S only in one constituency. FAFEN observers said the candidates were broadcasting advertisements on local cable television networks in many constituencies. Advertisements seeking votes for the PML-N are being broadcasted on local cable networks in 31 constituencies, for PPP in 39, PML-Q 52, JUI-F 6, MQM 10, ANP 5 and PPP-S in 2 constituencies.

Voters Intimidation: The report said the candidates were found intimidating voters - primarily those who are dependent for livelihood on landowners, employers or others - in order to gain support. The PML-N candidates are intimidating voters in 9 of 148 constituencies, PPP in 14 of 170, PML-Q in 35 of 157, JUI-F in three of 60, MQM in six of 62, ANP in two of 42 and PPP-S in three of 34 constituencies. Some candidates have been found inducing voters through payments or promises of payments or other rewards. FAFEN observers reported the PML-N candidates were inducing voters in 47 of 152 constituencies where their strategies were observed, PPP in 62 of 172, PML-Q in 91 of 165, JUI-F in 15 of 61, MQM in 15 of 63, ANP in 9 of 41 and PPP-S in 6 of 34 constituencies.

Mobilization of Voters through the Biradari System: All major political parties' candidates were found mobilizing voter through the Biradari System (caste-based communities) or by appealing to them in more than 68 percent of constituencies. Party-wise candidate mobilization of Biradari vote in constituencies are PML-N 127 of 161, PPP 151 of 183, PML-Q 142 of 168, JUI-F 43 of 61, MQM 45 of 65, ANP 31 of 43 and PPP-S 24 of 35 constituencies.

Ethnic Affiliations: Fewer party candidates are mobilizing voters with appeals to ethnic affiliations or differences, as compared to those invoking the Biradari vote. The MQM and the ANP are mobilizing the ethnic vote in more than 44 percent of constituencies where their campaign strategies were observed. The data collected shows PML-N is mobilising ethnic vote in 58 out of 152 observed constituencies, PPP in 61 out of 174 observed constituencies, PML-Q in 63 out of 160 observed constituencies, JUI-F in 20 out of 60 observed constituencies, MQM in 28 out of 63 observed constituencies, ANP in 20 out of 42 observed constituencies and PPP-S in 12 out of 34 constituencies.

Religious Themes: The report says the JUI-F candidates are mobilizing voters through appeals to religious themes or affiliations in 50 out of 67 constituencies. PML-N candidates are mobilizing the religious vote in 66 out of 155 constituencies, PPP 68 out of 177 constituencies, PML-Q in 69 out of 160 observed constituencies, MQM in 21 out of 63 observed constituencies, ANP in 13 and PPP-S in 9 constituencies. Likewise, JUI-F candidates are soliciting support of mosque leaders in 47 of 65 constituencies, PML-N 59 of 154, PPP 67 of 176, PML-Q 71 of 160, MQM 21 of 62, ANP 14 of 42 and PPP-S 10 of 34 constituencies. The candidates are mobilizing minority voters in 44 percent constituencies. PML-N candidates are doing so in 87 of 156, PPP 108 of 178, PML-Q 104 of 163, JUI-F 27 of 59, MQM 33 of 62, ANP 19 of 41 and PPP-S 15 of 34.

Detailed report can be accessed through following link:

<http://www.fafen.org/admin/products/p479b3fbb922.pdf>

Election Update – 9: Intimidation and Harassment by Police and Intelligence Agencies

According to FAFEN's Election Update – 9, one of the most frequent complaints received by FAFEN is of police harassing candidates and/or workers of certain political parties by threatening them or registering cases against

them. Particularly, the candidates and supporters of the PPP candidates are being threatened by the police that their names can be included in the list of those who ransacked and damaged public and private property during the protests and in incidents of violence that took place after the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. Such reports are coming particularly from various districts in Sindh such as Sanghar, Karachi South and Thatta. Police also are asking the supporters and candidates of political parties who formed the opposition during the tenure of the previous government to stop campaigning. In Khanewal district, the police issued a warning to the PPP candidates asking them not to campaign as there was a serious threat to their lives. In Thatta district, police are not giving security clearance to PPP candidates for holding public meetings.

For further details click: <http://www.fafen.org/admin/products/p47a2aac79fb46.pdf>

Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development (PILDAT)

Pre-Election Process 'Highly Unfair' – Citizens Group on Electoral Process Releases Scorecard

The Citizens Group on Electoral Process (CGEP), in its recent report, has termed the pre-poll electoral process in Pakistan highly unfair, giving it a score of 26 on a scale of 100 in respect of overall fairness of the pre-poll environment spanning over 12 months. The CGEP, working under Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development (PILDAT), and comprising prominent, non-partisan and generally respected national figures coming from diverse backgrounds, considered independence of judiciary and the effectiveness / credibility of the Election Commission as the two most important parameters to judge the fairness of the pre-poll election process. Judging the overall fairness of the pre-poll environment spanning over 12 months, the Group gave it a poor assessment, a score of 26 on a scale of 100, and observed that it was indicative of the fact that pre-poll election phase had been unfair to a large degree and the prospects of the entire electoral exercise to carry some credibility were extremely low.

The next crucial ingredient, in the eyes of the CGEP, had been the neutrality of the President and governors followed by the neutrality of the caretaker and local governments, freedom of private media, maintenance of law and order, credibility of electoral rolls and the, neutrality of the state-owned media, in the order of importance assigned by the Group in terms of the importance of these parameters in the pre-poll process. Detailed report is available on following link:

<http://www.pildat.org/events/08-01-09/pdf/Pre-poll%20Assessment%20Report.pdf>

Attock Pre-Election Fact-finding Mission Report

The Citizens Group on Electoral Process – CGEP, facilitated by PILDAT, undertook a Fact Finding Mission to Attock on Tuesday, January 15, 2008. Following are the main findings by the mission:

- § District Nazim using district resources and influence of his position to support/run campaign
- § Planned Rigging by the District Government through filing applications for “massive” number of postal ballots for government employees (about 15000 in the district)
- § Mass scale recruitment in the Police on the eve of Election Schedule
- § Terms of appointment of all contract employees in the Attock District extended up to 60 years of age on the eve of Election
- § Alleged police intimidation against election candidates contesting against the PML-Q candidates
- § Continuation of development schemes and initiation of new development schemes in the districts after the announcement of election schedule

For detailed report click: <http://www.pildat.org/events/08-01-21/pdf/FFM%20Attock-Report.pdf>

Gallup-PILDAT Electoral Survey – Polls will be Rigged: 53pc Voters

A Survey was conducted by PILDAT. According to its findings, Fifty-three percent of the country's population expects that the February 18 General Elections will be rigged, 15 percent believes polls will be transparent while the remaining 32 percent can't give any comment on the fairness of the polls. Popular perceptions about the integrity of the electoral process in Pakistan are dismal. Only 15 percent of the country's voting age population believes elections in the country are free and fair. This is one of the lowest in the world.

The survey reviewed all the eight elections held in Pakistan since 1970 and made an assessment of electoral rigging. It would help to determine what to expect and how to check the possibility of rigging in Pakistan's forthcoming national elections.

1970 Elections:

According to the survey, 1970 polls were designed to facilitate the emergence of a "hung parliament" which because of its internal divisions, could be manipulated by the establishment.

A) Polling day rigging: Irregularities on the polling day were not significant to meaningfully alter the outcome of the election. (B) Post-Poll rigging: The state resources intelligence agencies and armed forces were used in discriminately to conspire against the outcome of the polls.

1977 Elections:

A) Pre-poll rigging: The state machinery and public resources were used to intimidate opposition parties whereas the party in power allowed massive abuse of control and coercion. B) Polling day rigging: This rigging was wide spread. It was caused by cynical disregard for "Rule of Law" by the rulers and a partisan clique of civil servants. C) Post-poll rigging: In this phase a very large section of voters who had voted against the ruling PPP felt cheated.

1985 Elections:

- A) Pre-polling Election: The military government's decision to hold party-less elections deprived political parties of a basic political platform this distorting the rule of level playing field. B) Polling Day rigging: Not significant (C) Post Poll rigging: The state had designed a policy of creating and nurturing a new political setup meant to as General Zia-ul-Haq himself put it, "Share and not transfer power" to the elected politicians.

1988 Election:

A) Pre-poll rigging: Islamic Democratic Alliance had a patronage of ISI. The consolidation of anti PPP vote maneuvered under official patronage hurt the PPP and helped its opponents. (B) Polling Day rigging: It did not affect the election (C) Post-poll rigging: Intelligence agencies of the state continued to play a decisive role in the formation as well destabilisation of governments at federal and provincial levels.

1990 Election:

A) Pre-poll rigging: The role of intelligence agencies, establishment used the mass media including state television embarked on a highly parties on campaign against the PPP indirectly aiming to benefit its key adversary IJI. (B) Polling Day rigging: There are considerable allegations of polling day rigging in the case of 1990 election. (C) Post-poll rigging: The Post election power struggle within the election engineers and their beneficiaries sowed the seeds of mistrust between new premier Nawaz Sharif and his erstwhile supporters in the two arms of the troika, Presidency and the Army.

1993 Election:

A) Pre-poll Rigging: The election engineers used the 1990 script of pre-poll rigging but modified the characters and the tactics. B) Polling Day rigging: Irregularities on the polling day were not of a magnitude to alter the outcome of the elections. (C) Post-poll rigging: If someone is to look for evidence of post- poll rigging, it should be in the presidential election but perhaps it was minor by the norms that had been widely accepted as a standard practice by then.

1997 Election:

A) Pre-poll Rigging: The goals of the establishment in dismissing Benazir Bhutto's government in 1996 were unclear but apparently it was expected that the 1997 election would serve as another round in the "Musical Chair Game" . Establishment would produce a weak Parliament, Politicians would stand discredited and a stage would be set for introducing a formal role of armed forces through a new National Security Council. (B) Polling Day rigging: It was combined with the cynical negligence to the rule of law and the Constitution of the Country took its toll.

2002 Election:

The aims of the 2002 election were stated clearly as 1. There will a step towards democratic transition 2. Mr Nawaz Sharif and Mrs. Benazir Bhutto, leaders of the two major parties shall remain in exile outside the country 3. Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf will be the President of the country while maintaining his role as Army Chief. A) Polling Day rigging: It did not affect the outcome of the election at the national level (C) Post-poll rigging: The post-poll election interference was massive. A section of its elected leadership was lured and intimidated to form splinter groups.

Pakistan Coalition for Free Fair and Democratic Elections (PACFREL)

Women's More Role in Elections Urged

Pakistan Coalition for Free Fair and Democratic Elections (PACFREL) and its partner organizations Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Ecumenical Advocacy Forum (EAF), South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK), Aurat Foundation (AF), Strengthening Participatory Organizations (SPO), Sungi Development Foundation (SDF), Interactive Resource Centre (IRC) and Pakistan Institute for Labour Education and Research (PILER) have demanded ECP to take action against the groups averse to women voting.

While reacting to a news published in a section of press titled "Tribal Leaders Vow to Bar Women from Voting", PACFREL recommended to the ECP and the Federal Government to announce that the General Elections 2008 would be null and void in those areas where women would be barred from casting their votes. It said that PACFREL NWFP Chapter had also sent a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner, requesting him to take urgent steps for ensuring maximum participation of women in election 2008. The PACFREL added that the obstruction and hurdles on the part of some groups depriving women from casting their votes be tackled down according to the constitution and the election rules.

Other Election Observations

PML-Q behind PPP and PML-N in NA Seat Contests

The number of National Assembly seats for which the Pakistan Muslim League-Q has not fielded its candidates is higher than those of its arch rivals, the PPP and the PML-N. One reason is the PML-Q has not sponsored candidates in constituencies where its ally, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), has fielded its nominees, chiefly in Karachi. The PML-Q has no candidates under its election symbol in a total of 58 National Assembly constituencies. This means that its candidates are vying for 214 seats of the National Assembly, which has a total of 272 directly contested constituencies. The PPP has not put up its ticket holders for nine seats and has as many as 263 candidates in the field, while the PML-N has no nominees in 49 constituencies and has 223 contestants in the run.

- § The pro-President Pervez Musharraf **PML-Q** did not prefer to sponsor its ticket-holders in nine constituencies of the Punjab, 34 of Sindh, 13 of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and two of Balochistan. These seats include NA 70 (Khushab), NA 71 (Khushab), NA 73 (Bhakkar), NA 74 (Bhakkar), NA 96 (Gujranwala), NA 123 (Lahore), NA 147 (Okara), NA 162 (Sahiwal) and NA 173 (Dera Ghazi Khan) of Punjab; NA 201 (Ghotki), NA 202 (Shikarpur), NA 209 (Jacobabad), NA 211 (Naushehro Feroz), NA 213 (Nawabshah), NA 215 (Khairpur), NA 216 (Khairpur), NA 217 (Khairpur), NA 218 (Hyderabad), NA 219 (Hyderabad), NA 224 (Badin), NA 226 (Mirpurkhas), NA 228 (Mirpurkhas), NA 231 (Dadu), NA 234 (Sanghar), NA 235 (Sanghar) and NA 236 (Sanghar), and from NA 240 to NA 252 (Karachi), and from NA 254 to NA 257 (Karachi) of Sindh; and NA 262 (Killa Abdullah) and NA 272 (Kech-cum-Gwadar) of Balochistan.
- § The **PPP** has no candidates in six constituencies of the NWFP and three of the Punjab while it is contesting all the National Assembly seats of Sindh and Balochistan. The constituencies where the PPP has no nominees include NA 72 (Mianwali), NA 74 (Bhakkar) and NA 90 (Jhang) of Punjab; and NA 8 (Charsadda), NA 16 (Hangu), NA 17 (Abbottabad), NA 19 (Haripur), NA 26 (Bannu), and NA 27 (Lakki Marwat) of the NWFP.
- § The **PML-N** has not put up candidates in NA 69 (Khushab), NA 75 (Faisalabad), NA 86 (Jhang), NA 87 (Jhang), NA 102 (Hafizabad), NA 105 (Gujrat), NA 147 (Okara), NA 162 (Sahiwal), NA 174 (Rajanpur), NA 175 (Rajanpur) and NA 195 (Rahimyar Khan) of the Punjab; and NA 202 (Shikarpur), NA 203 (Shikarpur), NA 209 (Jacobabad), NA 212 (Naushehro Feroz), NA 222 (Hyderabad), NA 229 (Tharparkar), NA 230 (Tharparkar), NA 232 (Dadu), NA 235 (Sanghar), NA 236 (Sanghar), NA 237 (Thatta), NA 238 (Thatta), NA 240 (Karachi), NA 242 (Karachi), NA 244 (Karachi), NA 246 (Karachi), NA 247 (Karachi), NA 249 (Karachi), NA 252 (Karachi), NA 255 (Karachi) and NA 258 (Karachi) of Sindh; and NA 260 (Quetta-cum-Chagai), NA 262 (Killa Abdullah), NA 265 (Sibi-cum-Kohlu-cum-Dera Bugti), NA 267 (Kachhi), NA 268 (Kalat-cum-Mastung), NA 270 (Awaran-cum-Lasbela), and NA 271 (Kharan-cum-Panjgur) of Balochistan.

In some constituencies of the NWFP where Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam feels it has better chances to win, the PML-Q has not fielded its candidates as per their agreement. For some seats including one each of Attock and Chakwal, the PML-Q's candidates are contesting the elections as independents, not on its election symbol.

Election Campaign Cost Triples

The cost of election campaign for each candidate has almost doubled or tripled after the government extended the polling date to February 18. The 40 days delay in the elections is already turning out to be a nightmare for the candidates. While most of them are running out of hard cash, having already exhausted they had earmarked for electioneering, they have no other option but to almost start their campaigns anew. Some of them have even started begging money from their close relations. Others are requesting their friends to arrange for them publicity stuff like posters and banners instead of cash.

Though there is a lull in the campaign after the delay in the polls probably in the context of Muharram, yet the candidates could only suspend their campaigns right in the middle at their own peril. As such more candidates in the urban areas are quietly pursuing door-to-door campaign. They are also being obliged to keep their offices open for an extended period with provision of all the facilities to the workers manning those offices including food and round the clock tea and other eateries even, if the cost of chairs and tentage and rent of the building is not taken into account. Add to it the cost of maintaining generators in these days of loadshedding. Even the banners and posters that the candidates have put earlier on display in their respective constituencies have almost disappeared. They need new publicity material to remain visible in their areas. One candidate grumbled that each candidate would be required to start his publicity campaign once again.

The publicity process is prohibitively costly these days. The candidates are finding it hard to bear the cost of publicity stuff through flex technology that includes banners, posters etc. Flex is a modern technique and is more expensive as well, used in almost all the big portraits of the candidates and party symbols. More and more candidates like flex graphics for its showing clarity and good result.

These days TV channels are also offering very attractive packages to the candidates and their party leadership. Most of the candidates are using TV channels to put across their message and profile. As such, TV channels are doing a roaring business. The PML (QA) seems to have spent a lot on its publicity through newspapers and TV. In the wake of security threats, campaigns through TV and media have become all the more important for every party and its candidates.

A survey conducted by The Nation revealed that the election 2008 would be the most expensive polls in the history of Pakistan. On the average, each candidate for National Assembly will be required to spend not less than Rs 30 to 40 million on his/her election campaign. These expenses vary from candidate to candidate. Some are merely fighting on the basis of their material resources. The main criteria of parties these days to select candidates for National and Provincial assemblies is whether or not a candidate has got the resources to contest elections. Days are gone when committed and ideological workers were given precedence over the others. Imagine the cost of printing of publicity material these days. The EC has allowed only Rs 1.5 million for a National Assembly candidate and Rs One million for a Provincial Assembly candidate. But the printing of publicity material alone incurs more expenses than the limit prescribed by the EC.

In the changed times, even the party workers, instrumental in running the candidates campaign are on the lookout for dole, ever-ready to strike deals with candidates. The workers are not ready to work voluntarily for the candidates or out of their commitment to the party any more. They want a full package from the candidate that includes cash as well as other facilities on regular basis. Some candidates have even hired area youngsters holding BA/MA degrees, mostly the unemployed lot, to conduct their campaigns. As such maintaining an electioneering office with all the political hustle and bustle is not an easy task. Apart from publicity, maintenance of offices and payments to the workers, logistics etc are few challenges which each candidate faces. Transport is very important for the movement of workers in the constituency. The cost of transport peaks on the election-day when every candidate needs a bigger fleet to transport the voters to the polling stations.

Governance at Large

Ordinances/Laws Promulgated

Electronic Crime Ordinances Issued

President Pervez Musharraf on January 10 promulgated 'Electronic Crime Ordinance 2007' in the country aimed at curbing rising cyber terrorism by giving capital punishment and up to seven-year sentence with ten million rupees penalty for cyber crime. Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Abdul Riar while briefing the media on the Ordinance, said that the law will be affective from December 31, 2007 and with its promulgation Pakistan had become the 42nd country, which had the proper law to prevent the cyber crimes. The ordinance while carrying 18 different offences will be affective from December 31,2007.

Cyber Terrorism: According to the Law, whoever would commit the offence of 'Cyber Terrorism' and cause death of any person should be punishable with the death or imprisonment for life and with fine and in any other case, he should be punishable with imprisonment and of either description for a term, which may extend to ten years, or with fine not less than ten million rupees, or with both. Defining the offender of cyber terrorism, Ordinance said any person group or organization who, with terrorist intent utilizes, accesses or causes to be accessed a computer or computer network or electronic system or electronic device or by any available means, and there by knowingly engaged in or attempted to engage in a terrorist act commits the offence of cyber terrorism. The expression of Terroristic Intent, used in the definition of the offender, was meant to act with the purpose to alarm, frighten, disrupt, harm, damage; or carry out an act of violence against any segment of the population, the government or the entity associated therewith.

Criminal Access: The second offence was 'Criminal Access' defined as whoever, intentionally gains unauthorized access to the whole or any part of an electronic system or electronic device with or without infringing security measures, should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine not exceeding than three hundred thousand rupees, or with both.

Criminal Data Access: The third mentioned offence was 'Criminal Data Access' defined as whoever intentionally causes any electronic system or electronic device to perform any function for the purpose of gaining unauthorized access to any data held in any electronic system or device or on obtaining such unauthorized access should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine or with both.

Data Damage: The fourth offence was 'Data Damage' defined as whoever with intention to illegal gain or cause harm to the public or any person, damaged any data should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine or with both. The expression data damage included but not limited to modifying, altering deleting, deterioration, erasing, suppressing, changing location of data or making data temporarily or permanently unavailable, halting electronic system, choking the network or affecting the reliability or usefulness of data.

System Damage: System Damage was the fifth offence defined as whoever, with intention to cause damage to the public or any person interfered with or interrupted or obstructed the functioning, reliability or usefulness of any electronic system (ES) or electronic device (ED) by inputting, transmitting, damaging, deleting, altering, deteriorating or suppressing any data or service or halting electronic system or choking the network should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine or with both.

Electronic Fraud: Electronic Fraud described as whoever for wrongful gain interfered with or used any data, ES or ED or induced any person to enter into a relationship or with intent to deceive any person, which act or omission was likely to cause damage or harm to that person or any other person should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine or with both.

Electronic Forgery: Electronic Forgery the seventh offence was defined as whoever for wrongful gain interfered with data, ES or ED with intent to cause damage or injury to the public or the any person, or to make any illegal claim or title or cause any person to part with property or to entered into any express or implied contract, or with intact to commit fraud by any input, alteration, deletion or suppression of data, resulting in unauthentic data with the intent that it be considered or acted upon for legal purpose as if it were authentic, regardless of the fact that the data was directly

readable and intelligible or not should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, or with fine or with both.

Misuse of Electronic Device and Electronic System: Misuse of Electronic Device and Electronic System defined as whoever produced, possessed, sold, procured, transported, imported, distributed or otherwise made available an electronic system or device, including a computer Programme designed or adapted primarily for the purpose of committing any of the offences established in this Ordinance or a password, access code, by which the whole or any part of an ES or ED was capable of being accessed with the intent that it be used for the purpose of committing any of the offences established under this ordinance, was said to commit offence of misuse of ES or ED. However, whoever committed the offences described in sub-section 1 should be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term, which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

Unauthorized Access to Code: Unauthorized Access to Code defined as whoever disclosed or obtained any password, access as to the code, system design or any other means of gaining access to any ES or ED with intent to obtain wrongful gain, did reverse engineering or caused wrongful cause to any person for any other unlawful purpose should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with both.

Misuse of Encryption: Misuse of Encryption was defined as whoever for the purpose of commission for an offence knowingly or willingly encrypted any incriminating communication relating to that crime or incriminating evidence committed the offence of misuse of encryption should be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both.

Malicious Code: 'The offence 'Malicious Code' described as whoever willfully wrote, offered, made available, distributed or transmitted malicious code through an ED or ES with intent to cause harm to any electronic system or resulting in the corruption, destruction, suppression theft or lost of data would be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both.

Cyber Stalking: Cyber Stalking was defined as whoever with intent to coerced, intimidate and harass any person used computer, computer network, internet, network site, electronic mail, or any other similar means of communication to communicate obscene, vulgar, profane, lewd, lascivious, indecent language picture or image and threaten any illegal or immoral act.

The offender of this crime would be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may be extend to seven years or with fine not exceeding than three hundred thousand rupees, or with both.

Spamming: Spamming defined as whoever transmitted harmful, fraudulent, misleading, illegal, or unsolicited electronic message in bulk to any person without the express permission of the recipient or caused any ES to show any such message or involved in falsified online user account registration or falsified domain name registration for commercial purpose committed the offence of spamming. The offender of it in sub-section 1 would be punishable with fine not exceeding fifty thousand rupees. If he committed this offence of spamming for the first time and for every subsequent commission of offence of spamming he would be punished with imprisonment of three months or with fine, or with both.

Spoofing: Spoofing was another offence of the ordinance that was described as whoever established a website, or sent an electronic message with a counterfeit source intended to be believed by the recipient or visitor or its electronic system to be an authentic source with intent to gain unauthorized access or obtained valuable information which later can be used for any unlawful purpose committed the offence of spoofing and whoever would commit spoofing specified in sub-section 1 would be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

Unauthorized Interception: Unauthorized Interception was described as whoever without lawful authority intercepted by technical means, transmission of data to, from or with in an electronic system including electromagnetic emissions from an electronic system carrying such data committed the offence of unauthorized interception. The offender of this crime would described in sub-section (1) would be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine not exceeding five hundred thousand rupees, or with both.

Surveys

Most Pakistanis want Madrassa Reforms: USIP Poll

Madrassa Reforms: According to a poll released on January 7 a large moderate middle-bloc of Pakistanis support government reform of religious schools known as madrassas, which have been blamed for spreading Islamist militancy. The poll, funded by the US Institute of Peace (USIP), was conducted in the country before President Pervez Musharraf's six-week state of emergency and the assassination of former premier Benazir Bhutto last month. The poll results, released about six weeks before the elections scheduled for February 18, show that 64 percent of Pakistanis wanted madrassas reform by the government.

Islamic Democracy: Most Pakistanis want their country to be a democratic Islamic state, but are deeply distrustful of the United States and its war on terrorism, the results reveal. The results also show that a large majority of Pakistanis see democracy as fully compatible with Islam. Democracy ranked especially high among the 60 percent of respondents who wanted Muslim-based Sharia law to play a larger role in legal affairs of the country.

The survey finds strong public support for a wider role for Islam. Asked to gauge the importance of living 'in a country that is governed according to Islamic principles' on a 10-point scale, 61 percent give an answer of 10 (meaning 'absolutely important'). The mean response is 9.0. However, when asked to gauge the degree to which Pakistan is currently governed by Islamic principles, the mean score is just 4.6 (on a 0-10 scale with 10 meaning 'completely'). Sixty percent want Sharia to play a larger role, as compared to current Pakistan law.

No Talibanisation: The poll showed that 59 percent of the public want to hold the line against the encroachment of conservative Muslim mores known as "Talibanisation". Three in five (60-62 percent) view the activities of Al Qaeda, local Taliban, and Pakistani Islamist militant groups as threats to Pakistan's vital interests. However, a significant 14 to 18 percent do not view these groups as a threat to Pakistan.

Rights of Minorities: Eighty-one percent say it is important for Pakistan to protect religious minorities and three quarters (75-78 percent) say that attacks on specific religious minorities are never justified.

The poll, which has a 3.3 percentage point margin of error, surveyed 907 adults in 19 Pakistani cities from September 12-28. About 49 percent of the respondents were women.

Reports

Risks to Economy Increasing – Quarterly Report by SBP

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said in its quarterly report (July-September) that all key performance indicators recorded a significant decline during the first quarter of the current financial year and the resulting imbalances could have adverse consequences for the economy.

Following are the key findings of the report:

- § The political uncertainty ahead of the coming elections was impacting on investor sentiment. The risks to the economy are increasing as it is clear that neither the global nor the domestic economic environment is as benign as in the past years.
- § The government is relying heavily on borrowings from the State Bank, which added to the reserve money growth, the report said.
- § The fiscal imbalance has already led to a substantial rise in government borrowings from the central bank. The borrowings rose to Rs191.3 billion during the first five months of the current year (2007-08), exceeding both quarterly and annual ceilings and the preceding year's trend.
- § The 2007-08 growth was also likely to be below the 7.2 per cent annual target. "The current trend indicates that the fiscal deficit target will not be met unless appropriate corrective measures are taken promptly.

- § All key fiscal performance indicators had deteriorated significantly in Q1-FY08 (July to Sept 2007). The government's budgetary borrowings from the banking system during July-1st Dec FY08 rose by Rs191.3 billion compared to Rs97.6 billion over the corresponding period in FY07.
- § Another challenge was the country's large external current account deficit. Recent evidence indicated that the modest contraction seen in July-September 2007 was unlikely to continue in months ahead.
- § The report said the annual current account deficit remained large while the SBP predicted that the annual FY08 deficit could remain at around 5.2 per cent of GDP, very close to the levels seen in the previous fiscal year. More troubling is the fact that the high and volatile food inflation is now increasingly influencing core inflation as well. Since May 2007 both measures of core inflation (i.e. non-food non-energy and the 20 per cent trimmed mean) have been trending up.
- § The LSM (Large Scale Manufacturing) production data for Q1-FY08 suggested a deceleration in growth that reached only 6.9 per cent, the lowest since FY03 during this period. The aggregate growth of LSM had decelerated in Q1-FY08, although disaggregate data revealed a mixed picture. The first quarter outcome of a larger number of industries reflected slower growth, said the report

Pakistan's GDP Growth Likely to be lower in 2008: IMF

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected that the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is likely to be lower than the originally projected. The original projection for 2008 was around 7 per cent and the external current account deficit will be higher. The IMF has said that it is closely monitoring the economic impact of the instability and political difficulty in Pakistan. According to a transcript of a press briefing by Masood Ahmed, Director, External Relations Department, International Monetary Fund (IMF) at Washington on January 11, the IMF said that the Fund does not have a financial programme in Pakistan, but it is engaged in Pakistan through its work on surveillance, through the work it does on technical assistance. And obviously, the Fund is monitoring the any economy such as Pakistan that goes through a period of difficulty or instability, or a political difficulty, he added. The spokesman further said, "if you step back a bit and look at Pakistan's economic performance over the past few years and just look at the last fiscal year (2006-2007), the economy did perform well and had a GDP growth rate of over 7 per cent, and reserves have been strong and strengthening. So that's sort of where we're coming from. Also, the economy has shown considerable resilience." Immediately following the assassination of former Prime Minister Bhutto, the local stock market has experienced significant losses after reopening on December 3, 2007 but has recovered, in part, subsequently. There have also been some reserve losses following the attack, but the reserve position remains strong. In terms of currency markets, the Pakistani rupee has depreciated moderately since December 27. And as far as spreads are concerned, the EMBI global sovereign spread for Pakistan has widened by 170 basis points as of January 3, 2008 relative to its level before the attack. So clearly, there was a sort of initial effect. "Our assessment now is that the real GDP growth is likely to be lower than originally projected. The original projection for 2008 was around seven percent. And the external current account deficit will be higher, but in that we should note that this will be as much due to the recent increase in oil prices which is affecting current account deficits in a number of countries and—but also some reduction in capital inflows, in particular portfolio investment flows.

Inflation for Lowest Income Group Up by 15.7 percent

With ever increasing inequity between rich and poor and scarcity of flour, the downtrodden are compelled to ride wave of inflation, whereas, prices of essential commodities registered an unprecedented growth of 15.7 per cent for the poorest. The official statistics showed that the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) for the income group of Rs. 3000 per month soared by 15.72 per cent on January 3 as compared to the corresponding period of the last financial year. The SPI on week-on-week basis saw a growth of 2.12 per cent for the same class. On other hand, the SPI for the richest of the country (monthly income above Rs. 12000) ballooned by 9.68 per cent on year-on-year basis and 1.19 per cent on weekly basis. For the second lowest income group (Rs 5000/month), the SPI on yearly basis soared by 15.42 per cent. The income group comprising people with income up to Rs. 12000 per month witnessed an increase of 13.97 per cent in inflation. Similarly, the combined SPI (average inflation for all income groups) also saw a double-digit growth, recording at 12.38 per cent during the period under review. Whereby, the combine SPI on weekly basis increased by 1.5 per cent.

According to the government's own statistics, the gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots' is on the rise in Pakistan as the richest class's income is three times higher than the poorest segment of the society. Despite 23.5 million tons wheat yield, as claimed by the government, the flour has almost disappeared from the markets. The rate of one-kilogram wheat flour has climbed to Rs 28 and still it is not available when people are even ready to make long queues in the chilly weather with willingness to tolerate the bruises of the baton charge. The cost of construction is also increasing

with every passing day. The Federal Bureau of Statistics bulletin showed an increase of 15.9 per cent year to January 3 in the cement prices and it augmented by 0.4 per cent on weekly basis.

The FBS bulletin also depicted rise in the prices of 23 essential commodities. The major kitchen items that saw increase in the cost include, wheat flour, onions, wheat, tomatoes, vegetable ghee, tea, potatoes, sugar, oils, pulses, chillies and rice. The FBS carries out a survey in 17 urban centres each week to determine the trend in the prices of 53 essential items. This time the rates of 23 essential commodities swelled, five times' decreased, and 25 products prices remained same as of the previous week. The essential goods witnessing increase in prices on yearly basis include, rice basmati broken 60 per cent, wheat flour 47.8 per cent, bananas 8.5 per cent, wheat 54.5 per cent, tomatoes 6.4 per cent, vegetable ghee loose 45.8 percent, tea (prepared) 9.9 per cent, kerosene per litter five per cent, mustard oil 55.7 per cent, masoor pulse 31.5 per cent, washing soap bylon 17.5 per cent, shirting 9.2 per cent, red chillies 36 per cent, Liquefied petroleum Gas (11kg cylinder) 50.5 per cent, firewood 14.4 per cent and mash pulse 0.4 per cent. On weekly basis the rates of the essential items mounted in the following way, LPG 8.4 per cent, wheat flour and bananas 7.5 per cent, onions 7.3 per cent, wheat 6.7 per cent, tomatoes 2.6 per cent, vegetable ghee loose 2.5 per cent, tea 1.9 per cent, gur 1.3 per cent, potatoes and kerosene 1.2 per cent , sugar and mustard oil one per cent and eggs 0.8 per cent. On weekly basis the rates of chicken witnessed a decline of one per cent, viol printed and lawn 0.8 per cent, garlic 0.4 per cent and rice (irri-6) 0.2 per cent.

SPDC Report on Devolution and Human development in Pakistan

Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) has launched its annual review report for 2006-07 entitled "Devolution and Human Development in Pakistan" launched on January 26. AN analysis of characteristics of the district nazims conducted by SPDC shows that the introduction of the devolution process in 2001 has failed to empower the people of Pakistan. Following are some of the observations and findings of the report:

- The study said that the influence of tribes, families and political affiliations still hold sway. SPDC researchers' team did observe certain positive features of the system, which were greater representation of marginalized groups, especially women. It, however, focuses on "state capture" by local elite, which remains an important and persistent challenge. "Although wider representation has been given to the under-privileged groups like women, real empowerment has been frustrated by election malpractices and elite capture at the local level," the study observed.
- SPDC report makes a forceful plea for a second generation reforms of devolution to realize the full potential of decentralization.
- Local bodies elections in 2001 and then in 2005 were held on non-party basis but voters aware of the political affiliation of the nazims and naib nazims. "Both the government and political parties have violated the Election Commission's instructions and openly supported their representatives," observed the report, pointing out that the Chief Ministers of the four provinces openly worked for their candidates.
- The basic question raised in the SPDC report was whether decentralization had contributed to the human development through improvement in efficiency, promotion of equity, enhancement in people's participation and thereby promoting people's involvement in matters affecting the quality of their lives.
- The report said local expenditure had grown fast since 2003-04 due to larger transfers arising from a faster economic growth and improvement in macro-economic conditions rather than any enhanced priority to local allocations. Expansion in outlays of basic services is beginning to contribute to improvement in some social indicators, it notes. But at the same time, the study also found a growing inequality in access to basic services among districts in Sindh and Punjab.
- The share of local governments in provincial allocable pool of resources has fluctuated between 37 per cent and 39 per cent. "It appears that the priority attached by the provincial governments to allocations for local governments has declined somewhat during the last five years," notes the SPDC study. Another feature observed by the study is that the provincial governments had handed over a number of major services to local governments and their share in public expenditure has remained unchanged at 23 percent.

Attacks, Clashes in Pakistan Claim 3,448 Lives in 2007: PIPS

The security situation in Pakistan remained "highly unsatisfactory" as terrorist attacks continued throughout 2007, resulting in 3,448 deaths from 1,503 attacks and clashes. The assassination of former premier Benazir Bhutto and

continued attacks on army personnel question the effectiveness of the security forces, the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) has said in its security report for 2007. The report states that around 1,503 attacks and clashes took place in 2007, leaving 3,448 people dead and 5,353 injured. These casualties figure are 128 per cent and 491.7 per cent higher as compared to 2006 and 2005, respectively. It states that the sharp increase in terrorist attacks proves that the country's security is rapidly deteriorating. The report says that the security forces are facing direct threats from the terrorists and looking helpless. This helplessness was proven during 2007 with the deaths of 232 soldiers, 163 paramilitary troops and 71 policemen in terrorist attacks. The report states that Pakistan faced 60 suicide attacks (mostly targeted at security forces) during 2007, which killed at least 770, besides injuring another 1,574 people. The report says that there was a visible increase in suicide attacks during and after the Lal Masjid operation. In July alone, 15 suicide attacks were reported in NWFP, Islamabad and Punjab, killing 191 and injuring another 366. The report states that as many as 12 political clashes took place during 2007, resulting in 64 deaths and 64 injuries. According to PIPS, the lack of a security operation in the Tribal Areas has increased the risk of increased infiltration of militants into Afghanistan, besides increasing risk to the country itself. The threat of enhanced 'targeted' suicide attacks on political and security forces also remains intact, as no investigations in any suicide attack have ever been completed, it adds. The political unrest, if prevails, may consolidate the militant outfits in FATA and NWFP, and encourage the nationalist insurgents in Balochistan and Sindh.

1,100 Children Die Every Day in Pakistan -- The State of World's Children Report 2008

Pakistan occupies the third higher place in the under-five mortality rate in Asia as in country more than 420,000 children under five years die every year mostly due to preventable diseases. It was revealed in the flagship publication, The State of the World's Children Report 2008: Child Survival launched here on January 23.

The report says that every day around 1,100 children die in Pakistan. Of them, more than six out of 10 of these children are under one month of age. The report provides a wide-ranging assessment of the current state of child survival and primary health care for mothers, new-born and children. Worldwide four million babies die each year in their first month of a life, and up to half of these die in their first 24 hours. A child is about 500 times more likely to die in the first day of life than at one month of age says the report. According to the report neonatal mortality accounts for almost 40 percent of all under-five deaths. The largest absolute number of newborn deaths occurs in the South Asia. Half of the world's regions are making insufficient progress toward MDG 4 that is about child survival. Many child deaths are preventable through simple and affordable measures," said Martin Mogwanja, UNICEF Country Representative for Pakistan. The practices of universal vaccination, breast-feeding, access to health care for women during childbirth and proper sanitation can save countless lives. Pakistan has many examples such as the government's country-wide vaccination programmes to prevent polio and measles, initiatives to improve access to health services for mothers and new-born babies as well as the Lady Health Worker Programme that brings door to door basic healthcare and hygiene education to millions of families. However, more efforts are needed to save the lives of the thousands of children under the age of five who die needlessly every year. Among the main challenges is to improve health services for mothers and newborn babies. Child survival depends upon creating a network of healthcare and support. This extends from the family level - where parents are informed about good childcare practices - to the community, and must be backed up by strong and effective healthcare systems, which can ensure that simple and affordable life-saving interventions reach every child efficiently.

Detailed report is available on following URL:

<http://www.unicef.org/sowc08/docs/sowc08.pdf>

Geo-Political Dynamics

South Asia

Atomic Chief Fears for Security of Pakistan's Nuclear Arsenal

The head of the UN atomic watchdog Mohamed ElBaradei has voiced concern over the possibility that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal could fall into extremist hands, in statements published on January 8. ElBaradei told the pan-Arab daily Al-Hayat in an interview: "I fear that chaos... or an extremist regime could take root in that country which has 30 to 40 warheads," He stressed that he was worried that nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of an extremist group in Pakistan or in Afghanistan. He further said that I fear that a war in the Middle East or in the Muslim world could have grave repercussions in Pakistan, more than in Iran. The UN Nuclear Chief, who is due to visit Tehran at the end of this week for talks on Iran's disputed nuclear programme, reiterated warnings against any attempts to solve the problem by force.

Pakistan has rejected statement of ElBaradei, Director General International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), saying that as head of the UN nuclear watchdog he should be more careful about his statements, which ought to remain within the parameters of his mandate.

Nepal's Polls Set for April 10

The Government of Nepal said on January 11 that Nepal's twice-delayed elections for a special assembly to map the nation's political future will be held on April 10. The Assembly will write a new constitution for Nepal, and will formally declare the country a republic after more than two centuries of royal rule. Minister for Labour and Transport Ramesh Lekhak told after a cabinet meeting that we have set the elections for April 10.

They will be the first national polls in nearly nine years. Elections for the 601-member constituent Assembly tasked to prepare a new constitution, earlier set for November last year, were postponed after the former Maoists rebels quit the interim government three months ago. That step by the former guerrillas, who began a brutal fight against the monarchy in 1996 that caused more than 13,000 deaths, triggered a political deadlock that clouded the peace pact. The impasse ended in December when the government agreed to a Maoist demand to abolish the monarchy after the election, and this was approved by parliament. Earlier the assembly had been expected to decide the fate of the monarchy. But now it will only rubber stamp parliament's decision to turn the impoverished nation into a republic.

Southeast Asia

Thaksin Ally Elected Thai PM

Thai lawmakers elected Samak Sundaravej, an ally of deposed Premier Thaksin Shinawatra, as the nation's new Prime Minister on January 28, restoring civilian leadership after 16 months of military rule. The election of Samak cements a stunning political turnaround for Thaksin, who was toppled by the military in a September, 2006, coup and has been living ever since in self-imposed exile. Samak, a 72-year-old veteran politician in his own right, has promised to bring Thaksin back to Thailand despite the criminal corruption charges facing him in the courts. He won 310 votes in the vote by members of parliament, defeating opposition leader Abhisit Vejjajiva of the Democrat Party who won 163 seats.

A charismatic yet deeply divisive figure, he will take office and form his cabinet only once King Bhumibol Adulyadej has endorsed him, a formality that could take a few days. Samak said his cabinet would be ready by Feb 6, and vowed to install a high-calibre team to bolster the economy. After the vote Samak headed off to a popular fresh market to buy groceries, telling reporters that "there will be no celebration. I will continue with my normal life". Analysts say that in important ways Samak will remain beholden to Thaksin, whose political clout and pocketbook remain a powerful influence. Samak, who overcame doubts about his record and his gruff manner by openly campaigning as Thaksin's proxy, was elected to parliament in 1975.

Myanmar Defiant on 60th Anniversary of Independence from Britain

Military-run Myanmar put on a show of defiance on the 60th anniversary of independence from Britain amid global pressure for reform following the junta's bloody crackdown on dissent. The junta's leader, Senior General Than Shwe,

was absent from the brief ceremony, but called on the country to go ahead with the regime's "road map" to democracy in a message read out in front of 5,000 officials and soldiers. The 74-year-old ruler urged people "to cooperate in realising the state's seven-step road map with union spirit, patriotic spirit and the spirit of sacrifice." Under the junta's "road map", Myanmar will adopt a constitution in a referendum which, in theory, would eventually lead to free elections in a country which has been ruled by the military since 1962. But the United States, the European Union and the United Nations have dismissed the road map as a sham due to the absence of detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's political party from the process. Analysts have also said a new charter will only serve to formalise the military's role in government.

The independence anniversary came as the regime faces mounting pressure for democratic reform amid tightening Western sanctions after its crackdown on peaceful protests, led by Buddhist monks, in September 2007. The United Nations has found that at least 31 people were killed during the suppression, and 74 remain missing. Protests began after a sudden hike in fuel prices in August that left many people in this impoverished nation unable even to afford the bus fare to work, and snowballed into the biggest threat to the junta in nearly 20 years. Despite the growing international pressure, Than Shwe was defiant in his message on Friday, saying the road map was vital for turning Myanmar into "a discipline-flourishing democratic nation." The junta leader made no reference to the September violence in his message and also made no mention of independence hero General Aung San, who is best known overseas as the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, 62. In Yangon, Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition party, the National League for Democracy, held its own independence ceremony at its headquarters, drawing some 300 supporters under the watchful eyes of 50 plainclothes security officers. The NLD issued a statement calling for the release of its leader and all 1,100 political prisoners in Myanmar. The Nobel peace prize winner has spent 12 years under house arrest for her efforts to end decades of military dictatorship. In the wake of the September crackdown, the junta appointed Labour Minister Aung Kyi to liaise with her in an apparent bid to ease international pressure on the junta. Aung San Suu Kyi and the junta's middleman have so far held three meetings, but since their last talks on November 19, no further date has been set. Details of their meetings have not been disclosed. Aung San Suu Kyi led the NLD to victory in elections in 1990, but the junta has never recognized the result.

US Presidential Election

US Presidential Elections

The United States presidential election of 2008, scheduled to be held on November 4, 2008, will be the 56th consecutive quadrennial election for President and Vice President of the United States. This Presidential Election schedule coincides with the 2008 Senate elections, House of Representatives elections, and gubernatorial elections, as well as many state and local elections. Under Article Two of the United States Constitution, as amended by the Twelfth Amendment to the United States Constitution, an Electoral College will elect the president. These electors are appointed by mechanisms chosen by each state's legislature (prevailing, by popular vote of the voters of each state). The individual who receives a majority of votes for president — 270 votes are needed for a majority — will be the president-elect of the United States; and the individual who receives a majority of electoral votes for vice president will be the vice president-elect of the United States. If no presidential candidate receives a majority in the Electoral College, then the president-elect will be selected by a vote of the House of Representatives, with each state receiving a single vote. If no vice presidential candidate receives a majority, then the vice president-elect will be selected by a vote of the Senate. Although rare, these latter scenarios have occurred twice in America's history, in 1825 and 1837.

Major Parties: Democratic Party and Republican Party

Other Parties: Constitution Party, Green Party, Libertarian Party, Prohibition Party, Socialist Party USA, Socialist Workers Party, Unity08 Party, Withdrawn candidates (minor parties).

Profiles of Presidential Hopefuls

Following are brief profiles of the main contenders:

DEMOCRATS:

HILLARY CLINTON, 60, beat rival Barack Obama in Nevada. Clinton, a senator from New York, would be the first female US President if elected. A former first lady, she has emphasized efforts to insure 47 million Americans without health coverage and criticized opponents for lack of experience. After a disappointing third-place finish in Iowa, Clinton bounced back to a surprise win in New Hampshire. Her once strong lead in national opinion polls has narrowed.

JOHN EDWARDS, 54, is focused on winning the January 26 Democratic primary in South Carolina, the state where he was born and where he won the primary during his unsuccessful 2004 Presidential bid. He finished a distant third in Nevada. The former senator from North Carolina was the Democratic nominee for vice president in 2004. He has made combating poverty a major campaign theme and called his vote to authorize military action in Iraq a mistake. Edwards now urges withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. He edged out Clinton for second place in Iowa but came in third in New Hampshire and trails Obama and Clinton in national polls. His wife, Elizabeth, is being treated for a recurrence of cancer.

BARACK OBAMA, 46, hopes to recoup from his Nevada loss with a win in South Carolina where a majority of Democratic voters are black. The first-term Illinois senator, who would be the first black president, won the opening contest in Iowa. Obama gave the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic convention before he was elected to the Senate. He has opposed the Iraq war from the beginning and has tried to cast himself as a Washington outsider. He scored a surprise victory in Iowa and came in second to Clinton in New Hampshire.

REPUBLICANS:

RUDY GIULIANI, 63, was once the party's front-runner but is fighting to stay alive in the coming votes. The former New York mayor, who has made his leadership during the September 11 attacks a centerpiece of his candidacy, did not campaign heavily in the states holding the early contests. He focused instead on the larger states that vote later, particularly Florida. Widely shunned by many conservatives because of his support for abortion rights, gun control and gay rights, he received the endorsement of Christian evangelist Pat Robertson.

MIKE HUCKABEE, 52, a Baptist minister, hopes to win support from the large bloc of evangelicals in Saturday's vote in South Carolina. The bass-playing former Arkansas governor was born in Hope, Arkansas -- the birthplace of Bill Clinton. He won the Iowa caucus thanks to strong support from fellow evangelicals, who admire his religious beliefs and conservative stances on issues like abortion and gay marriage. Known for his wit, he has been criticized for a lack of knowledge on foreign policy.

JOHN MCCAIN, 71, who lost the South Carolina primary in a bitter battle with George W. Bush during his run for president in 2000, hopes to win over the state's sizable population of military veterans on January 19. He also is looking for a win in Michigan, a state he won in 2000. The senator from Arizona attended the U.S. Naval Academy and was shot down in 1967 over Vietnam, where he spent 5 1/2 years as a prisoner of war. He would be the oldest first-term president, at 72, if elected. He has been a pro-business conservative and abortion foe while supporting the Iraq war and calling for additional troops to quell the violence. His campaign was running low on cash and hit by a wave of defections this summer but he rebounded with a big win in New Hampshire.

MITT ROMNEY, 60, needs a win in his native Michigan to keep his White House hopes alive after second-place finishes in Iowa and New Hampshire. The Harvard-educated former Massachusetts governor was previously a business executive who co-founded the private equity firm Bain Capital. He has appealed to conservatives with his opposition to gay rights and abortion rights, which he once supported. Romney, whose father was once Michigan governor and an auto executive, who sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1968, would be the first Mormon president.

Hillary, Obama Contend over who can Beat McCain

Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, the two remaining Democrats in the US Presidential race will be vying next week over who is more capable of beating Republican frontrunner John McCain and winning back the White House in November. For months the Presidential race has run in parallel in the two parties, with candidates battling their ideological bedfellows to become the formal nominee. But the contest has now narrowed dramatically, with McCain emerging as the Republican frontrunner and the Democratic battle reduced to a tense two-horse race.

US Election to be the Most Expensive Race in History

The outcome of the 2008 White House election remains up in the air, but one thing is certain — the bid to succeed President George Bush will be the most expensive race in history. The cost of the last presidential campaign in 2004, considered a peak for its time, was \$ 693 million. Common estimates of this year's total outlay have tended to come in at around \$1 billion, and Fortune magazine recently upped its overall cost projection to \$3 billion. As a historical comparison, the campaign two decades ago that saw Republican George H W Bush succeed Ronald Reagan at the White House cost \$59 million.

Historians believe that the nation's 16th President, Abraham Lincoln, spent \$100,000 in his bid to take the executive office in 1860. In the countdown to Super today on Feb 5, when 22 states including New York and California hold their primary elections, White House hopefuls are furiously bolstering their campaign war chests. The official tally of campaign finances for 2007 will not be published until Jan 31 by the Federal Election Commission, but top Democratic candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have already released their numbers.

The former first lady and current New York senator's campaign said she raised a total of \$115 million in 2007, of which 24 million was raised during the last few months of the year. Illinois Senator Obama has said his drive raised \$103 million in 2007 of which 22.5 million came in during the last part of the year. Clinton and Obama's campaigns raked in several million dollars more — over six million for Clinton and eight million dollars for Obama — following the country's first nominating contests in Iowa and New Hampshire earlier this month. The campaign for Republican candidate Rudolph Giuliani, who despite an early swell of support has been trailing in the presidential polls, has admitted to funding woes. Giuliani said that his campaign has \$12.7 million, of which seven million is available as ready cash, and amid the cash shortage top staffers have agreed to go without their pay cheques this month. The admission by Giuliani's camp exposed the risks of his strategy, which aimed to reserve most of its energy and cash for the influential state of Florida and its Jan 29 primary, while rivals began spending heavily and gaining momentum in earlier nominating contests. Republican White House hopeful Mitt Romney, a wealthy Mormon businessman, has already dished out \$17 million dollars of his own, and early last week he divulged that he had reached in his own pocket for more — though he did not say how much — to fund his campaign in the blue-collar state of Michigan. Of all the political aspirants in this year's White House push, Romney, formerly the governor of Massachusetts, has spent the most cash on his campaign. According to his own estimates, as of September 30, 2007, he had spent an average of \$100,000 per day over the first nine months of the year. But with Romney trailing in the polls, the breakout success of Republicans Baptist preacher Mike Huckabee and Arizona Senator John McCain has shown that money is not enough to win the election. Just six months ago, McCain's campaign was widely viewed as dead in the water amid a cash crunch, and Huckabee had raised just \$2 million by the end of September. But McCain surged to victory in New Hampshire and Huckabee surprised the nation with a come-from-nowhere victory in the Iowa nominating caucuses. And in a sign that success just breeds more success, Huckabee raised \$8 million in the last three months of 2007 and two million more in the first weeks of January, just after his Iowa splash.—US election to be the most expensive race in history.