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## **Table of Contents**

### **Gender**

#### **Women & Politics**

Inter-Ministerial Group Launched for Implementation of Gender Agenda  
PML-N Leader Wants Quota for Women on General Seats  
PML-N to File Reference against Laila Muqaddas

#### **Women & Economics**

US Grants Funds for Women's Development  
Seminar on Gender Responsive Budget  
3500 Lady Livestock Workers to be Hired by Federal Government

#### **Women & Laws**

NA Refers 8 Private Bills to Standing Committees to Cope Violence against Women and Children

#### **Girl Education**

UNICEF Hands-Over Three New Girls Schools to AJK Government  
Girls' School Blown-Up in Bannu

#### **Articles/Reports/Books on Gender**

Report on the Status of Women Police Station

### **HR Watch**

#### **Women & HR Issues**

Death Penalty for Kids, Women Abolished  
39 more Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Centres for Victims of Violence  
68 Women Burnt in Lahore in First Quarter of 2009  
Sherry Denounces Domestic Violence in Kashmore  
Woman Member of Afghan Council Slain by Taliban

#### **Child Rights**

36 Child Rehab Centres Planned Across Country  
Data Collection System on Crimes against Children, Women Launched

#### **Other HR Issues**

Human Rights Situation Worsened in 2008: HRC Report  
3.6m Kiln Workers Facing Scourge of Bonded Labour

### **Democracy Watch**

#### **Government Watch -Political Governance**

Federal Cabinet  
Accountability Commission  
Draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2009  
Provincial Government of Punjab  
Judiciary

## **Government Watch – Economic Governance**

### Reports and Statistics on State of Economy

Donors' Financial Assistance  
BISP Updates

## **Government Watch – Local Governance**

Provinces can Amend LG Laws  
Regular Courts will Work Beside Qazi Courts in Swat

## **Election Watch**

ANP Retains PF-1 Seat in By-Polls  
Former Allies Contribute to Each Other's Defeat in By-Polls

## **Regional Politics & Election Watch**

### **Pakistan's Foreign Relations**

Zardari Meets Iranian VP, Finland PM, Chinese Investors to Uplift the Country's Economy  
Federal Cabinet Approved Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline Project  
Zardari, Gilani Urge Better Relations with Philippines  
US Senate Okays \$4bn Increase in Aid to Pakistan

### **Ongoing Indian Parliamentary Elections**

Three Phases of Indian Election Ended  
Indian Party Leaders Too Old: Poll Opinion  
Congress Cashes-In on 'Distorted' Facts in Advani Autobiography  
India's All-Important Muslim Vote

### **Upcoming Presidential Elections in Afghanistan**

Allies Ponder How to Plan Elections in Afghanistan  
Watchdog Wants Warlords Barred from Afghan Presidency

### **Post-Election Scenario in Bangladesh**

Hasina Threatens to Evict Archrival Khaleda  
UN and Other Charities Receive Death Threats in Bangladesh

### **Political Crisis in Thailand**

Thailand State of Emergency Lifted

### **Indonesian Elections**

Indonesian Voters Lose Faith in Religious Parties  
Indonesian President's Party Leads in Polls

## Gender

### Women & Politics

#### **Inter-Ministerial Group Launched for Implementation of Gender Agenda**

To develop coordinated strategies for implementation of government's gender agenda in light of national and international commitments, an inter-ministerial group of provincial ministers for women development was launched on April 9. The announcement was made at a meeting organized by Women Development Department (WDD) of Pakhtoonkhwa in collaboration with UNIFEM. High-level officials including Ministers for Women Development from Balochistan, Pakhtoonkhwa and Sindh and secretary Women Development Department of Punjab attended the meeting. In their respective speeches, the ministers shared information on the on-going projects, their results and policies. They also discussed preliminary scope and parameters of the group and discussed ways to strengthen WDDs in order to achieve gender equality and women empowerment. To ensure continuity of the initiative even after any change in government, the ministers also signed a joint declaration. The group will also undertake joint leadership capacity building measures and trainings for advising and implementing national and international commitments. The basic purpose of the inter-ministerial group is to provide a platform to provincial governments where they can share information and learn from experiences from each other. The group will also enable the ministries to assume a stronger role towards ensuring women empowerment and gender equality within their respective provinces.

The meetings of the group would be held on a quarterly basis in each provincial capital in rotation. The Minister for Women Development from each province will act as the chairperson of the group for a period of one year while the relevant provincial secretary will act as the secretary of the inter-ministerial group. Participants of the meeting nominated Sitara Ayaz Minister for Women Development of Pakhtoonkhwa as the first Chairperson of the group. She pointed out that International partners working with WDDs and the Ministry of Women Development will extend technical support to the group in terms of providing technical assistance, expertise and trainings. This group will, however, organise its quarterly meetings from its own resources. According to her every province had launched a variety of culture-friendly projects with an aim to empower women in their respective areas, and our focus is to implement the already existing legislation while side by side drafting new ones to provide security to women especially those living in rural areas. Fatima Bhutto Tauqir Provincial Minister for Women Development of Sindh stated that their ministry was successfully providing legal and financial help to violence victims through volunteers and our institution has also presented an amendment bill in the assembly under which honor killing will be considered murder. Ghazala Gola Minister for Women Development of Balochistan projected the problems faced by women in all provinces were more or less the same but their dynamics and intensity was different. She realized that the bringing change to the mindset was a slow process and the group would play an important role in implementation of the initiatives undertaken by provinces.

*(The News-April 9, 2009)*

#### **PML-N Leader Wants Quota for Women on General Seats**

PML-N Vice President Senator Syed Zafar Ali Shah on April 22 called for a quota for women on general seats in addition to the seats already reserved for them, while speaking at a workshop for the PML-N Women Wing, organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Senator Shah explained that the party should allocate more tickets to women for general seats because it would help widen the scope of women's political participation. Claiming that women are better than men in reaching out to the masses he added that the party would benefit if they had more representation on constitutional institutions as well as the party's decision-making bodies. On the

question of how women will bear the expenses of contesting general elections, Senator Shah also uttered that it is also difficult for men to bear the costs of election but the answer to financial constraints for the candidates lies in stronger parties that can finance campaigns for their candidates. The two-day workshop was last in the series of five being organized by NDI as part of its programme to strengthen women's participation in political parties. Around fifty senior representatives of the PML-N women's wing from all four provinces and the federal capital, including MNAs, senators, provincial and district level executives, participated in the workshop.

Begum Ishrat Ashraf Central President of the PML-N Women's Wing MNA urged women to use the opportunity of the party reorganization to reach out to more women to join the party. She noted that the more women are organized the more they get power and important positions also speaking of financial constraints, she pointed out that fundraising should be the party's responsibility and asked for suggestions on how the women's wing could raise its own funds.

Najma Hamid Provincial President PML-N Women's Wing Punjab Senator and President Federal Capital MNA Nuzhat Amir also spoke on the occasion. Women from NWFP and Balochistan, including a young participant from Fata, reported that increasing militancy and the worsening law and order situation in both provinces have limited their ability to continue political work. However, they added, they are not deterred and continue organizing women and conducting political activities despite the risks and threats to their personal safety. The participants developed detailed plans to strengthen their women's wing and to ensure more representation on their parties' decision-making bodies. The plans are part of a National Action Plan developed in December last year by women from five political parties including PPP, PML-N, PML-Q, ANP, and MQM as a way to ensure women can play their due role in a democratic political environment. The National Action Plan sets out standards to strengthen women's wings and increase women's representation on all party decision making bodies.

Sheila Fruman NDI Country Director highlighted that women have time and again demonstrated their ability and commitment to play an active political role as party members, election campaigners, polling agents and public representatives. She explained with the new opportunities for democratic development in Pakistan, it was in the parties' own interest to encourage a greater role for women because they represent more than half of the voters.

*(The News - April 23, 2009)*

### **PML-N to File Reference against Laila Muqaddas**

PML-N will file a disqualification reference against its MPA Laila Muqaddas for crossing floor to join PPP. Provincial law minister Rana Sanaullah Khan has been directed to prepare and file the reference against the MPA. Party's Punjab chapter president Sirdar Zulfikar Khosa also confirmed that the party's decision to file reference while attending a reception held on April 7 for the Chief Minister's newly-appointed advisers Raja Ashfaq Sarwar and Begum Zakiya Shahnawaz. Muqaddas, elected on a PML-N seat reserved for women, had during the Governor's rule in the province changed her loyalties and announced support for the PPP. Also she had claimed to have the support of 27 other PML-N MPAs. Khosa also commented that Liala Musadaq could be called a forward woman and not a forward bloc of the PML-N.

*(The Nation - April 7, 2009)*

## **Women & Economics**

### **US Grants Funds for Women's Development**

The United States State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on April 2 granted \$100,256 to Pakistan's Kashf Foundation for the economic development of women. This grant will be used to launch a micro-finance programme for women in rural areas, allowing them to become self-sufficient and financially independent, the US embassy confirmed in a statement. Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Jacob J Lew explained that the grant would bolster the organisation's ongoing efforts to promote Pakistani women's access to

economic opportunities, nationally and internationally. Empowering women to participate politically, socially, and economically will have lasting, positive impacts on their families and communities. The grant was part of the US-funded 'One Woman' Initiative that Kashf Foundation would implement within 12 months. The project would also conduct an empowerment study of new clients. The 'One Woman' Initiative exemplifies a dynamic public-private partnership which the US government is proud to be a part of, he added. The initiative, launched in May 2008, is an international women's empowerment fund administered by a public-private sector effort, co-chaired by the State Department and USAID.

*(Daily Times - April 2, 2009)*

### **Seminar on Gender Responsive Budget**

To mainstream gender dimension into all stages of the budget cycle, a pre-budget seminar on 'Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)' was organized at the Planning Commission auditorium by Gender Development Section, Finance Division, under the National Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP), the seminar was attended by government officials, representatives of development sector, civil society members and media persons. The basic objective of the seminar was to share government's vision for strengthening gender mainstreaming in the budgeting process, to discuss the impact of gender responsive budgeting and to develop an understanding of Medium Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) to be more responsive towards government's strategic objectives. The speakers included Deputy Team Leader for MTBF Noman Ishtiaq, National Project Manager Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative Sajjad Ahmed Shiekh, Project Director GRAP Rehana Hashmi, Additional Finance Secretary Asif Bajwa and Joint Secretary External Finance and Policy Rana Assad Amin. Dr Aliya H Khan moderated the discussion followed by introductory speeches made by the speakers. The participants were told that the MTBF that was meant to enhance fiscal discipline and improve budgetary management system would also ensure inclusion of gender-disaggregated data wherever possible. The countries that have modernized their budgeting procedures along these lines have achieved higher efficiency and effectiveness in public spending and improved service delivery. The MTBF aimed at putting in place the building blocks for realizing a vision of how the budgetary processes would be managed in future. The key elements of this vision are empowerment of line ministries to manage their budgets, establishment of programmatic structure within line ministries and development of output-based budgeting.

In his inaugural comments, Asif Bajwa discussed that the conceptual design of governmental agencies does not cater to the gender inequalities and disparities existing in the society. It is based on the erroneous assumption that gender inequality doesn't exist and female and male citizens are benefiting from the government policies, programmes and services equally. He pointed out that gender equality was not only a question of social justice but was also necessary for ensuring equitable and sustainable human development, and it is one of the key ingredients for a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that allows harnessing the potential of the segment of a society which hitherto has not been adequately involved in the development of the country and since major socio-economic policies were implemented through annual budgets, it was, therefore, extremely important to ensure engendering the budgetary process, draft/align policy measures and execute programmes aimed at ensuring gender equality. The MTBF will not only enhance fiscal discipline but will also ensure mainstreaming of gender disaggregated-data in all development projects.

*(The New-April 17, 2009)*

### **3500 Lady Livestock Workers to be Hired by Federal Government**

Federal Government has decided to hire 3500 lady livestock workers, like lady health workers, to enhance the livestock and dairy development to meet the increasing demands of dairy products in the country as well as, increase the farmer's income. According to Ministry of Finance these lady-workers will provide the basic awareness of livestock among the rural communities by targeting at least more than 60 families settled among the rural dweller particularly.

*(Express-April, 18 2009)*

## Women & Laws

### **NA Refers 8 Private Bills to Standing Committees to Cope Violence against Women and Children**

The National Assembly on April 14 referred as many as eight private members bills including proposed legislation against heinous crime of acid throwing and legislation on children rights to its standing committees for further deliberations. PML-Q member Marvi Memon moved two bills tagged as Anti Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2009 and the Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2009 focusing on acid burn victims. The draft bill to further amend Anti Terrorism Act, 1997 seeks to bring the trial of perpetrators involved in acid throwing under the preview of anti-terrorist courts. The other draft bill she moved proposed that courts should take into consideration the period of litigation and amount of financial losses faced by the aggrieved party in burn victim cases, and grant compensatory cost according to the circumstances of each case. Her third draft bill calling for life imprisonment and a penalty of Rs 500,000 to those involved in defacing or removing figures of human body was deferred after Parliamentary Affairs Minister Babar Awan raised technical issues including sharia provisions. The government did not oppose her other bill related to violence against women relating to dowry and award of 10 years' imprisonment to those who contract second marriage after concealing the first one. The government opposed two out of three bills moved by Yasmeen Rehman of the ruling PPP. She moved the draft Rights of Juvenile Offenders Bill 2009 to set up special courts to dispose of the cases of children speedily, besides providing better health and education facilities to juvenile prisoners. The bill was referred to the standing committee concerned. Charter of Child Rights Bill 2009 moved by Dr Donya Aziz was also referred to the standing committee concerned for promotion of an enabling environment to the children free of violence, all kinds of abuse and exploitation.

*(Daily Times - April 15, 2009)*

## Girl Education

### **UNICEF Hands-Over Three New Girls Schools to AJK Government**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has handed over to the government of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir three newly constructed girls' primary school buildings built at a total cost of Rs 16.18 million in the earthquake-affected districts of Muzaffarabad and Bagh. These schools were completely destroyed in the 2005 earthquake and educational activities had continued in transitional shelters while Unicef was in process of building seismic resistant permanent structures for these schools. The Government Girls Primary School (GGPS) Nazirpur in district Bagh has been completed at a cost of Rs5.1 million. The GGPS Komi Buthani in district Muzaffarabad has cost Rs5.42 million and the GGPS Pano Pindi, also in district Muzaffarabad, has been constructed at a cost of Rs5.66 million. Each of these schools can accommodate nearly 80 students. Unicef has constructed these schools with financial assistance from the European Union, Australian Aid for International Development, Royal Netherlands Embassy and the Canadian International Development Agency. Since the earthquake in 2005, Unicef has been supporting the governments of Pakistan and AJK in reactivating educational activities in all the five affected districts. So far, 4,039 primary schools catering to 1,684 girls have been provided school tents and supplies. Over 428,000 children have been re-enrolled including 186,000 girls and 36,000 children who were not in school prior to the earthquake. Moreover, 14,750 teachers have been trained in pedagogy, teaching methodology and psychosocial support. In support of the 'Build Back Better' programme of the government, Unicef is committed to build 63 seismic resistant permanent school buildings in the affected districts. Of these 31 schools have been completed and handed over to the education departments in NWFP and AJK.

*(The News - April 17, 2009)*

### **Girls' School Blown-Up in Bannu**

Unidentified men blew up a girls' school in Jahangir Khel in the precincts of Miryan Police Station on Sunday. Police sources said the men had placed explosives in the building of the Government Girls' School, damaging it. No casualties were reported.

*(Daily Times - April 6, 2009)*

## Reports/Articles/Books on Gender

### **Report on the Status of Women Police Station**

Dr. Fehmida Mirza, Speaker National Assembly, expressed that discrimination against women in our society was impeding the pace of progress and it was high time to ensure equal opportunities to women in social, political and economic spheres of life, she pointed out while launching a report on the status of women police station compiled by a Committee of Women Parliamentarian Caucus in the Parliament House, on April 16, Beside presiding residing over the meeting of the General Body of Women Parliamentary Caucus, the Speaker highlights that women in our society particularly in the rural areas are confronting severe problems regarding education, healthcare and employment and denying women of their due rights was hampering our economic progress and tarnishing our image abroad. The Speaker stressed over the attitudinal change was needed to bring the womenfolk to the main stream such as policing. She also admire the working of women police stations in Pakistan were great phenomenon and achievement of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto that she established for protection of women rights, securing them against violence and where women would seek justice with fear or any gender discrimination. The Speaker announced that the report regarding women police station would be sent to the Interior Ministry and all provincial governments as recommendations to bring betterment in women policing in the country, and she has recommended allocation of more funds, better service structure, attractive environment and better salaries for the women police in the country. The implementation of the recommendations of the Parliamentary Caucus will go a long way in improving women policing, ensuring quick dispensation of justice to women and elimination of violence against women in the country.

*(The Nation-April 17, 2009)*

#### **Death Penalty for Kids, Women Abolished**

The Lahore High Court on April 17 abolished death sentence to the extent of under-trial women and children arrested in narcotics cases while enhanced sentences for previous convicts. A full bench held this while laying down new principles to remove discrepancies and bring uniformity in different sentences being awarded under Control of Narcotic Substance Act 1997. The court, however, observed that the trial courts only in cases containing special features could depart from these principles but then they would have to write down reasons for such departure. The discrepancies in the law came to fore when a division bench during the hearing of an appeal of convict found that he was awarded only two years sentence in section 9-C (minimum punishment up to 14 years) of CNSA, 1997. With observation that it a meagre punishment, the DB referred the matter to chief justice to form a larger bench so that a uniform sentencing policy could be formulated in narcotics cases for guidance of trial courts.

The CJ had formed a full bench comprising Justice Asif Saeed Khan Khosa, Justice Tariq Shamim and Justice MA Zafar. The bench further held in its 14 pages judgement that a previous convict should be awarded 1/3 more sentence of imprisonment and fine. In case his sentence exceeds (after calculating as per laid down principles) the maximum punishment prescribed by law would be awarded but the fine would be doubled. However, women and children on account of their gender and tender age are to award 1/3 less sentence of imprisonment and fine in default of payment of fine than the normal sentence however this sentence would be simple in nature. In case a woman or a child is a previous convict then they would be handed down same sentence that of previous male convict. But it would be simple imprisonment however, death penalty would not be given to women and children even they are previous-convict.

*(The Nation - April 11, 2009)*

#### **39 more Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Centres for Victims of Violence**

The Federal Government will establish 39 more Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Centres for Women in various district to provide temporary shelter, psychological counseling, medical and legal aid and micro credit and shall training, for rehabilitation of women who are victims of violence. According to the Ministry for Women Development, funds allocation to establish more 39 Women Centres will be made in the budget of financial year 2009-10 as project proposals are being finalized by the Planning Division. The Ministry has already established 25 Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Centers for Women at district level during the current financial year for providing facilities including shelter and rehabilitation of women, who are victims of violence, at local level.

*(The Post - April 26, 2009)*

#### **68 Women Burnt in Lahore in the First Quarter of 2009**

According to data available with the AGHS Legal Aid Cell revealed that 68 women were burnt in Lahore in the first three months of 2009. A statement issued by the cell confirmed that eight women were burnt in acid attacks, while 60 were set ablaze. Expressing grief over the growing number of burnt victims in Pakistan, the cell condemned the brutal attacks on women and it was a reflection of the government's failure to stop violence against women and recorded figures were probably a tip of the iceberg, as 49 cases in Lahore alone were reported in the local press. Most cases went unreported for various social reasons. AGHS pointed out the tendency was rising and culprits went unpunished and demands that burning women alive was a barbarous act, and it should not be tolerated at any cost. The cell condemned such inhuman acts and demanded proper protection for burn victims.

*(Daily Times - April 15, 2009)*

### **Sherry Denounces Domestic Violence in Kashmore**

Former Minister for Information Sherry Rehman on April 6 condemned an incident of domestic violence in Kashmore district of Sindh in which a husband chopped off the nose of his wife on suspicion of illicit relations with a relative. A house hold lady, Aasia Mamdani, a resident of Kashmore, was brutalized by her husband, who accused her of having illicit relations with her relative. The victim is under treatment at Sukkur Civil Hospital. Condemning the incident, Rehman stated that domestic violence continued to pose a serious threat to the security of women within the confines of their house and there is an urgent need to address the issue of domestic violence through enactment and enforcement of an appropriate legislation. She pointed out the rising gender discrimination in society and closing eyes to the unequal power relations between man and woman in the domestic setting would amount to encouraging the serious crime that lay at the center of gender inequality in the society, and also commented over the incident's report that Aasia's husband had also threatened his first wife and sister-in-law with killing, In fact that he was living in freedom despite his involvement in two murder cases is a cause of concern for advocates of justice. How could Aasia's husband escape conviction and go on to commit his third crime if he should have been put behind the bars in account of his very first murder? She noticed the incident seriously and called for the parliament, the political forces, the civil society and the media needed to step up their efforts to address domestic violence crimes; Particularly, Such acts can't be ignored as 'private affairs' when they threaten the lives of our women, and she demanded from the lawmaking institutions to develop a concrete response and solid solutions to address the issue. This needs broad efforts on the social level to raise awareness and discredit the perpetrators of such crimes to ensure that they lose their social position and authority when they commit such brutalities against women.

*(Daily Times - April 8, 2009)*

### **Woman Member of Afghan Council Slain by Taliban**

Taliban gunmen on motorbikes gunned down a woman provincial legislator in Afghanistan on April 11, Ahmad Wali Karzai brother of President Hamid Karzai, a council head confirmed the incident of killing of Sitara Achikzai, a high schoolteacher and women's rights activist in her 50s, was shot dead outside her home in the city of Kandahar. In the mean while, a spokesman for the Taliban movement, Yousuf Ahmadi, admitted responsibility of the incident and conveyed by telephone that his militia had carried out the assassination, and also blamed that Sitara Achikzai was targeted because she did not have a good background, without explaining what this meant. She had returned from years' exile in Germany with her husband, a doctor and university lecturer, to work in the city. The Taliban had restrictive policies against women when they were in government between 1996 and 2001, including barring them from work outside of the home, have carried out similar assassinations in Kandahar. They admitted to killing the country's most high-profile female police officer in the city last year and are also suspected of the 2006 assassination of head of the provincial women's affairs department.

*(The Nation - April 12, 2009)*

## **Child Rights**

### **36 Child Rehabilitation Centres Planned across Country**

Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education is reconsidering the project of establishing 36 Child Protection Centres (CPCs) across the country, a programme, which was earlier shelved due to non-availability of the required funds. Last year due to the severe financial crunch, the ministry was forced to drop the project worth Rs 500 million. But now Samina Khalid Ghurkii, Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education, has planned to request the Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani to release the required amounts from his discretionary fund said a ministry official. Presently, only five CPCs exist in Pakistan which have the insufficient capacity to provide protection to the destitute children. Therefore, the Ministry is planning to enhance the number of such centers, especially in areas where there is high crime rate against children. The centres would be established at district level on the pattern of National Child Protection Centre Islamabad. The centres would rescue and recover children suffering from violence and abuse and would provide

rehabilitation facilities to them. The official further explained that it's required to comply with international laws bounding Pakistan to bring radical legislation for providing protection to children vulnerable to sexual abuse and all kind of violence. It is pertinent to mention that ministry has embarked on the project at a time when it has finalized both the Child Protection Bill and Policy and is going to submit the same before the cabinet shortly. The Ministry of Social Welfare since past many years is trying to come up with concrete mechanism to protect child rights. But due to the bureaucratic delay it took three years to finalize the much awaited Policy and Bill. The Child Protection Bill seeks to provide requisite statutory status to the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development for effectively performance, supervision and co-ordination of child rights' matters including establishment of Child Rights Fund for protection of children.

*(The Nation - April 11, 2009)*

### **Data Collection System on Crimes against Children, Women Launched**

A new data collection system on crimes against children and women at police stations of NWFP was launched on April 24. Speakers on the occasion underscored the need for credible data for formulation of good policies saying policy formulation in absence of reliable figures was impossible. However, they said, now the policy makers would have access to reliable and official data while framing policies. Chief Guest NWFP Inspector General of Police (IGP) Malik Naveed Khan in his speech said that a Juvenile Justice Working Group (JJWG) had also been formed that would review the laws for children to identify weaknesses and problems. He also stressed the need to set-up child and women protection centre with cooperation of other stakeholder without official patronage to provide shelter t under trial children and women instead of keeping them in police lockups. He said that it would provide a child-and-women friendly environment to inmates. He said that the ongoing militancy and its coverage on media was exposing children to violence. Elders could express themselves but children could not and it was having bad impacts on their psyche. He asked the researchers to conduct research on violations of child rights in conflict-ridden areas and conduct detailed surveys on psychological, mental and social impacts of violence on children. He also stressed the need for introduction of restorative justice system as criminal and legal system had a huge load. It would provide a platform to public to resolve their disputes out of courts and police stations. He said Frontier Police had taken an initiative in this regard.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) representative Huma Chughtai said on the occasion that reform spirit in police department could end several wrong things. She called for establishing protection committees and centres for women and children to provide psychological counseling to those having a problem under law. She said that usually society did not accept the women who had been to jail and such centres were necessary for rehabilitation. She said that police should be informed about discriminatory laws against women during training as such steps would increase the confidence of public in police.

Central Police Office (CPO) Director Research Fasihuddin briefed the participants about the new system. He said that a police station has 25 registers under 1934 police rules; however, now new printed registers would be placed at police stations to document violence against children and women. NWFP Director Human Rights, representatives of UNICEF, Save the Children and other human rights organizations also spoke on the occasion.

*(Daily Times - April 25, 2009)*

## **Other HR Related Issues**

### **Human Rights Situation Worsened in 2008: HRCP Report**

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan on Aril 6, released the report, titled 'State of Human Rights in 2008, report reveals that the new government allowed greater freedom of assembly, expression and movement and a new law on industrial relations freed trade unions from some of the curbs imposed by the previous regime, but women continued to suffer more than the rest of the population at the hands of Taliban, and on account of inhuman customs and traditions. While election results of 2008 made it abundantly clear that the militants enjoyed very little support

amongst the voters, militants' sway and religious tolerance spread unchecked, it added. The lot of victims of forced disappearances did not change as citizens continued to face harassment by state agents and terrorists alike.

**Terrorism Across the Country:** The report maintained that terrorism remained one of the major problems. At least 67 suicide attacks killed 973 people and injured 2,318 across the country. The number of terrorist attacks in the NWFP alone was 1,016, including 37 suicide bombings in which 961 people lost their lives and 1,698 sustained injuries. At least 289 people were killed in police encounters, 73 of which took place in Karachi alone, while 186 individuals were recovered from illegal police custody. Lahore accounted for 119 of them.

**State of Violence Against Women:** Report stressed that women remained subject to violence in the society such as, 1,210 were killed for various reasons, including 612 for honour. Over eight hundred were sexually harassed, 350 raped, 45 gang-raped and 13 were stripped, according to HRCP. Domestic violence killed 185 women, with four recorded instances of amputation. At least 138 women were injured and 30 killed as a result of burnings and the number of acid burn victims was 37. Continued targeting of girls' schools and teachers in Taliban-infested areas, especially Swat and Dir, and places affected by conflict between local militants and the army caused immense setbacks to women's education.

**State of Juvenile Victimization:** According to report at least 114 children were killed for various reasons, including for honour and karo-kari, and at least 221 girls and several hundred boys were reported to have been raped, gang-raped, subjected to sodomy or stripped in public. The country's national report on child sexual abuse and exploitation revealed approximately 700,000 children lived and worked on the streets of major cities. The failure to implement the National Plan for Action for the Elimination of Child Labour, which was introduced in 2001, meant that child labour and their exploitation continued unchecked.

About **freedom of thought, conscience and religion**, the report concludes that members of religious minorities were targeted because of their faith. Three Ahmadis were killed in September after a popular television channel declared that killing Ahmadis was permissible under Islamic norms. In Kurram tribal agency, clashes between members of Sunni and Shia sects led to over 1,000 deaths. The situation of **freedom of expression**, the HRCP report stressed that nine journalists were killed and one committed suicide, four were kidnapped and two went missing. At least 34 journalists were arrested in different parts of Sindh under anti-terrorism and anti-riot provisions in the wake of Benazir Bhutto's assassination. The report claimed that working journalists and other employees in the print and electronic media continued to face job insecurity along with hardship due to non-payment of earned wages by a large number of media managements. About **freedom of assembly and movement**, it said the campaign for general elections was hampered by government restrictions and threats of violence by militants though lawyers and members of civil society continued to hold rallies across the country, including a long march on Islamabad in June, to press the government to restore the deposed judges. About political participation, serious impediments to democratic electoral process were documented as 130 people were killed in politically-motivated attacks in the pre-election period. Differences within coalition partners at the centre emerged over the PPP's reluctance to honor its word on pre-emergency judiciary, leading the PML-N to pull out its members from the federal cabinet in May 2008. Report divulges over the distressing economic conditions of the textile sector across the country as well and particularly, the adverse economic conditions in all sectors of the economy affected employment prospects of the workforce and led to large-scale layoffs and in consequences of that 500,000 workers employed by textile industry lost their jobs because energy shortages had affected production.

**State of Elementary Education:** Report also focused the education sector and highlights that of 4,575 primary schools in the public sector in Fata, 1,777 were without basic facilities, including drinking water, toilets, and electricity and boundary walls. It said of 57,000 schools across Sindh, over 8,000 were ghost schools while nearly 6.5 million children in the age group of five to nine

remained out of schools, over 2.6 million in the NWFP. According to report the government had claimed that 14,656 madressahs had been registered, leaving between 1,000 and 1,500 institutions all over the country unregistered, but the issue of incorporating federal education boards' syllabus into the madressah course had not been settled.

**Public Health Issues:** Report reveals that at least 96 polio cases were registered, and one doctor was available for every 1,225 persons, while deforestation and environmental degradation due to land use for road expansion, development schemes and housing societies contributed to the declining health levels in the country. On the other way at least 2,528 people, including 1,725 men and 803 women, committed suicide in 2008. The ratio suggests that seven people commit suicide in Pakistan every day.

**State of Jails across the Country:** The report also depicted a gloomy picture of state of jails as around 7,500 condemned prisoners were on death row and 237 people were awarded the death penalty. Thirty-six were executed last year. The capacity of 20 jails in Sindh was 9,000 but over 20,000 prisoners were kept there, while 59,000 prisoners were detained in 32 prisons across the country meant for detaining no more than 21,000, the report revealed. At least 76 prisoners died in jails and 293 foreigners, including convicted and under-trial prisoners, were detained in jails in Punjab alone.

*(Dawn – April 7, 2009)*

### **3.6m Kiln Workers facing Scourge of Bonded Labour**

About 3.6 million men, women and children are still doing bonded labour at brick kilns despite the Supreme Court judgment of 1992 for abolition of bonded labour. The poor labourers and their family members are sold like animals to other kilns owners if their services are not required any more at one work place and they are kept in private jails. Inter-province sale of bonded labour is also common. General Secretary Syed Ghulam Fatima and Executive Member Mahar Safdar Ali, Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF) and Pakistan Workers Confederation President Muhammad Yaqoob pointed out the terrible scenarios of bounded labour during an interview on April 25. The BLLF office bearers explained that most of the kilns were owned by MNAs, MPAs or their relatives and therefore the state machinery remains silent on the miserable plight of the kilns labourers and their families. The government formed district vigilance committees under DCOs to check bonded labour but the committees are non-functional for the last nine years. BLLF officials also demanded the political parties should not give tickets to such persons as are involved in bonded labour and the same restriction is to be included in the manifestos of all the political parties to end the modern form of slavery. In bonded labour, women are subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse by owners and their toddies. The young girls of labourers are kidnapped and raped often while the police take no action.

*(The Post – April 26, 2009)*

# Democracy Watch

## Government Watch -Political Governance

### Federal Cabinet

#### **Three New Federal Ministers Sworn-In**

President Asif Ali Zardari administered the oath to the ministers. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Interior Rehman Malik was sworn in as interior minister, Senator Babar Ghouri of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement as ports and shipping minister and Senator Waqar Ahmed Khan was sworn in as investment minister. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, Senate Chairman Farooq Naik, Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer, cabinet ministers, diplomats and federal secretaries also attended the ceremony.

*(The News - April 28, 2009)*

### Accountability Commission

#### **Government to Replace NAB with Accountability Commission**

The government has decided to abolish the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and replace it with the Holder of Public Offices Accountability Act 2009, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Babar Awan elaborated the details here on April 12 while addressing a press conference, the proposed bill would be tabled in the current session of the National Assembly for debate and would be approved by parliament if a consensus were achieved. The government would welcome suggestions and positive amendments in the bill. Explaining the bill's features; an accountability commission would be set up which would consist of prosecution and investigation department. Babar also pointed out in order to make the commission transparent, the chairman would be a serving judge of the Supreme Court, or retired judge or a lawyer who met the specified criteria. Two deputy chairmen would also be appointed whose qualification would be equal to a high court judge, and the government has decided to abolish NAB in accordance with the Charter of Democracy.

*(Daily Times - April 13, 2009)*

### Draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2009

#### **Chapter on Islamic Education Dropped from New Education Policy**

The government has omitted the whole chapter of Islamic education and other Islamic provisions from the draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2009, awaiting the cabinet's approval for implementation. The draft policy was to be considered by the federal cabinet in its meeting on April 8 but the Prime Minister decided to take it up for consideration and approval in its next cabinet as most of the ministers had not read the draft policy. Comparison between the National Education Policy 1999 and the draft NEP 2009, which would be implemented for another decade, shows that the Chapter III of the 1999 policy that was precisely dedicated for Islamic education is simply excluded from the draft 2009 policy. Besides, some Islamic provisions included in the 1999 policy's Chapter II 'Aims and Objectives' have also been excluded. The draft policy 2009, also available on the official website of the Ministry of Education, merely includes one Islamic provision in its Chapter II — Overarching Challenges and Responses — which reads as: "The National Education Policy recognises the importance of Islamic values and adheres to the agreed principles in this regard. All policy interventions shall fall within the parameters identified in the Principles of Policy as laid down in Articles 29, 30, 33, 36, 37 and 40 of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973. These include the need for Muslim children to be provided instructions in Islamiyat to enable them to develop themselves as good Muslims. Similarly, minorities should be provided with facilities to get education of their own religion. The provisions of Chapter II Aims and Objectives of the NEP 1999, which did not make a part of the draft NEP 2009, include: The state shall endeavour: To make the teachings of the Holy Qur'aan and Islamiat compulsory; (ii) to encourage and facilitate the learning of Arabic

language; (iii) to secure correct and exact printing and publishing of the Holy Qur'aan; iv) to promote unity and the observance of the Islamic moral standards.

Education Ministry spokesman said the main work on the draft NEP 2009 was done during General Musharraf's tenure while in the present regime it was once discussed by the federal and provincial education ministers, excluding Punjab, which did have an Education Minister. The spokesman said that none of the provinces had objected to the exclusion of the Islamic provisions and a complete chapter on Islamic education from the existing NEP 1999. The spokesman dispelled the impression that this exclusion would have been done owing to some foreign pressures. He added that the Islamiyat and other Islamic education was part of our curriculum so it did not matter if it was not reflected in detail and as such in the policy. During Musharraf's tenure, even the Islamic part of curriculum was greatly changed that led to controversies and protests. It was said that besides removing Qur'aanic reference about Jihad, Islamic teaching about freedom, biographies of Islamic heroes and ideology of Pakistan were removed from the syllabi of different education boards by the ousted dictator to please Washington.

*(The News - April 9, 2009)*

### **Education Policy 2009 – Body Formed to Make Recommendations**

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Education has formed a sub-committee, which would formulate its recommendations on Education Policy 2009. The seven member sub-committee under the convenership of former Education Minister, Zubaida Jalal would prepare proposals to make the draft of the policy comprehensive and affective. The sub-committee would also formulate suggestions to enhance education budget of Balochistan to increase literacy rate in the province and its recommendations would be included in the policy. Abid Sher Ali, the Chairman of the Committee, also asked the State Minister for Education to Ghulam Farid Kathia to present the Education policy in the National Assembly to initiate the debate.

Education Secretary, Abdur Rauf Chaudhary giving briefing on the policy to the members of the committee said that special emphasis has been given to Islamic education in the policy and Islamiyat would be made compulsory for Class I and II. From Class III to XII the students would be taught Islamiyat would be taught alongwith the Paras of Holy Quran.

*(The Nation – April 22, 2009)*

Draft Education Policy 2009 is available on following link:

[http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Pakistan/Pakistan\\_National\\_education\\_policy2009.pdf](http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Pakistan/Pakistan_National_education_policy2009.pdf)

## **Provincial Government of Punjab**

### **Tahir Javed Elected Forward Bloc Leader**

The PML-N on April 6 stamped its authority over the PML-Q forward bloc when it got Dr Tahir Ali Javed elected parliamentary leader of the bloc, sidelining high-profile Atta Muhammad Maneka, sensing his defeat, a disgruntled Maneka withdrew from the race and let Dr Tahir, a former provincial health minister. According to party sources, Mr Maneka has been promised senior ministry in case the PPP sits in the opposition. A strong group within the PML-N, led by Sardar Zulfiqar Ali Khosa, has been opposed to Atta Maneka's is being given charge of the bloc. Mr Maneka, being a tough bargainer and having strong political roots, has been problem for some senior party leaders. As opposed to Mr Maneka, Tahir Ali Javed had been instrumental in luring many deserters to the Nawaz league, especially the Cheemas from Sargod.

The party senses that even if the PPP does not join the cabinet, most of the forward bloc members would not be accommodated which may cause desertions backwards. In that case, a high-profile and media savvy Maneka could cause trouble for the party. Mr Javed had so far proven to be the most pliant ally of the PML-N for taking instruction quietly and spiritedly executing them. That's why the party felt more secure with him rather than anyone else. It could be termed a win-win situation for both of them. In fact, the amalgamation of the forward bloc would not be a smooth ride for the PML-N, according to another leader of the PML-N. Some members of the bloc had

unresolved issues with the banks which could also prove a political embarrassment for the party. In that scenario, a person like Atta Maneka could be an added problem.

*(The Nation - April 7, 2009)*

## **Judiciary**

### **SC Gets 4 More Judges: Justice Khawaja Sharif Appointed LHC CJ**

Acting on recommendations by the chief justice of Pakistan, President Asif Ali Zardari on April 12 appointed four more Supreme Court (SC) judges and a new chief justice (CJ) of the Lahore High Court (LHC). The President appointed Khawaja Muhammad Sharif as the LHC Chief Justice to replace Justice Zahid Hussain, who has been appointed an SC judge. The other three judges appointed to the SC are former Sindh High Court judge Ghulam Rabbani and former LHC judges Muhammad Said Ali and MA Shahid Siddiqui. With the appointment of four new judges, the SC strength has increased to 29, as approved in the finance bill in June 2008. Meanwhile, the president also restored three retired SC judges to the positions they were holding immediately before the November 2007 emergency. The restored judges are Justice Rana Bhagwandas, Justice Falak Sher and Justice Ghulam Rabbani. According to the notification, the restoration of the three retired judges is for the purpose that they may draw their salaries and other benefits during the intervening period as per their entitlement in accordance with the law. The newly-appointed judges of the SC as well as LHC chief justice are expected to take oath April 20. According to a press release, the President has reiterated his commitment to the independence of the judiciary.

*(Daily Times - April 13, 2009)*

### **Judicial Body Bars Judges' Appointment as Acting Governors**

The National Judicial (Policy Making) Committee (NJPMC) decided on April 19 that no Chief Justice or Judge from superior courts would accept appointment as acting governor of any province in future. A two-day meeting of the NJPMC, which concluded, also decided that superior courts' judges would not accept appointment to any other public office in the federal or provincial governments after retirement. The committee considered various issues related to the dispensation of justice, and vowed to uphold the independence of the judiciary. The committee expressed concern over retired judges' appointment to various offices, and indicated that such jobs are not befitting of the status of a judge, and the government should also refrain from making such offers, and called on retired judges appointed to various offices to reconsider their position. Highlighting its point, the committee referred to a constitutional provision which states, a former judge of the Supreme Court or a high court should not hold the office of profit in the service of Pakistan – not being judicial or quasi judicial office of the chief election commissioner or of a chairman or member of the Law Commission or of chairman or member of the Council of Islamic Ideology – before the expiry of two years after his retirement ... no retired judge of the superior court shall therefore, accept appointment to an ex-cadre post which is lower than his status. The committee recommended that the government relieve such judges of their services, and called on the judges to consider resigning from their posts. The committee also recommended that appointment of retired judicial officers to special courts should be discouraged, and as per the requirement of the principle of the independence of the judiciary, qualified serving judges should be appointed to such posts in consultation with chief justices of high courts. The meeting also took notice of complaints against judicial officers and court staff allegedly involved in corruption, and threw its support behind the chief justice's policy of zero tolerance on graft. It was decided that high courts would improve the current mechanism for launching disciplinary proceedings against those involved in corruption, and complaints against corruption should preferably be reported to chief justices of high courts, for prompt action. It also, however, directed to bar members and the general public to support their claims with credible evidence. The meeting decided to establish Cell for Eradication of Corruption from Judiciary under the supervision of high courts' registrars. Complaints with credible evidence would be forwarded to this cell, and a copy would be sent to the Supreme Court registrar, it was decided.

*(Daily Times - April 20, 2009)*

## **Reports and Statistics on State of Economy**

### **Pakistan Suffered \$6bn Terror War Losses in 2007-08: PIDE**

Pakistan has suffered economic losses amounting to \$6 billion during 2007-08 while supporting the global war on terror, Dr Hafiz Pasha, heading a panel of Planning Commission economists, pointed out on April 1 while addressing the Pakistan Institute of Development Economists' (PIDE) 24th annual general meeting, he added that the calculation of losses was based on a US model Washington was using to work out terror war expenses in its own country. The loss to the economy, according to the government of Pakistan, is over \$8 billion and the US should double the funds being given to Pakistan for its support to the war on terror in view of the massive losses. He also explained the prevailing economic situation of the country is 'not very positive', as tax collection had fallen, imports were very high, real effecting exchange rate was functioning at the level pf last-year.

*(Daily Times - April 2, 2009)*

### **Textile Sector Posts 23% Growth in Profits despite Declining Exports**

Amid declining exports, textile sector posted handsome growth of 23 percent in its profits, which indicates the viability of the sector in current recessionary economic situation. The growth in the profits of the textile industry has been attributed to substantial growth in the net sales, which reflected that domestic as well as export demand is still buoyant for textile products although economic crisis in the world hit USA and EU markets—major demand drivers of Pakistan textiles. The depreciation of rupee helped rise in export based revenue. The rupee depreciated by around 21 percent in first quarter of current financial year. The high financial cost increasing 100 percent in the period under review dented the earnings of the sector; however it managed to record 23 percent growth in the first half of current fiscal year. Financial cost rose on the back of higher borrowing rates as 6-month KIBOR during the period averaged 14.59 percent, up 458 basis points. Textile exporters said that thought the situation for textile sector is aggravating with the each passing day due to rising cost of production. However, textile exports absorbed these shocks and were able to at least make some profits in such a critical situation. However, they pointed out that this could not be sustained in the long-run if the rising cost of business persisted in the coming days. Moreover, the dampening demand in developed nations is not a good omen for the sector. The performance of textile composite sector was impressive as its net profits grew by 61 percent in the period under review. Due to its rupee orientation, the depreciating rupee boosted revenues of the sector, which reflected 26 percent increase. However 105 percent growth in its financial cost dented its profits heavily, which could have been much higher. The weaving sector posted profits in the period under review compared to same period of previous year, which incurred losses. The growth in net sales and gross margins helped the weaving sector's losses turn into profits. Spinning sector performed poorly during first six months of current fiscal as it recorded losses during this period against the profits of previous year. Though, it registered 13 percent growth in its sales, 102 percent increase in the financing cost dented the profitability of the sector. Analyst pointed out that rupee depreciation made the difference between different sectors of the textile as composite one thrived mainly on account of its export revenue, which rose in rupee terms.

*(Daily Times - April 9, 2009)*

### **IMF, EU Leaders Praise Pakistan's Economic Performance**

In a meeting with Adviser on Finance Shaukat Tareen on April 26, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European leaders commended Pakistan's economic achievements made in a short span of time. Tareen, who is leading a high-level Pakistani delegation to the annual World Bank-IMF spring gathering, held productive meetings with IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss Kahn, Deputy Managing Director Murilo Portugal and the ministers from Germany, Britain, France, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Kahn, Portugal and UK's Secretary of State for International

Development Douglas Alexander commended Pakistan's achievements made through its homegrown programme of economic reforms.

Wieczorek-Zeul, German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development appreciated the courageous measures taken by Pakistan to correct the macroeconomic imbalances. She reaffirmed Germany's commitment to support the country in overcoming its economic challenges and offered a debt swap for the HIV AIDS and Malaria Global Fund. Mehmet Simsek Turkish Minister of Economy expressed that the two countries agreed to increase the mutual trade volume as well as investment in the business sector. He held constructive meetings with his counterparts from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, and Tareen reiterated that Pakistan would continue its support for the development and stability of Afghanistan. He proposed to set up groups to work on different areas for strengthening bilateral relations. Tareen also suggested availing international assistance for the regional integration projects. Pakistan and Afghanistan agreed to work closely on trade related issues including tariffs and unofficial trade. In the end Tareen briefed his interlocutors about the current economic challenges and the blowback effect of the war on terrorism being faced by Pakistan. Islamabad, he also explained the government is focusing on agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure and poverty reduction for achieving a higher growth rate and a better standard of living for the people as well as mobilizing domestic resources was the key challenge and efforts had to be made to increase revenues to bridge the savings-investment gap and reduce Pakistan's reliance on external borrowing.

*(Daily Times - April 27, 2009)*

## **Donor's Financial Assistance**

### **Friends Pledge \$5bn for Pakistan**

Pakistan secured more than \$5 billion in fresh aid over two years at a donors' conference on April 18 after President Asif Ali Zardari vowed to step up the fight against the Taliban. The pledges, bigger than an expected \$4 billion, reflect the international community's worries that an economic meltdown in Pakistan could fan popular support for Al-Qaeda and other militant groups. The participants also noted concern about the security situation in Pakistan and the impact on development, the investment climate, and growth, co-chairs Japan and the World Bank said in a statement. The new aid is targeted for areas such as health, education, governance and building democracy. World Bank Vice President for South Asia Isabel Guerrero expressed while addressing the conference that it is very important that these development resources are used in a way that they do reach the poor, that they do increase the productivity of Pakistan's economy, so that Pakistan can go back to a high growth path and to poverty reduction. US special envoy Richard Holbrooke lauded the outcome of the donors' gathering, telling reporters it was an extreme success. Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso let know the gathering and was impressed by President Zardari's resolve to combat extremism. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi announced that the next donors' conference would take place in Turkey, and the conference's schedule would be announced after a meeting and consultation with the Turkish foreign minister.

*(Daily Times - April 18, 2009)*

### **Pakistan Priority in New European Commission Plan on Terror**

On the eve of the donors' conference for Pakistan, the European Commission (EC) has adopted a new three-year programme to fight terrorism, trafficking and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The programme includes the first global counter-terrorism measures developed by the Commission together with experts from EU member states. Key priorities are Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as the Sahel region in Africa. The commission has an important role to play in fighting terrorism by supporting capacity building in third-world countries such as Pakistan and in the Sahel region announced by the External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner. The programme includes a significant component to tackle the threat of piracy, in particular in the Gulf of Aden, by enhancing the capacity of coastal states to patrol their own territorial waters and exchange information. Links between terrorism and organised crime are addressed in areas such as drugs trafficking from Latin America to Western Africa, trafficking in small arms and light

weapons, and illicit trafficking in chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material. In the area of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our ambition is to consolidate the work already carried out in the former Soviet Union and focus more on new regions of concern such as the Middle East, South and South-East Asia.

*(Daily Times - April 18, 2009)*

### **IFAD to Allocate Over \$87m for Reducing Rural Poverty**

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has indicated to allocate \$87.5 million under the new country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) for Pakistan over the next five year aimed at rural poverty reduction. The Ifad Executive Board meeting in Rome later this month will approve the new country programme for Pakistan. It is expected that the new resource allocation will be used to finance two to three projects to be selected by the government. Ifad, a specialized UN agency dedicated to eradicating rural poverty, has submitted five projects to the government. The projects are land allocation scheme for poverty eradication in southern Punjab with possibility of including districts in Sindh, Chitral and Northern Areas Development Programme targeting poor households of Chitral and six districts of Northern Areas; Piloting Community Livestock Farms benefiting very small dairy farmers in Punjab, Sindh and the NWFP; Sindh Coastal Area Development project for the 1.2 million households in the coastal Talukas of districts Thatta and Badin; and the Fisheries Development in the Coastal Areas of Balochistan, particularly coastal districts of Gwadar and Lasbela along Makran coast.

According to a report prepared for the executive board meeting, IFAD will focus on areas which it did not emphasize in the preceding COSOP, such as high-value crops, livestock development and market access. Due importance will be accorded to the challenge of climate change, with a focus on climate adaptation. Where applicable, IFAD-funded projects will support the adoption of sustainable land management approaches that take into consideration predicted climate change scenarios and their impact on populations and ecosystems. The main target groups for future IFAD projects are small farmers with limited land and livestock ownership; landless farmers whose survival strategy is based on a combination of on farm and off-farm wage employment; and women-headed households and women in poor households who have little access to resources, services or assets of their own. The report also reveals the overall country situation, especially in security terms, could strongly influence the feasibility of attaining the proposed strategic objectives as well as the poverty impact of the fund's operations which based on IFAD's own experience, continued project support in certain areas and localities of the country may pose significant risks in terms of both design and implementation. Other risks are related to the macro-economic situation and to factors of an operational nature. The COSOP will support the government's strategies and initiatives for rural poverty reduction and in this context IFAD has proposed two strategic objectives aimed at enhancing the access of poor rural men and women to productive assets, skills, services and improved technologies, with particular emphasis on productivity enhancement; and strengthening the capacity of the rural poor to engage in and benefit from local development processes. **Gender equality and the empowerment of women** will be a special area of focus, as will the challenge of climate change. Greater efforts will be made to pursue the important agenda of innovation, policy dialogue and knowledge management.

The IFAD report pointed out a major cause of rural poverty is the highly unequal distribution of assets particularly land and access to water that exists in Pakistan. Because of this skewed distribution of ownership and access to productive assets, much of the direct gains in income from crop production, particularly in the case of irrigated agriculture, accrue to higher-income farmers. Other causes of rural poverty include lack of education, poor access to health services, large family size, gender discrimination and vulnerability to environmental degradation and deterioration of the natural resource base, given that the poor tend to be heavily dependent on such resources.

*(Dawn - April 12, 2009)*

### **World Bank to Provide \$350m for Education**

The World Bank, commended the Punjab Education Development Programme as introduced by the Punjab government, has agreed to provide \$350 million during the next three years. The agreement to this effect was reached in a high level meeting between representatives of the World

Bank and a delegation of the Punjab government comprising the school education secretary, finance special secretary and P&D member. During the meeting the initiatives taken by the Punjab government for the uplift of education sector were highlighted. It was stated that in addition to the measures for the promotion of education, Punjab government has also introduced a number of initiatives, on the directions of the chief minister, to ensure universality as well as quality of education.

*(Daily Times - April 24, 2009)*

### **JICA to Help Improve Health Information System**

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Ministry of Health on April 25 signed record of discussions on launching Technical Cooperation Project for the District Health Information System (DHIS) for evidence based decision making and management. The main purpose of the Technical Cooperation Project on DHIS is to implement a nationwide scale-up strategy for the DHIS and conduct routine operation and budget planning in an evidence based manner through the newly introduced DHIS, nationwide in the country. Ultimately these will improve the health information performance in the country which is critical for achieving better health outcomes. During the three years of Technical Cooperation, JICA will provide Japanese experts in the fields of monitoring and supervision, data collection, data analysis and data use basically to advise the District, Provincial and federal governments concerned to enhance their capacities in implementing the DHIS in a smooth manner across the country

*(The Post - April 26, 2009)*

### **BISP Updates**

#### **BISP to be Expanded with Health, Insurance Benefits for Poor: PM**

Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani on April 11 disclosed that Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will be expanded to cover more deserving poor with additional benefits of health care and insurance while addressing a big gathering of people after performing ground breaking of Aiman Wala Pattan bridge, Multan. He also explained that BISP will be expanded further to cover more deserving people. In addition to MNAs, 8000 BISP forms will also be provided to each MPA to enhance the functionality of BISP programme to provide the insurance and health cover benefit for the poor and the initiative will be taken as per vision of martyred PPP leader Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who wanted to extend maximum possible relief to the deprived segments of society.

*(Daily Times - April 12, 2009)*

#### **Bajaur Taliban Declare BISP Money Haram**

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Bajaur Agency on Aril 5 declared the money provided by the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to women haram and un-Islamic. The TTP also warned the women against getting the BISP support money or having Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) made. This is announcement broadcasted on the Taliban's illegal radio FM channel, according to Bajaur TTP chief Faqir Mohammad inquired the people to stop women in their families from getting their CNICs made as during the process, the women had to come in contact with men, which was considered obscenity according to him and women did not need CNICs and the TTP would not allow them to get the cards.

*(Daily Times - April 6, 2009)*

## **Government Watch – Local Governance**

### **Provinces can Amend LG Laws**

The provincial governments have the preprogrative to amend the local government ordinance (local bodies being a provincial subject) but prior consent of the President is necessary says a constitutional expert. Former Attorney General Malik Muhammad Qayyum told that the local bodies ordinance has been given protection under Schedule 6 of the Constitution and it can be amended with a simple majority after the consent of the President. He said that the provincial subjects are dealt in the provincial assemblies therefore if the President consents to the wish of any provincial

assembly to make any amendment in the local bodies ordinance then it is up to the provincial assemblies to amend it the way they like.

Federal Minister for Local Governments and Rural Development Justice (R) Abdul Razak Thahim said that a uniform policy would be followed in all the provinces and his Ministry has invited proposals from all the provinces. He said that his Ministry would hold two inter-provincial meetings in the near future to make changes in the local government ordinance.

Sardar Dost Muhammad Khosa, Punjab Minister for Local Government and Rural Development said that his province has proposed the Zila Council Act 1979 and has suggested that the current structure be overhauled and the system be reverted to councilors and mayors. He said that as a uniform policy is to be followed in the whole country, therefore, all provinces would be accommodated. He said that LG is a provincial subject therefore it must be given back to the provinces and the provision of President's consent must be eliminated. He said that his province has suggested that the LG elections must be held on non-political basis.

Haji Muhammad Adeel, senior Vice-President of ANP said that Pervez Musharraf had introduced the devolution plan to deprive the provincial governments of their powers and he succeeded in doing so but now the ANP wants empowerment of the provincial government while the local government must be restricted to development work. He said that his party has no problem with the structure of LGs at the UC level but the powers needed to be defined which would further strengthen democracy in Pakistan.

The local bodies elections are likely to be held in October this year and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will start updating the voters' list from next month. Secretary ECP Kanwar Dilshad said that the entire process including registration of votes will take three months to complete and we will be ready to hold LG elections in October.

*(The News – April 17, 2009)*

### **Regular Courts will Work Beside Qazi Courts in Swat**

Peshawar High Court (PHC) Registrar Qalandar Ali Khan explained the appalling situation of pending cases of district Swat on April 7 and also pointed out that regular courts will function alongside qazi courts in Swat as there are still thousands of cases pending in regular courts on the other way, Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) Chief Sufi Muhammad seeks complete ban on regular courts, Registrar clarify again that civil and sessions courts judges would resume their duties once the law and order situation improved and the establishment of the Darul Qaza (shariat appellate court) and the Darul Darul Qaza (shariat final appellate court) in Malakand division prior to presidential approval of the Nizam-e-Adl would be illegal and unconstitutional. Qazi courts legal: The NWFP government had started qazi courts in Swat under the 1999 regulations, which was legal. However, the 1999 regulations had no mention of Darul Qaza and Darul Darul Qaza and if the provincial government established these two appellate forums before the implementation of Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009, the courts would not be considered legal or constitutional. He mentioned that the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009 clearly stated that Darul Qaza would be established in pursuance of Article 183(2) of the constitution and Darul Darul Qaza would be established under Article 198(4). According to Tehreek Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) chief Sufi Muhammad's demand to empower qazis to hear all minor and major criminal and civil cases, registrar commented that this is not realistic in fact empowering qazis to hear major civil and criminal cases required the fulfilment of certain legal requirements and constitutional amendments whereas the present powers of qazis in Swat were equivalent to those of civil-cum-judicial magistrates.

*(Daily Times – April 8, 2009)*

### **By-Elections in PF-1 Peshawar**

#### **ANP Retains PF-1 Seat in By-Polls**

ANP candidate Aurangzeb Khan emerged victorious in the by-election on NWFP Assembly seat, PF-1 (Peshawar-I), held here April 11, according to unofficial results. The ANP's candidate was backed by PPP, PML-Q and PPP-S. Alamzeb bagged 9,886 votes, while Haji Dost Muhammad of JI got 4,508 votes. Dr Zakir Shah of PML-N secured 3,683 votes and Syed Irfanullah Shah of JUI-F obtained 2,738 votes. The turnout was 17.53 percent. A total of nine candidates were in the run. Besides, Aurangzeb, Dr Zakir, Dost Mohammad and Irfanullah five independents candidates, including Itibar Khan Yousafzai, Akram Khan, Anwar Gul, Bahrullah and Muhammad Shah Zeb also contested the election.

The provincial assembly seat fell vacant after the death of young Alamzeb Khan, who was killed in a bomb blast on February 11 while inspecting development activities in his Peshawar constituency. A total of 65 polling stations had been set up in the constituency, including 31 for female and 34 for male voters while 218 polling booths were also established. The polling, in general was held in a peaceful atmosphere except an incident that occurred in Union Council of Faqirabad where two groups having an old enmity exchanged fire that resulted in injuries to four persons. The injured included Jamshed Insaf, president, ANP, Faqirabad UC, Taj Muhammad, Idrees and Iftikhar who were rushed to hospital where their condition was stated to be stable. Police arrested two persons. However, the incident triggered panic among the voters, resulting in a very low turnout.

*(Daily Times - April 13, 2009)*

#### **Former Allies Contributed to Each Other's Defeat in By-Polls**

The recent by-election for an NWFP Assembly seat, PF-1 Peshawar, again brought the JI and JUI-F face-to-face in a bitter contest. The JI candidate, Haji Dost Mohammad, garnered 4,508 votes to stay ahead of the JUI-F nominee, Irfanullah Shah, who polled 2,738 votes. But the winner was ANP's Aurangzeb Khan, brother of deceased MPA, Alamzeb Khan, who lost his life in a bomb explosion in Peshawar. He got 9,886 votes. Though the combined votes of the JI and JUI-F candidates were still less than those secured by the joint ANP-PPP nominee Aurangzeb Khan, there was another Islamist candidate as well, Dr Zakir Shah, who was this time fielded by the PML-N but had won the seat in the 2002 elections on the MMA ticket owing to his affiliation to the Jamiat Ahle Hadith. His tally of votes in the recent by-election was 3,683. A single candidate fielded by the Islamic parties would have carried the day in PF-1 Peshawar.

Once partners in the six-party religious alliance, MMA, JI and JUI have in recent months fought three assembly by-elections in which their candidates contributed to each other's defeat. In fact, joint candidates fielded by the JI and JUI, or JUI-F as Maulana Fazlur Rahman's faction is known, could have won all three by-elections held in Buner, Mardan and Peshawar. But the inability of the two religious parties to overcome their differences and jointly field candidates paved the way for the secular alliance of ANP and PPP to win the by-polls. The revival of the MMA is obviously unlikely in the prevailing circumstances. And the two major components of that alliance are now at loggerheads. Apart from contesting against other parties, the JI and JUI-F candidates are mindful in every by-poll of overtaking each other and, at the same time, ensuring that the rival Islamic candidate doesn't win. Every by-election has widened the gulf between the JI and JUI-F. It was in the National Assembly's Buner constituency, NA-28, that the JI formally ended its boycott of electoral politics and decided to contest the by-election necessitated by the death of the ANP MNA, Abdul Mateen Khan. It fielded a strong candidate, former NWFP Assembly Speaker Bakht Jehan Khan, against the late Mateen's Khan's son Istiqbal Khan. The JI candidate bagged 30,015 votes and almost snatched the seat from the ANP with the latter's nominee, Istiqbal Khan, receiving 30,629 votes. The JUI-F candidate in the NA-29 by-election, Maulana Fazal Ghafoor, contributed to the defeat of the JI man Bakht Jehan by obtaining 4,649 votes. Support by the JUI-F for the JI candidate would have made the difference and enabled the latter to win the seat.

The next by-election was for an NWFP Assembly seat, **PF-30**, in Mardan district. Imtiaz Shagai, the brother of the late PPP MPA, Iftikhar Shagai, who died in a road accident, won by securing 12,455 votes. He could have lost if the JUI-F and JI had agreed on a joint candidate. Maulana Tajul Amin Jabbal of JUI-F was runner-up with 8,627 votes while JI candidate Maulana Ataur Rahman, a former MNA, was third with 3,412. By pooling their resources and fielding a single candidate, the JUI-F and JI, stood a chance of turning the tables on the PPP nominee.

*(The News – April 17, 2009)*

## Regional Politics and Election Watch

### Pakistan's Foreign Relations

#### **Zardari Meets Iranian VP, Finland PM, Chinese Investors to Uplift the Country's Economy**

President Asif Ali Zardari highlighted the terrorism in Asia; as another pressing issue while speaking at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum, which focuses on the global financial crisis held on April 18, and over 1,600 delegates gathered at the annual summit on the tropical Chinese island of Hainan, which aims to promote regional economic integration. President Zardari, who only a day earlier succeeded in getting pledges of over five billion dollars from the international community to help the country's economy meet the challenges it faces from terrorists and militants, and also stressed that the world needs to stand together to fight terrorism jointly, and the issue of terrorism and how it is affecting the region; particularly, Afghanistan and Pakistan were in the eye of storm, whereas Asia and the world were interdependent and relied heavily on each other. The forum provided opportunity for Pakistan to deliver its message.

**Pak-Iran Ties:** Parviz Davoodi, First Vice President of Iran called on President Asif Ali Zardari here on the sidelines of the Boao Forum for Asia on April 18 and discussed bilateral ties, regional situation and progress on the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project, both the countries had been expanding and strengthening their relations in all fields and there was a need for translating the political ties into more meaningful economic cooperation. The two leaders expressed satisfaction over the progress on US 7.4 billion dollars worth 2,775-kilometer-long IPI gas pipeline project aimed at helping Pakistan meet its growing industrial and domestic needs. Under the agreement, Pakistan will import around 750 million cubic feet of gas per day from Iran to meet its growing energy needs. The federal cabinet officially approved the pricing formula at a recent meeting. President Zardari expressed that Iran could play an important role in the region and the two countries could join hands to fight the threat of terrorism and extremism with enhanced closer cooperation. The Iranian first vice president said the ties between the two countries were historic and had continued to face the test of time. He was of the view that increased cooperation between the private sectors would strengthen their economic ties and bring the two countries closer.

**Pak-Finland Cooperation:** Prime Minister of Finland Matti Vanhanen, who called on President Zardari, here on the sidelines of Boao Forum for Asia discussed ways to boost relations in all spheres. President Zardari explained that Pakistan provided vast opportunities for investment and it was high time that the Finnish investors focused on the vast opportunities available to them. He invited investors from Finland to invest in energy and infrastructure development projects and that business relationship would lead to closer people-to-people contacts and generate economic activity. The two leaders also discussed the situation in the region, the threat the world was facing at the hands of extremists and terrorists and the need for closer cooperation to thwart efforts to disrupt peace.

President also discussed the Pakistan's energy crisis while talking to Lou Jiwei, Chairman and CEO of China Investment Corporation (CIC) and Levin Zhou, CEO, China International Capital Corporation, (CICC), here on the sidelines of the Boao Forum for Asia. President Zardari in his meeting with Levin Zhou sought more investment in Pakistan's hydropower and infrastructure development projects and stated it would go a long way in generating economic activity and employment opportunities. The president urged the CICC to consider the possibility of collaboration in banking and financial sectors between the two countries by setting up consortiums to invest in Pakistan.

*(The News-April 19, 2009)*

## **Federal Cabinet Approved Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline Project**

The federal cabinet has approved the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline project under which Pakistan will import a billion cubic feet of gas for power generation in the country. Federal Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira has announced after attending the cabinet meeting on April 8.

*(Daily Times - April 9, 2009)*

## **Zardari, Gilani Urge Better Relations with Philippines**

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani called for further strengthening of bilateral ties between Pakistan and the Philippines during separate meetings with Philippines Foreign Minister Alberto G Romulo. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Secretary General to President Salman Farooqi also attended the meeting. Philippine Ambassador Jaime J Yanbao, stated that Pakistan enjoyed close bilateral relations with the Philippines. The prime minister underlined the need to further strengthen bilateral ties through enhanced political, cultural and people-to-people exchanges for the mutual advantage of both countries. Commending the initiative taken by the Philippines president for interfaith dialogue, he assured of Pakistan's continued support to the Philippines at all international forums to bring believers of different faiths together. Emulating experience: He also praised the Bishop-Ulema Conference held in the Philippines, which helped reconcile differences between the Muslim and Christian communities. Gilani utter both countries should focus their attention towards expanding relations in the fields of trade and economy, and cooperate to stamp out terrorism. Pakistan will consider the Philippine's proposal for candidature as an observer in the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and this matter will be discussed by the foreign offices of both countries, he assured the visiting foreign minister.

Romulo praised the premier for his constructive role in consolidating the democratic institutions of Pakistan with high-level exchange of visits, particularly of the parliamentarians of both countries, should be increased. He also assured Gilani of his government's maximum support for Pakistan's candidature for full dialogue partnership of ASEAN, and hoped this would be approved in July. He assured that his country would also favour Pakistan's candidature for ECOSOC and for a non-permanent Security Council seat for the 2011-12 tenor.

*(Daily Times - April 19, 2009)*

## **US Senate Okays \$4bn Increase in Aid to Pakistan**

The US Senate voted on April 2 to boost aid to Pakistan by \$4 billion next year. As the US lawmakers continued work on a \$3.5 trillion budget blueprint for the upcoming fiscal year, Senator John Kerry, a Democrat, won adoption of a \$4 billion increase next year in aid to Pakistan, a key ally in the war on terror. The Obama administration plans to seek as much as \$3 billion over the next five years to train and equip Pakistan's military and is considering sending 10,000 more troops to battle the Taliban in Afghanistan. In outlining the spending programme publicly for the first time, defence officials explained the US Senate Armed Services Committee it is critical to train and equip the Pakistanis so they have the skills and will to fight. With the administration's backing the bill would provide \$1.5 billion next year, linked to Pakistan's counterterror and democracy-building efforts, officials. Defence and other administration officials spoke about the spending plans on condition of anonymity because the specific budget requests have not been released. Also on senators questioned Gen David Petraeus, who heads the US Central Command and Undersecretary Michele Flournoy over the possible deployment of 10,000 more troops to Afghanistan? Petraeus said he had forwarded the proposed increase to the Pentagon. That plan could mean stationing almost 80,000 American forces in the country by next year. Currently 38,000 US troops are in Afghanistan. Lawmakers asked why the extra brigade and headquarters unit requested by Gen David McKiernan had not yet been approved by President Barack Obama. Flournoy said Obama is aware of the request, but was told he does not have to consider it until late this year because the additional troops will not be needed until next year.

*(Daily Times-April 3, 2009)*

## Ongoing Indian Parliamentary Elections

### **Three Phases of Indian Election Ended**

**Third Phase:** Polling for the third phase of Lok Sabha elections ended on April 30. People voted for 107 constituencies in nine states and two union territories. The third phase of Lok Sabha elections will decide the fate of political leaders like Sonia Gandhi, L K Advani and H D Deve Gowda among others.

In Gujarat, polling was held in all its 26 constituencies. Besides Gujarat, polling was also held for 16 seats in Madhya Pradesh, 15 in Uttar Pradesh, 14 in West Bengal, 11 each in Bihar and Karnataka, 10 in Maharashtra and one each in Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, JD-U Chief Sharad Yadav, former Karnataka Chief Minister S Bangarappa and Union Ministers Sriprakash Jaiswal and Jyotiraditya Scindia were also in fray in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections.

Compiling the preliminary statistics from nine states and two union territories, Balakrishnan, Deputy Election Commissioner, said that the voting percentage in Uttar Pradesh was 45 %, Bihar (48 %), Madhya Pradesh (44 to 45 %), Karnataka (57%), Maharashtra (43 to 45 %), Gujarat (49 to 50 %), Jammu and Kashmir (30 %), West Bengal (64%) Sikkim (65 %).

With the completion of the third phase, polling has now been over for 372 of the 543 seats. Polling for the remaining 171 seats would take place in two phases on May 7 for 85 seats and May 13 for 86 seats.

*([www.indian-elections.com/latest-news](http://www.indian-elections.com/latest-news))*

**Second Phase:** According to the Election Commission, the average polling was over 55 per cent in second phase across the states. The polls in north-east states of Assam and Tripura passed off peacefully with a high polling percentage. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his wife Gursharan Kaur cast their votes at a polling station in the Guwahati Lok Sabha segment in Assam amid high security. UP and Bihar again witnessed a low turnout of 44 per cent each. With Jharkhand and MP reporting 46 per cent and 45 per cent, respectively, the low turnout has raised many an eyebrow. The second phase of the five-round elections saw the electorate decide the fate of a number of political heavyweights, including Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, former Defence Minister George Fernandes, BJs Sushma Swaraj, Ram Vilas Paswan, Kamal Nath, Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and M Pallam Raju, being sealed. There was trouble in Andhra Pradesh too, with activists of the ruling Congress, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and superstar Chiranjeevi's Praja Rajyam Party clashing at several places. Tripura recorded the highest turn-out of 75 pc for its two Lok Sabha seats.

*(Indian Express – April 23, 2009)*

**First Phase:** Elections in 124 of the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies on April 16 – the first of the five-phase polls – witnessed the killing of 19 people in violent incidents at 86 polling stations, mostly in the naxalite affected areas of Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. Polling, however, was largely peaceful in 1.85 lakh polling stations covering an electorate of over 14.31 crore. A total of 1,715 candidates, including 122 women, were in the fray. The 19 killed were nine civilians and polling personnel and 10 men of the Central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Force and other Central and State police forces. Seven were injured. At Chatra in Jharkhand, a landmine blast killed seven BSF jawans and two civilians. A group of poll officials was abducted and polling could not be held. At Bastar, Chhattisgarh, a polling station was burnt and in about a dozen blasts, several policemen and civilians were killed. In Gaya, Bihar, a polling station was attacked by naxalites and a policeman and a home guard were shot dead. Six booths were attacked and some set afire at Malkangiri, Orissa. In some booths in Orissa and Chhattisgarh,

electronic voting machines were snatched. The poll process was also disrupted by naxalites at Gachroli in Maharashtra.

The Election Commission, however, expressed "total satisfaction, considering the problems, difficulties and challenges" faced in conducting polls in remote areas. It was also happy that preliminary reports suggested a 58 to 62 per centage voter turnout. At Kandhamal in Orissa, which witnessed anti-Christian violence since August last, the voting percentage could be as high as 65, Deputy Election Commissioner R. Balakrishnan said here. Besides the Lok Sabha constituencies, covering 15 States and two Union Territories, elections were also held for 154 of a total of 294 Assembly segments in Andhra Pradesh and 70 of 147 seats in Orissa.

The break-up of the Lok Sabha seats that went to the polls is as follows:

Chhattisgarh 11; Kerala 20; Andhra Pradesh 22; Assam 3; Jharkhand 6; Orissa 10; Maharashtra and Bihar 13 each; Uttar Pradesh 16; Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya two each; Andaman Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Jammu & Kashmir one each. The tentative percentage for the States are: Andhra Pradesh 65 per cent; Arunachal Pradesh and Assam 62 each; Bihar 46; Jammu and Kashmir 48; Kerala 60; Maharashtra 54; Manipur and Meghalaya around 66; Mizoram, 52; Nagaland 84; Orissa 53; U.P., Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand around 50, Lakshadweep registering the highest at 86; and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands 62.

*(The Hindu - April 17, 2009)*

### **Indian Party Leaders Too Old: Poll Opinion**

A majority of young Indians want a young Prime Minister and a significant number want Congress party scion Rahul Gandhi as Premier after the April-May elections, according to a poll published on April 10. The survey carried by the Hindustan Times paper will make depressing reading for India's two main parties, both of who are fielding candidates for Prime Minister who in other walks of life would be well into their retirement. The incumbent Congress party is fielding 76-year-old Manmohan Singh, who recently underwent heart bypass surgery. The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is led by Lal Krishna Advani, who is 81. Of the 1,211 people polled, 72 percent viewed India needed a young prime minister with 44 percent preferring a candidate between 35 to 45 years of age. Twenty-eight percent preferred the 38-year-old Rahul to his mother Sonia Gandhi and incumbent premier Singh, the poll by research organization C-Fore found. The survey polled men and women in the 18 to 35 age groups in six cities across the country. Rahul, the great-grandson of India's first premier Jawaharlal Nehru and son of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, is one of Congress' star campaigners for the April 16-May 13 general elections. The polls will see up to 100 million people cast ballots for the first time. According to the poll, attempts by the BJP to woo the youth vote have made scant impact with just seven percent of respondents supporting Advani. Campaign pictures have shown Advani lifting weights under the slogan of his massive political experience of 80 and the enthusiasm of 20.

*(Daily Times - April 11, 2009)*

### **Congress Cashes-In on 'Distorted' Facts in Advani Autobiography**

In a belated dissection of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) prime ministerial candidate Lal Krishna Advani's autobiography 'My Country, My Life', published in March 2008, the Congress sought to take political advantage during the ongoing elections, citing instance after instance of what a Congress minister called distortion of facts and history. Union Minister and Congress spokesman Kapil Sibal pitied Advani at the AICC press briefing for "not caring to educate himself about the country's most celebrated freedom fighters - Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev" - by claiming that they were hanged for hurling bombs inside the Delhi assembly. Being a swayamsevak (volunteer) of the RSS, which had no role in the Indian freedom struggle, his ignorance is quite obvious, as otherwise, he should have known that they (freedom fighters) were sentenced to death actually for the assassination of JP Saunders, and that it was well-known and documented Lahore conspiracy case," Sibal said. Elsewhere in the book, Sibal added, Advani had described Punjab's Communist Party of India (CPI) leader as "late Satyapal Dang, not caring to verify as he would have known, that the veteran leader is very much alive and in good health". Sibal also pooh-

pooched the BJP leader for his "duplicity in writing that the BJP 'forced' then prime minister Indira Gandhi to order 'Operation Blue Star' to liberate Golden Temple from anti-national occupants, and at the same time describing it as one of the most painful moments in the history of the republic". Akali Dal, who remains aligned with the BJP, should note their prime ministerial candidate's views, Sibal said. The Congress spokesman said that another duplicity in the "divisive agenda" was apparent when Advani described the Babri Masjid demolition as "Hindu awakening", but then "hypocritically" called it the "saddest" day in his life. "Yet he did the groundwork for that day when he embarked on his journey spreading hate in his 1990 Rath Yatra that resulted in communal riots in which hundreds were killed," Sibal said. Another "memory lapse" is evident when Advani claims to have spoken to US ambassador Robert Blackwill for assistance during the IC-814 plane hijack drama. The fact is that Richard F Celeste was the US ambassador to India during that period, the Congress spokesman said. Another falsehood in the book that Sibal nailed was Advani writing that both he and then prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee were firmly opposed to sending Indian troops to Iraq. He cited a statement of the Indian embassy in Washington dated June 8, 2003, that: Advani told then US defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that the matter was under consideration. Sibal also ridiculed Advani for choosing to give account of people killed by police firing during the Gujarat riots but not finding it important to talk about how the state machinery, including police, was involved in the riots. He also criticised Advani for lacking the courage to mention that the RSS forced him to resign as the BJP president over his controversial praise of Muhammad Ali Jinnah during a visit to Pakistan in 2005. Sibal said Advani was desperate to shed the tag of "prime minister in waiting" but his ambition based on "distortion of facts" would ensure that he lives with this tag in perpetuity.

*(Daily Times - April 19, 2009)*

## **India's All-Important Muslim Vote**

*by Suvojit Bagchi*

The Indian government's 'war against terror' may cost the Congress party dearly in the election. Arrests and alleged extrajudicial killings of Muslim youths have angered many in the Islamic community. People in power have branded us as terrorists and used us as a vote bank, this cannot go on, expressed by the all-powerful cleric of Delhi's Jama Masjid mosque, Syed Ahmed Bukhari while addressing a press conference. Speaking about the deaths of two Muslim students allegedly at the hands of police in South Delhi's Muslim area last October, he demanded that the Muslim community wants justice.

This sense of injustice has resulted in the formation of new Muslim political parties over recent months. Our primary aim is to erode the vote of Congress and then to win a few seats. According to Buranuddin Qasmi, Assam United Democratic Front, these parties believe in Indian parliamentary democracy and explained that these parties are working to strengthen it, his party's manifestos unanimously emphasis the "safety and security" of all communities, especially the Muslims. The security of Muslims is one big issue, as after every blast in India a series of arrests of Muslim youth's takes place, and Muslim men were systematically killed in routine police encounters, he alleged. In fact Muslims comprise more than 13% of India's population and many are aggrieved that proportionately they only have about half that much representation in parliament. More than two dozen Muslim political parties, big and small, are contesting these elections - almost double the figure of the last election. The prominent players are the Assam United Democratic Front (AUDF), Ulema Council and Indian Peace Party in Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Muslim Munettra Khazhagam in Tamil Nadu, the People's Democratic Council in West Bengal and veterans like the Muslim League and Indian National League in Kerala, the Democratic Secular Party in Bihar and the Majlis-e Ittihad al-Muslimin in Andhra Pradesh.

Dr Abu Saleh Shariff, member of the Sachar Committee expressed that the minority affairs ministry has done literally nothing, just with the exception of giving scholarships to some of the Muslim student. Interestingly, even the staunchest supporters of these parties do not believe they are going to win. Our primary aim is to erode the vote of the Congress party and then to win a few seats, supposed by Buranuddin Qasmi, an election analyst of the AUDF. Meanwhile, many Muslims

are questioning the logic behind the hasty launch of such parties. They argue that a party like the Ulema Council will not even be able to emerge as a minor player because it lacks proper planning and goals. Statistics show the parties that manage to win the votes of low caste people along with the Muslim vote bank have a strong chance of winning.

Since India's independence from British rule, Congress has been getting a sizeable chunk of Muslim votes at national level, largely because Muslims felt they had to prove their loyalty to India in early post-partition days, according to political experts. In India, the Muslim League and its president, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, are held responsible for dividing India and creating Pakistan. Muslims who stayed in India have traditionally supported Congress since independence to prove their loyalty. Empowered Yogendra Yadav, the noted political commentator, feels that Muslim parties have come of age. After fifty years into independence, the trauma of partition prevented Muslim political parties from conceiving a politics of their own, Many Muslims have questioned the proliferation of Islamic parties but they are slowly getting out of it. In the last decade or so they have been speaking for themselves - a very positive sign for Muslims as well as for democracy. Mr Yadav highlights the figures seem to support his claims - the proliferation of new political parties means that no one party is expected to get more than 60% of Muslim votes. But Congress believes Muslims cannot be empowered by a Muslim party alone.

According to Imran-ur Rehman Kidwai, the chief of the party's Minority Cell Muslim parties have traditionally voted for Congress and will continue to do so, as they know only a majority party like Congress with secular credentials can empower them. He also brushed aside the fact that there is any kind of insecurity among Muslim youth, calling it a non-issue. But whatever Mr Kidwai explained, in fact it's obvious that in at least one state a Muslim party is creating serious trouble for Congress. The Islamic vote in Assam makes up more than 20% of Muslim votes and appears to be making forays into Congress bastions. The Hindu nationalist BJP - which Muslims tend to vote against - could win in the state. But that has not stopped the AUDF from running anti-Congress campaigns. Congress is confident it can retain the bulk of the Muslim vote enough of that - whenever Muslims vote against Congress, it is believed to be in favour of the BJP. As its describe by the AUDF's election analyst that Can't we ever raise our voice because of right-wing parties like the BJP?", Buranuddin Qasmi, asks. The real Achilles' heel for Congress is the Sachar Report - a prime ministerial committee that recommended several measures to improve the living conditions of Muslims in India. Initiated by Congress and tabled in parliament in 2006, the report has become central to the Indian Muslim community and is often quoted to voice their grievances.

*(Daily Times - April 20, 2009)*

## Upcoming Presidential Elections in Afghanistan

### Allies Ponder How to Plan Elections in Afghanistan

Inside the office of the Afghan interior minister is a map showing that nearly half the country is a danger zone. Ten of Afghanistan's 364 districts are colored black, meaning they are under Taliban control, and 156 are colored to indicate high risk. The map raises a difficult question: How, in such an environment, can Afghanistan hold countrywide presidential elections in less than five months? The election, plus votes for provincial council seats, has become a prime focus of discussion, according to Richard C. Holbrooke, the special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who visited Kabul last Sunday. For now, Afghan officials and their American and NATO allies say they are absolutely determined to go ahead with the elections, scheduled for August 20. Canceling or postponing them not only would be a significant recognition of how badly the war is going, but also would throw the country into a political and constitutional crisis. At the same time, there is increasing concern that, even if NATO and Afghan forces can establish enough security in enough places, the vote will be so badly compromised that its credibility will be called into question and with it the legitimacy of the current and future Afghan governments. Taliban insurgents have such a strong grip on such a broad area — in particular the southern provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Oruzgan and Zabul — that even with the anticipated arrival of an additional 30,000 American troops this year, the elections will not take place in some areas; several Western and Afghan officials in Kabul recorded their reservations over the upcoming elections: Christopher Alexander, a deputy head of the United Nations Assistance

Mission in Afghanistan explained the terrible security concerns and accepted that there will certainly be some districts where it will be difficult to have elections, especially parts of Helmand Province. But the vast majority of districts, all but 8 or 10, took part in voter registration and are expected to take part in elections.

*(Daily Times - April 13, 2009)*

### **Watchdog Wants Warlords Barred from Afghan Presidency**

Afghans accused of human rights violations over three decades of war should be barred from running in the August 20 Presidential Election, a Commissioner of the state-appointed rights watchdog. Western backers of Afghanistan, which is in the grip of a growing Taliban insurgency, have pledged extra troops for securing the poll and for paying most of the cost of \$230 million for the vote, the second direct one in the country's history. The official nomination of candidates is planned for next week, and names that have appeared on unofficial lists include warlords linked with past crimes, Ahmad Nader Nadery, officer of the Independent Human Rights Commission expressed the culture of impunity since Taliban's fall meant that human rights abusers managed to stand in the 2004 poll as candidates for president or one of two posts as deputies, and the case was same this time. HR commission concerned again with the lack of a mechanism that would properly screen individuals (with) past human rights records, he added. Afghanistan's new constitution, drawn up after the Taliban's ouster in 2001, according to constitution the members or leaders of armed groups, as well as individuals sentenced by a court for war crimes, are not eligible to run for the office of President. Afghanistan has been caught in a cycle of foreign interventions and civil war for 30 years. Leaders of many former warring factions – many of whom have been accused by rights groups of abuse – now occupy positions in the government of President Hamid Karzai, who has ruled the multi-ethnic nation since Taliban's ouster and won the 2004 poll. Nadery pointed out that members of the public can complain to the Election Commission about past rights abuses by candidates, but neither the commission nor the government had drafted rules for a mechanism to bar warlords or abusers from office. Afghanistan has not set up a special court to hear cases of past abuse, and Karzai and his Western backers have lacked the political will to put warlords on trial for fear of stoking more violence while the Taliban insurgency rages. There is a false belief is prevailing in the international community – if they touch the justice issue then this fragile peace will be challenged as well. Surveys and studies have showed that in Afghanistan it's actually the other way round. He concluded, people talk about justice and good governance as a means to promote peace. The Taliban are finding their way in the villages and provinces because people are disillusioned with the government officials.

Meanwhile, Karzai called the top US and NATO general in Afghanistan again to explain civilian casualties caused by international forces, according to an official, Karzai demanded Gen David McKiernan to explain the reported deaths of six civilians in two incidents, whereas Karzai's office called late on April 19. In fact it was the second time in three days Karzai brought up the topic with McKiernan. On April 16, the US general was summoned to the presidential palace to explain other deaths. Karzai has long complained about civilian deaths caused by international forces.

*(Daily Times - April 20, 2009)*

## **Post-Election Scenario in Bangladesh**

### **Hasina Threatens to Evict Archrival Khaleda**

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken her feud with nemesis Khaleda Zia to a new level by threatening to evict the former Premier from her home. The two women, who have ruled the nation alternately for almost two decades, are frequently referred to as the "battling begums" for their longstanding personal animosity. Hasina came to power with a landslide victory in December elections, she stated in parliament on April 2 that Khaleda Zia was living in her house illegally and requested her to leave her house in the (army) cantonment in Dhaka, the prime minister explained that no member of parliament, no leader of the opposition should live in the cantonment and Khaleda zia should not keep the house ignoring the law and should leave the house willingly. The government would build apartments in the grounds around the house and give the homes to families of army officers who were slain in the February mutiny at another military

base in the capital, Hasina said. Zia, head of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, has lived in the army base since 1981 after her husband Ziaur Rahman, a former military chief and then president was killed in an attempted coup. Before the recent elections, Bangladesh was ruled for two years by a military-backed government, which jailed both Hasina and Zia for a year on charges of corruption. They were released on bail in deals with the army to ensure they took part in the elections. The army took control because squabbling between their party supporters degenerated into deadly street violence.

*(Daily Times - April 3, 2009)*

### **UN and Other Charities Receive Death Threats in Bangladesh**

UN and international charity workers in southern Bangladesh have been sent death threats by a group purporting to be from a banned organization, confirmed by the Police commissioner Abdur Rahim and explained the details; the typed letters were sent to offices of the UN's children's fund (UNICEF) and its World Food Programme (WFP), as well as the Red Crescent and Red Cross in the city of Barisal. Both the offices received identical letters signed by the group Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) ordering them to shut down and pull out their staff within 24 hours, otherwise they would be killed. Police commissioner had been stepped up security at the offices. UNICEF and WFP were continuing operations in the Barisal city despite the threats, UN officials also validate the incident that some foreign nationals worked in the offices and we have reported the incident to police and we are confident that police will take appropriate actions. UNICEF spokeswoman Christine Jaulmes viewed over the situation that the JMB has been virtually silent in recent years although authorities believe the group was behind a wave of 400 coordinated bomb attacks across the country in 2005. JMB leader Shaikh Abdur Rahman, his deputy, and four other members of the group's decision-making body were hanged in 2007. Last month police stepped up security at English-medium schools in the capital Dhaka amid concerns that militants were preparing an attack.

*(Daily Times - April 22, 2009)*

## **Political Crisis in Thailand**

### **Thailand State of Emergency Lifted**

On April 24 Thai PM Abhisit Vejjajiva lifts the country's state of emergency, which was imposed on April 12. Thailand's prime minister has lifted a state of emergency that was imposed in the capital Bangkok after rioting by anti-government protesters. PM Abhisit Vejjajiva made the announcement at the end of a two-day special parliamentary session aimed at finding a solution to the country's political crisis. Lifting the state of emergency is one of the measures to find a solution for the country as announced by Mr Abhisit during the session and explained that his government wants reconciliation and to move the country forward. The state of emergency was imposed on April 12 following rioting in Bangkok. Two people were killed and 123 injured as protesters clashed with troops and residents. The decree banned gatherings of more than five people. It also banned news reports that threatened public order and allowed the government to call up military troops to quell unrest. The protests were part of Thailand's long-running political turmoil, which revolves around former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra's ousting in a 2006 military coup for alleged corruption and abuse of power. Mr Thaksin's supporters, who are known as the red shirts, rioted in Bangkok last week, calling for Mr Abhisit's resignation and new elections. The red shirts, mostly from the rural poor who benefited from Mr Thaksin's social welfare programmes, claim the Mr Abhisit, who was appointed by Parliament in December, came to power illegitimately after court rulings removed two Thaksin-allied governments. Their protests came after three years of sporadic protests by Mr Thaksin's opponents, the yellow shirts, whose rallies paved the way to the 2006 coup and the later court dismissals of Mr Thaksin's allies. The yellow shirts come mainly from the urban, middle class and educated elite of Thai society, including royalists.

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## Indonesian Elections

### Indonesian President's Party Leads in Polls

Indonesian President confident that he would seek coalition partners after early results from elections showed his party ahead, but not by as much as expected. A quick count of votes gave the Democrat Party of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a reform-minded former general who has won praise for his leadership of Indonesia, about one-fifth of the parliamentary vote. According to political analyst leading political party will have to rely on coalition partners in parliament, reducing the prospects for major economic reforms in Southeast Asia's biggest economy. Mr Yudhoyono called while addressing a news conference at his home in Bogor, near the capital Jakarta that and his party will offer a partnership in the next government and of course a healthy, healthier, relationship between the government and parliament, and a lot more can be achieved in the next five years. The Democrats, which have led in most opinion polls, were ahead of PDI-P with about 15 per cent and Golkar with 14 per cent, based on about 90 per cent of the quick count vote sample by the widely followed polling agency LSI. Official results are not expected for few days, but they are not likely to differ much. Mr Yudhoyono, 59, is expected to win a second term in the more important Presidential Election on July 8 of this year.

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### Indonesian Voters Lose Faith in Religious Parties

As Indonesia headed to legislative elections, Islamic parties in the world's largest Muslim-majority country are facing the daunting prospect of their worst election showing yet. Despite efforts to project a modern image, opinion polls are showing sliding support for Islamic parties — and the grinding to a halt of years of apparently resurgent religious trend since dictator Suharto's fall in 1998. With growth in Southeast Asia's largest economy slowing, according to analysts Islamic parties' moral message is being overshadowed by voters' more earthly concerns. A 45-year-old Jakarta shop assistant Mohammad commented over the political crises that he doesn't care if the parties and candidates are religious in fact he will choose the people, who run a country, not a mosque and we can't pray away a bad economy, unemployment, poverty and crime. That appears to be a belief shared by many of Indonesia's 171 million voters, around 90 per cent of who are Muslims. While Islamic parties won 38 per cent of the vote in the last elections, in 2004, a recent survey showed the combined support of the country's half a dozen Muslim parties had slipped down to around 24 per cent. Among those feeling the pinch is the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), an offshoot of the banned Egyptian Islamist organisation Muslim Brotherhood, which just a few years ago were considered the rising star of Indonesian politics. Now, the PKS is just trying to look cool. When the party staged a massive rally in the capital last week, party president Tifatul Sembiring crooned on stage alongside dreadlocked band members. The display is nothing novel for an Indonesian election, where karaoke is a more common fixture of campaigning than policy debate, but for the usually dour PKS it is an attempt to soften an image of intolerance. The party was a key backer of a muchcriticised anti-pornography law passed last year which is widely seen as a threat to cultural traditions and non-Muslim minorities. The PKS, which got 7.34 per cent of the vote in 2004, had boasted that it would win 20 per cent this time. Polls suggest however that it will be lucky to gain five percent, a result that would be nothing short of a humiliation.

Indonesian Survey Institute, Dodi Ambardi researcher focused the core problem for Indonesia's Islamic parties — none of which advocate an Islamic state or the widespread introduction of Islamic law — is that they have failed to make the case that they can be trusted with practical issues. The issue isn't about having an Islamic state or a secular state. The hot issue is about the economy. When people are occupied by economic questions they become more rational and they compromise about religion. According to him Indonesia is heading toward a more mature democracy. However, this does not mean Muslim parties will be irrelevant. According to **Airlangga University**, Daniel Sparringa political scientist pointed out that the results of upcoming election will decide the makeup of Indonesia's national parliament and set the stage for jockeying for coalitions among the crowded field of contenders in the July presidential election. In the while the three big secular parties are considered most likely to field candidates, Islamic parties could be much sought after as

coalition partners. Islamic parties are still important. The nationalist parties need to join forces with them to built harmony and gain symbolic power.

On the other way, some liberal voices have raised concerns that hard-line Islamists are attempting to push Indonesia away from its more liberal roots. According to a report released last week by a coalition of think-tanks and former president Abdurrahman Wahid argued that extremists, including members of the PKS were infiltrating moderate Muslim groups. Opportunistic politicians who work with extremist political parties and groups have joined the radicals in driving our nation towards a deep chasm whose Islam-based National Awakening Party is floundering.

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