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Gender

Women & Politics

Shazia Marri Given Charge of Sindh Tourism

Sindh Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah changed the portfolio of Provincial Minister for Information Shazia Marri by allocating her new portfolio of Tourism Department. She has been given the new assignment by bifurcating the Ministry of another female member of the cabinet, Sassui Palijo. Sassui was holding the portfolio of Culture and Tourism Departments, but now only Culture Department has been left in her Ministry. No reasons were known immediately about the change made in portfolios of the two female ministers of PPP. In a major reshuffling the Sindh government has also transferred some seven administrative heads of different departments under orders of the Sindh CM.

[Daily Times -- January 16, 2010]

Roundtable Conference on Presence & Status of Women in Political Parties

Revealing huge gaps between party manifestoes and practices, the findings of a baseline survey on the status of women in major political parties revealed that the dominating male leadership does not give much importance to the opinion of women party workers and almost all office-bearers of women wings are nominated by male leaders. It shows that all those political parties that ensure equal rights for women do not even have any gender policy for their own female workers and never consult them in the selection of party candidates. These key findings were released at a roundtable conference titled 'Presence & Status of Women in Political Parties', organised by Pattan Development Organisation. The heads of women wings from JI, PTI, and PML-Q attended the event but the absence of any representative from the major political parties including PPP and PML-N was greatly felt on the occasion.

Despite the active participation of women in mainstream politics, the survey pointed out that the representation of women at central and divisional levels is quite low. In the ranks of the central bodies of the ruling political party, men fill all the positions of the President, Senior Vice Presidents, Vice Presidents and the General Secretary. Among the 55 Central Executive Committee (CEC) members, there are only five women. In the biggest opposition party - PML-N, again men occupy these positions with only one female at the level of Vice President, while in its 26-member CEC, there is only one female. In PML-Q, there are four women at the position of vice president while only two women in its 28-member CEC.

Sharing the key findings of the base line survey, Director Pattan Sawar Bari said the women wings of most parties lack proper interaction with their main bodies. Many female respondents stated that their family members make decisions on their behalf and most women joined the parties due to prior family affiliation. A significant number of women party workers have stated in the survey that they do not get any financial support for political activities from their parties. Regarding the behaviour of men towards female political workers, they said they usually defame politically active women. Mentioning the recommendations given by the women office-bearers, Bari said they demanded 33 per cent quota in the party hierarchy and structure at all levels and the same percentage of seats for women in all elections. "They also want their political parties to invest in the capacity building of women wings." Calling for the empowerment of women wings, these office-bearers suggested in the survey that the roles and responsibilities of women wings should be clearly defined in the constitutions of the parties and all positions of women wings must be filled through proper elections. Talking about the difficulties they faced during data collection, Bari said the party office-bearers were reluctant to share information with the survey team. He said the websites of almost all parties were found to be outdated. "In the PPP website, the name of Benazir Bhutto is still in the list of central committee members," he said. He said the political parties always use women at the time of crisis and when the crisis is over, these women just vanish from the political scene. To substantiate his argument, he gave the example of the women in the Sharif family. "Begum Kulsoom Nawaz was very active in politics during 1999, but she has not played any political role after 2008," he pointed out. Speaking on the occasion, Samea Raheel Qazi of JI said on some issues, her opinion is poles apart from the NGO sector, but she and her party is always ready to extend full support for the development of women wherever possible. She said the women wings of JI are the most organised women wings in the country.

[The News -- January 15, 2010]

Women & Laws

Senate Passes Bill against Harassment of Women at Workplace

The Senate, on January 20, passed a bill to further amend the Pakistan Penal Code 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 against sexual harassment at the workplace, amid strong criticism from religious parties. The bill – moved by Law Minister Babar Awan – had been referred to the Upper House following its passage in the National Assembly. **The new amendment bill seeks to insert a new offence in Section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code 1860(XLV) to provide for punishment over sexual harassment at workplaces, and consequential amendments in Schedule II of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898(V) to make the offence punishable with imprisonment – which may extend to three years – or a fine of up to Rs 500,000, or both.** Additionally, the offence would be bailable and non-compoundable. The amendment is aimed at protecting women in particular against sexual harassment.

The amendment was supported by all apart from religious parties and a senator from FATA. JUI Senators Mohammad Khan Shirani, Ghafoor Haideri, Gul Naseeb Khan, JI Senator Prof Ibrahim and Senator Prof Sajid Mir objected to the bill. They jointly proposed recommendations for inclusion in the amendment, which were rejected by a majority. They said that the new the amendment in the bill was a “violation of the fundamental norms of Islam and the constitution”, and would promote “vulgarity among women”. They proposed that the bill be sent to the Council of Islamic Ideology for further review. Female senators strongly protested and chanted slogans against JUI Senator Ghafoor Haideri for saying that the amendment would “further pave way for NGO employees to promote vulgarity”. Senators from the PPP, the PML-N, the MQM, the PML-Q, the BNP, the ANP and some other parties supported the bill, saying it would provide complete protection for women at workplaces. They said that since the bill was passed in the Lower House unanimously, there was no point in sending the bill to the Council of Islamic Ideology or including any more proposals in the amendment. They said that there were shortcomings in the current law, and the majority of the female population preferred to stay home out of fear of sexual harassment at the hands of male colleagues.

[Daily Times -- January 21, 2010]

President Signs Bill against Harassment at Workplaces

President Asif Ali Zardari, on January 29, signed a bill against the harassment of women at workplaces, approving amendments to both the Pakistan Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code. ‘The Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill 2009’ makes the offence punishable with imprisonment – which may extend to three years – or a fine of up to Rs 500,000, or both.

[Daily Times -- January 30, 2010]

Ban Bride Price, Make Laws to Prevent Trafficking of Women’

Legal experts demanded that the NWFP government immediately ban bride price and effectively implement the National Plan of Action 2005 to combat women trafficking in the province. The demand came at a two-day consultative workshop on countering women trafficking organized by the Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme (CAMP) in collaboration with DFID (UK Department for International Development) and UNDP (United Nation Development Programme) under the Gender Justice and Protection Project (GJP). The workshop covered both legal and humanitarian aspects of women trafficking.

Niaz Muhammad and Anis Badshah Bukhari, member inspection team and additional registrar Peshawar High Court respectively, highlighted the legal aspect of women trafficking and demanded that all sections pertaining to the punishment of perpetrators must be amended and due role of police and other agencies be included so as to address the issue comprehensively. Federal Ombudsman Director Mashood Mirza said that every year hundreds of thousands of women and children were trafficked both locally and internationally to use them in heinous crimes like prostitution, bonded labor and inhuman sports like camel race. Human rights activist Rakhshanda Naz lamented the poor performance of Pakistan in the TIP report of 2009 that placed it on tier 2 watch list. “Early child marriages, IDPs influx and rapid surge in poverty in the recent past have also contributed to the trafficking of women and girls,” she said. CAMP Chief Executive Naveed Ahmad Shinwari said that drastic reforms in laws and inter-institutional coordination among the law-enforcement agencies and CSOs would help curb the issue.

[Daily Times -- January 18, 2010]

Pakistan told to Expedite Domestic Violence Laws

The Pakistani government should quickly reintroduce legislation to protect women and children from domestic violence, the Human Rights Watch said on January 14. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill was passed unanimously by the National Assembly on August 4, 2009, but the bill lapsed after the Senate failed to pass it within the three months required under the Constitution. "Victims of domestic violence have long faced a double injustice -- abuse at home and then no protection from the government," said Ali Dayan Hasan, senior South Asia researcher at the Human Rights Watch. "The proposed law has widespread support in Pakistan, and the government should make passing it a priority." Legislators from both opposition and government parties told the Human Rights Watch that even though President Asif Zardari and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani supported the bill, it was delayed by unofficial opposition from some ministers who had privately urged members of religious parties to oppose the bill in the Upper House. Religious parties had not opposed the bill in the National Assembly. Hasan said that it is appalling that ministers from a political party committed to empowering and protecting women and led by a woman for 25 years are trying to undermine their own government's legislative agenda.

[The News -- January 15, 2010]

Women & Economics

Capacity Development Training of Women for Industrial Training Centres

To mark the end of a fifteen-day capacity development training for Industrial Training Centres (ITCs) of NWFP, an exhibition was held at the Empowerment through Creative Integration (ECI) Complex. The exhibition featured local handicrafts and skill demonstrations as well as plenty of food and game stalls, spread over the three floors of ECI's residential training complex, extending beyond the boundary walls towards the river Korang in Bhara Kahu.

The residential training workshop spanning over 15 days was part of a larger project titled 'Support to Implementation of GRAPS: Capacity Building of GRAP Stakeholders Project', funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and jointly implemented by Semiotics Consultants and ECI Pvt Ltd. The training had three major components - Effective ITC Management, Entrepreneurial Approach, and Skill Enhancement & Technical Training - that demonstrated the efforts of over 100 women participants from 15 districts of NWFP. Each of these women is either an instructor at or an owner of a public or private ITC in NWFP, while many of them have braved remarkable odds to move beyond the confines of their localities. This training event provided them with a platform to share their unique experiences, local products and skills with a larger audience. The event was designed as a 'capacity building initiative', where 105 training participants were provided an opportunity to interface with the market, display and sell their products, as well as learn to set-up and earn from such events. Through their experience, they learned to deal with competition, make a successful sales pitch, and the importance of appropriate packaging and display.

Remarkably, the skills being demonstrated were acquired in less than one week and included candle making, ribbon work, artificial flower-making using dough, foam and net, and jewellery making. Evidently, a lot of hard work and sleepless nights were put into creating the beautiful products on display at the final exhibition. Exhibition organisers and trainers were of the view that this was merely the first step towards introducing a range of new skills for majority of the ITCs, almost all of which would need specialised training before they could sell their products in a competitive market environment. The participants are now being encouraged to consider acquiring further training, they said. The participants felt that they had benefited tremendously from their experience, and many of them intended to disseminate the skills and business acumen they had learned through their ITCs to women and girls in their communities. A large number of them expressed their interest in seeking further training. This intervention has inspired ideas for future projects. Shahnaz Kapadia Rahat, Project Team Leader, elaborated the importance of not allowing this intervention to be a one-off initiative. She stressed that the ITCs are Business Development Service Providers (BDSPs) at the grassroots level with a potential to reach out and train women towards jobs or self-employment. Therefore, strengthening the ITCs will have a significant impact on economic development for women in NWFP.

[The News -- January 18, 2010]

MoU Signed for Facilitating Women-Run Businesses

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will facilitate acceleration of private sector-led economic, specifically for women-run businesses in southern Punjab, through adoption of effective market-

oriented technological, managerial and organisational practices. In this regard, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in Multan between the South Punjab Women Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SPWCCI) and the USAID FIRMS Project. The idea for the collaboration emerged from the Women's Small and Medium Enterprise Trade Fair arranged by the SPWCCI in November 2009. At the event, Suzanne Savage, Gender Adviser of the FIRMS Project and Aneela Iftikhar, President of SPWCCI, first explored the possibility of meaningful joint economic intervention to promote women entrepreneurship in south Punjab.

A spokesperson for FIRMS projects said on that the business environment for Pakistani women in general could be restrictive in terms of socio-cultural atmosphere, policies, regulatory arrangements and institutional mechanisms. Speaking at the signing of the MoU, Aneela Iftikhar said, "The signing of the MoU with the FIRMS Project demonstrates our commitment to enabling women entrepreneurs to play an active and productive role in prosperity of their households, their cities and the country."

She said women entrepreneurs would benefit immensely from the mission of FIRMS Project to improve government delivery service and develop dynamic, internationally competitive firms to accelerate sales, investment and job growth. Due to economic deprivation of the region, south Punjab has been identified as one of the key intervention areas by the USAID. Women entrepreneurs of this area are still facing business start-up problems and they require initiatives that will improve their skills and create a more enabling environment for business. The spokesperson said under the MoU, the USAID FIRMS Project and SPWCCI would enhance skills of women entrepreneurs and provide business development services to improve their operations and realise greater benefits from their work. Special attention will also be paid to developing the capacities of public and private support institutions.

[The News -- January 2, 2010]

SMEDA to Set-Up Women Business Development Centre

Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) has planned to set up 14 women business development centres in the country, including Multan. SMEDA CEO, Shahid Rashid meeting with members of Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) said SMEDA had arranged free legal service for SMEs. He advised the SMEDA Punjab chief to provide the MCCI with the maximum information on projects relating to Multan. He dispelled the impression that the Agro-Food Processing Plant was limited to the production of mango pulp only and said the plant had a capability of processing a number of other fruits like guava, tomato etc. The MCCI members expressed desire to organise an SME fair with the support of SMEDA for marketing SME products being produced in Southern Punjab and also invited SMEDA to set up a women business development center on the MCCI premises for promotion of women entrepreneurship.

[Daily Times -- January 1, 2010]

National Plan of Action: Draft says Data on Women's Employment Inadequate

To make women's economic contributions visible in both informal and formal sectors, the proposed draft of revised National Plan of Action (NPA) recommends gender review of the questions posed in national surveys including Labour Force Survey, Household Surveys and Agriculture Survey. Text of the proposed draft relates to the implementation of the new National Policy for Development and Empowerment of Women (2010 to 2015) that is currently under consultation. Prepared by Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP), Ministry of Women Development (MoWD), the new policy will coincide with tenth five-year plan and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) terminal year of 2015.

- The proposed NPA says that data on women employment collected by the Federal Bureau of Statistics as well as other surveys is inadequate and is unable to adequately capture rural women's work.
- It points out that gender disaggregated data is lacking in areas like recognition of women as fulltime workers in agriculture, exclusion of undocumented work by women such as small scale farming, work in informal sector, water and firewood collection and unpaid labour etc.
- The document says that simply disaggregating data by sex is insufficient to engender national statistics and budgets. This requires a thorough review of the data collection framework and process from gender perspective.
- It further states that a systematic and comprehensive approach should be developed to identify gender issues and provide data that genuinely surfaces women's needs to assist the formulation of policies and plans.

- To eliminate gender bias from data collection, the NPA suggests that key data collection institutions must focus on removing inconsistencies in data from different sources and gender training of government officials and members of civil society.
- Terming it a productive exercise, the paper appreciated gender review of Population Census 2010 in which questions have been included to capture part-time activities for more accurate assessment of women's economic contributions. However, it says that just statistical data collection is never sufficient to formulate plans that aim to advance women and achieve gender equality. For both qualitative and quantitative in-depth studies, it demands that the Ministry of Women Development (MoWD) research wing should be strengthened. It further suggest that Women Study Centres should also be strengthen for research and should be linked to MoWD and provincial Women Development Departments (WDDs). These study centres were established in eight universities across the country with a purpose to create a pool of knowledge around women's issues both in terms of research but also through courses.
- It also recommends that national research institutes such as Pakistan Institute of Development (PIDE) as well as university departments should be encouraged to expand research around gender, especially in all social, economic and art subjects.

[The News -- January 1, 2010]

Women & Media

Media & Women -- Quota Detaches Women from Real Competition

Urging women to make their place in media through professionalism and hard work, speakers at a seminar said that quota could never mainstream women in any field, rather it only introduces positive discrimination that detaches women from real competition. They were speaking at a one-day-training workshop on market and media, titled '**Growth of Electronic Media & its Impact on Women Journalists**', organised by the Gender Development Section (GDS), Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. Senior journalists including Dr Shireen Mazari and Matiullah Jan addressed the workshop, each session of which was followed by an interactive dialogue in which female journalists shared their experiences and pointed out the issues faced by women in electronic media. They said the women face discrimination in beat distribution, as in most cases, hard beats and on-the-spot coverage is given to their male colleagues. They termed harassment and lack of mobility some of the biggest hurdles in the way of professional development for women in this field, and said that much depends on the way women deal with all these hurdles. "If they are ready to put in their best and take initiatives, no one stops them from exploring new avenues," said one female journalist. Speakers said that demanding special gender recognition comes with positive discrimination that further segregates women from mainstream journalism, and added that good reporting demands thorough knowledge of the respective beat. They regretted that generally, the physical appearance of women determines their access to visual media. "At the end, it is not the looks but the capability and credibility that helps a professional to survive in this competitive field," said Dr Shireen Mazari. She condemned the recent circulation of the pictures of a party, attended by female journalists, on the Internet. "Maligning women professionals at a personal level is simply not acceptable and also raises questions about the attitude of male journalists towards their female colleagues," she added. Despite certain improvements, she said by and large, media is still a male domain and there is no comparison of a few female faces on screen with thousands of men behind the camera, controlling policies, production and hiring in media organisations. Secretary Ministry of Information & Broadcasting Mansoor Suhail said the government is the biggest beneficiary of the expansion of electronic media, as its message is now reaching every corner of the country. Pointing out certain gaps in this rapid expansion, he said the media is overly focusing on politics and news. "Even entertainment programmes revolve around news," he regretted and said that women could change media trends by bringing social issues in the limelight through professional reporting. Executive Director Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) Rehana Hashmi stressed the need to work on women issues that have so far remained invisible in media. She said majority of the women are unaware of women specific laws. "Only media can create awareness among women about their rights and the legal protection provided to them in the constitution," she pointed out. Rehana said every story has a gender angle that is usually ignored by media persons, and added that the female journalists could bring a real change in the social mindset of society.

[The News -- January 27, 2010]

Women's Leadership and Participation: Case Studies on Learning for Action

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DESCRIPTION

Women across the world bear a disproportionate burden of poverty in terms of material deprivation, discrimination, and denial of their basic rights. This means they often have little opportunity to influence the processes and institutions which shape their lives. The under-representation of women's voices in decision-making and agenda-setting at all levels mean that their interests tend to be under-represented in critical policy-making fora, and their skills, experience, and knowledge under-utilized. This entrenches both gender inequality and the poverty confronted by women and their communities on a daily basis.

There are, however, many examples where women have found the courage and the opportunities to challenge the status quo and become active citizens and successful leaders in political, economic and civil institutions, with inspiring results. This book brings together lessons and experience in building up women's involvement from Oxfam GB and its partners.

Women's Leadership and Participation illustrates methodological approaches and learning points, covering a range of issues, from women's participation in national elections to female decision-making in community livelihood initiatives. It asks the questions: what are the structural barriers to women's leadership and participation? How can women be encouraged to take up leadership positions? Once they are leading, how can women (and men) be supported to carry out their roles effectively and for progressive purposes?

The publication is available on <http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/display.asp?K=e2009102814340037>

HR Watch

Violence against Women

328 Cases of Violence against Women Reported in NWFP -- Report by Aurat Foundation

A total of 328 incidents of violence against women were reported in NWFP during the period of last six months (July to December 2009), said a report issued by Aurat Foundation (AF). The report has been prepared under the Project; policy and data monitor on violence against women with title 'Biannual Violence against Women'. The Director of the project was Shireen Javed with Dr Salahuddin as facilitator. According to the report, the highest number of cases was reported from Peshawar followed by Mardan, Nowshera and Charsadda. No case was reported from Tank and for the first time since the start of the project a case from Kurram Agency was reported in newspapers. Two hundred and thirty three cases were registered 37 not registered and there is no evidence of FIR status of remaining 58 cases.

The report said that out of 328 of violence against women 155 are murder cases with 38 in Peshawar, Mardan 30, Swabi 14, Nowshera 12, Charsadda 11, Haripur 6, Mansehra 9, Kohat Abbottabad, Lakki Marwat, Bannu 2 each while 5 each cases were reported from Karak and Malakand. Four case were reported from D I Khan while one each case was reported from Chitral, Swat, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Kurram Agency, Buner, Kohistan, Bajaur Agency and Shangla. A total of 33 cases of abduction/kidnapping were reported with highest 22 in Peshawar, 4 in Mardan, 2 in Nowshera and one each from Charsadda, Swabi, Mansehra, Bannu and Malakand. According to the report, a total of 64 cases of domestic violence were reported from different parts of the province while Peshawar once again topped the list with 37 cases followed by five cases in Nowshera and 4 in Mardan and Swabi while 2 cases were reported from Charsadda, Swat, and D I Khan and one each in Haripur, Kohat, Buner, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Batagram and Kohistan. Similarly, 22 cases of suicide were also reported with 5 from Peshawar, 3 in Nowshera, two each from Mardan and Mansehra and one each in Batagram and Kohistan. Amongst the total of 5 cases of rape/gang rape cases, two were reported from Peshawar and one each from Nowshera, Haripur and Batagram while one each case of kerosene oil burning and acid throwing were reported from Peshawar and Nowshera respectively. Amongst the 27 cases of miscellaneous nature included vani/swara, hurt and body injury, attempt murder, attempt suicide, women trafficking attempt kidnapping 11 were reported in Peshawar, 3 in Swabi, two each in Mardan, D I Khan, Kohat, Mansehra, Haripur and one each in Charsadda, Bannu and Upper Dir.

[Business Recorder -- January 6, 2010]

Violence against Women Claimed 27 Lives in 2009

As many as 12 women were killed by their husbands and another 15 fell victim to male violence in different incidents during 2009. According to details, two girls were killed when the girls' parents refused to marry them to the accused. A couple of incidents were also reported where women killed their husbands. On April 20, Umar killed his 35-year-old wife Asia Bibi, enraged over the fact that she had given birth to a daughter, in Liaqatabad police precincts. On May 8, Arshad – a resident of Johar Town – allegedly poisoned his wife Razia Bibi over a family dispute. On the same grounds, Ahsan Elahi of Model Town shot dead his wife Shazi on May 26. On June 23, Meer Ali burned to death his 21-year-old wife Kiran Shehzadi, for allegedly refusing to give him the Rs 50,000 she had taken from her parents. On July 23, 21-year-old Asma was burned by her in-laws, who then threw her on a road in Johar Town. Edhi officials shifted her to the hospital in critical condition where she passed away. On August 16, Umar of Sabzazar killed his wife by beating her with a hockey stick for objecting to his second marriage. Ashiq – a former army jawan – shot dead his wife Haneefa Bibi over domestic issues in Millat Park police precincts on August 18. On August 20, Javed Masih – a resident of Shahdara – killed his wife Asia by mutilating her with a pair of scissors. Nadeem shot dead his wife and three-year-old daughter, and then committed suicide in Bhatti Police precincts on September 17. The reason behind the murders is still unknown. On August 13, Irshad killed his wife Sobia Butt, and then unsuccessfully tried to commit suicide by shooting himself in Iqbal Town police precincts. Sagheer – along with his brothers – killed his wife Shazia over a family dispute on September 24. Ali Raza shot dead his 20-year-old wife Kulsoom in Sabazazar police precincts on November 30, because she had filed for divorce.

On April 10, Nadeem Abbas – along with two accomplices – mutilated 23-year-old Fauzia by cutting off her hands and legs when the victim's family refused to marry her to the accused. On November 12, Irshad murdered Shamim after her parents refused to marry her to the accused, in Shafiqabad police precincts. On June 16, Zohaib shot dead 22-year-old Qaisra Babar when she ignored his advances in Misri Shah police precincts. On October 25, Rashid killed 35-year-old Robina, the wife of his employer Saleem, for firing him from work in Samanabad police precincts.

On November 15, 24-year-old Tasleem Bibi – who was unmarried – died at a hospital in North Cantt police precincts during an abortion surgery. On June 5, Amjad and Sher Khan shot dead Ruby and her husband Habibur Rehman over a personal enmity. On July 8, an unidentified person killed 18-year-old Saima in Rivaz Gardens. On November 15, a 13-year-old girl was killed in a crossfire between two groups in South Cantt police precincts. On February 20, an elderly woman Hanifa Bibi and her 10-year-old grandson Tahir were strangled by unidentified persons at their home in Hunjerwala police precincts. The motive for the murders is still unknown. On July 23, 40-year-old advocate Safia Jabeen died after being shot by unidentified persons at the railway station. Meanwhile on July 29, unidentified men axed to death Sughra Bibi – a labourer at a brick kiln – in Raiwind for unknown reasons. On September 14, three women of a family were found dead in their house in Gole Bagh, Shadbagh police precincts. The victims were identified as 17-year-old Sana, her 35-year-old mother Tasneem Bibi and her 65-year-old maternal grandmother Mumtaz Bibi. On October 19 – three men and two women – allegedly shot dead 60-year-old Jannat Bibi and later cut her jugular vein over a domestic dispute in Baba Fareed Colony, Kot Lakhpat police precincts. On April 14, Tabinda Naseem, committed suicide after killing her four-year-old daughter Mayanaz in Qadri Colony, Shafiqabad police precincts. Family issues were reported as being the reason behind the tragic incident.

[Daily Times -- January 4, 2010]

Special Course Conducted for Police Officers on Section 174-A

In a focused campaign to create awareness about Section 174-A of the CrPC, a law enacted to prevent gender-based violence (GBV) in society and specifically relating to deal with the 'burn case victims', a special training session for mid-ranking police officers was conducted at the Sihala Police Training College. A team of experts from the Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP), led by Medical Superintendent Family Health Hospital Dr. Nasira Malik, conducted the training. Commandant Sihala Police Training College Nasir Khan Durrani facilitated the training which was attended by a batch of 80 under-training officers of DSP rank and inspectors to be promoted as DSPs. Deputy Commandant of Sihala Police Training College, Khalid Dad Lak, and SSP (Course Commandant) Ghulam Rasool Zahid assisted the FPAP team in the training session. "Being the officers of the law, already performing their duties in the community and will resume their task of policing after completing your course in the college, it is all the more important that you should know exactly what the Section 174-A CrPC is and the circumstances that led to its incorporation in the law," Dr Nasira Malik said while addressing the police officers. She deliberated briefly over the prevailing conditions almost all over the country with reference to the gender-based violence (GBV) incidents and focused specifically on the incidents where women are burnt, leaving them disfigured and mutilated and in a large number of cases they eventually die. Additional Secretary Government of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Raja Mohammad Razzaq, was engaged as resource person for the training session spoke at length over the issue explaining the situation prevalent before Section 174-A CrPC was introduced as well as the conditions at present. He was of the view that only because of lack of awareness as to what Section 174-A CrPC provides for while dealing with gender based violence, and specifically while handling the burn cases, in which invariably victims happen to be women, dispensation of justice is hindered. There are four institutions involved in handling the GBV cases. The first and foremost responsibility lies with the medical doctor to whom the victim is brought first for medical treatment. Under Section 174-A CrPC, the medical doctor who attends to such a patient has been given powers to record the victim's statement, which has been given a legal status. The next stage is where police gets involved in the case. If the police officer dealing with the case is aware of the intricacies of Section 174-A CrPC, he can handle the case in a manner that will help prepare a good case for the lawyer to take to the court of law. Similarly, if the lawyers are also aware of this particular section of the law, it would be easier for them to plead the case in the court and help the judge reach a right decision, Raja Razaq said adding the role of medical doctor and the police officer handling such cases are of utmost importance.

[The News -- January 25, 2010]

Child Rights

Complaint Desk Set-Up for Kids at Wafaqi Mohtasib

Children can write, phone and e-mail to Wafaqi Mohtasib to file complaints against schools, hospitals and law enforcing agencies for redressal of an act of injustice. This is a unique initiative and children can send complaints to Children Complaint Office (CCO) of Wafaqi Mohtasib, which is working to protect and promote rights of children. Wafaqi Mohtasib joined hands with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to create the complaint office under a project Responsible, Enabling and Accountable Systems for Children Rights (REACH). Children are more than 50 percent of the total population of Pakistan. Advisor and Head of Children's Complaint Office Ejaz Qureshi said main objective of the complaint office will be to provide an alternative forum to children for seeking justice. The office will investigate cases filed by a child upto 18 years of age to prevent maladministration on part of any federal agency.

At present the office is receiving 65 to 70 percent of complaints from children residing in provinces. These cases are tackled by complaint offices in provinces. About 30 percent of the complaints are registered by children living in federal areas and most of the problems are of admissions in schools and colleges. These cases are taken up with the Federal Directorate of Education. Although courts hear cases filed by children but filing of legal applications, hiring of a lawyer and waiting for justice for months is expensive and tiresome. However, suo moto action of courts is a ray of hope for petitioners as they get speedy justice. Ejaz Qureshi told that the Children's Complaint Office was established in 2008 and a workshop was held in Lahore to discuss its working. The project began in earnest in April 2009 with the appointment of an incharge and officers to handle the cases. As a first step, Wafaqi Mohtasib kept its procedures simple so those youngsters feel encouraged and willingly step forward to file complaints. It also arranged a workshop to train provincial officers and give them proper guidelines on how to handle complaints of children. The guidelines have been circulated among all the officers, Ejaz added. The office takes maximum time of two months to resolve matters of children. The applicants do not require attaching national identity card to file complaints and they can submit them online. Ejaz said his office will further simplify procedures and even forward proposals to the government for legislation to make the process more effective.

As people are not aware about this complaint office, Wafaqi Mohtasib is looking to launch a media campaign this month. Young people can email their complaints at complaints@mohtasib.gov.pk and can call on toll free number 111-123- 967 and phone numbers 051-9252357 and 051-9252391-94. They can write to Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Secretariat, Benevolent Fund Building, Zero Point, Islamabad.

[The Nation -- January 18, 2010]

'Media Coalition against Child Labour' Formed

Journalists from print, electronic and online media from Karachi and Hyderabad said at a meeting to form Karachi and Hyderabad Chapters of 'Media Coalition Against Worst Form of Child Labour' organised by 'Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR)' in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation and the Federal Ministry of Information that in today's media environment, there is a need to create more pro people space in media and children which are a major chunk of population. They need special attention of media as they are being put in a large number into hazardous and the worst forms of child labour. They pledged to work for the cause of the working children pledging to fight against the menace of the worst forms of child labour through their respective media work. Representatives from ILO, Federal Ministry of Information, Roshni Helpline for Children and Employers Federation of Pakistan also shared their perspective on child labour and offered their full cooperation to media professionals in exposing the hazardous impacts of child labour on children and Pakistani society. Saud Alam from Employers Federation, Zaheer Arif from ILO/Ministry of Information, Shahid Shah, Adeel Pathan and Shafqat Munir from JDHR, Muhammad Ali from Roshni Helpline took active part in the discussion. The Media Coalition's Karachi chapter elected Aroosa Masroor as its convenor and Zulfiqar Rajpar as deputy convenor, and a committee comprising seven members, Hyderabad Chapter elected Adeel Pathan as convenor, Saba Channa as deputy convenor with a seven members committee.

[The News -- January 16, 2010]

Child Protection & Welfare Bill -- Govt Seeks CSOs Suggestions on Draft

The Provincial Government has sent the draft of NWFP Child Protection and Welfare Bill to the civil society organisations to get their input in providing protection to the children at risk. The bill having nine parts with 66 sections is aimed at providing care, protection, maintenance, welfare, training, education, rehabilitation and

reintegration of the children at risk in the Frontier province. The bill envisages the establishment of the NWFP Child Protection and Welfare Commission, comprising a Chairperson (Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development), vice-chairperson (Social Welfare and Women Department secretary), and secretaries of the provincial finance, home and tribal affairs, law, local government and primary education departments as members. Another six members will be from the civil society while Chief Protection Officer (CPO) will act as Secretary and member of the Commission and also the Chief Executive of its secretariat. According to the bill, the government will establish child protection units at district level with prime responsibility of receiving and registering children and their families considered to be in need of protection and then planning and coordinating the provision of services in cash or in kind to meet the assessed needs of children and their families. The Commission may also establish one or more child protection institutions not only to provide the child at risk with accommodation, treatment, maintenance and facility for education but also for the development of his character and abilities and necessary training for protection against moral dangers or exploitation.

Under section 13 the Commission shall establish child protection and welfare fund consisting grants, donations, endowments and bequest received by it for the care, protection, maintenance, welfare, training, education, rehabilitation and rehabilitation of children at risk. The bill also provides for establishment of child protection courts with the concurrence of the Peshawar High Court. The special court may issue orders in respect of handing over the custody of a child at risk with respect of a child that is brought before it either to his parents, guardian, a suitable person or a child protection institution. The bill further states that no report in any newspaper, magazine regarding a child under this bill will disclose the name, address or school or any other particulars, which lead to the identification of the child nor shall any picture of the child be published provided the authority holding the assessment may permit such disclosure if in its opinion such disclosure is in the interest of the child. A child above the age of 12 and below 15 when convicted may be ordered to perform a community service through probation officer. Similarly, a child above the age of 15 and below 18 when convicted shall be treated in accordance with the provisions of Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000. About corporal punishment, the bill states that the wrongdoer shall be punished with imprisonment for a term, which may extend to six months or with fine up to 50,000 rupees, or with both. For offences of sexual abuse, the culprits under the bill shall be punished with maximum 14 and minimum seven-year imprisonment and also liable to be fined not less than Rs1 million.

[The News -- January 25, 2010]

Lawmakers Call for Legislation against Child Labour

Legislators in the National Assembly, on January 25, called for urgent legislation against child labour in the country to prevent child abuse and domestic violence. The lawmakers called for this legislation in context to the death of a 12-year-old housemaid, Shazia, who was killed in Lahore a few days ago due to alleged torture by her employers. The House also passed a unanimous resolution to condemn the killing of Shazia and demanded the culprits be brought to justice.

MNAs including Shahbaz Bhatti, Attiya Inayatullah, Wasim Akhtar, Dr Nelson Azeem and others asked the government to immediately take steps for effective legislation against child labour so incidents like these could be controlled in the future. Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti said Shazia Masih died due to physical torture and the post-mortem report revealed there were 26 wounds on her body. The Minister said that he visited the house of the bereaved family on the directive of Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani and offered condolences on the PM's behalf. President Asif Ali Zardari and the PM have announced Rs 500,000 as compensation for the family.

MNA Attiya Inayatullah said the death of Shazia was the result of delayed legislation against child labour. She lauded the Punjab Chief Minister's efforts whose intervention forced the police to register a First Information Report (FIR) after initial delay. She also urged the interior minister to direct the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to take action against gangs involved in the kidnapping of children. MNA Ayaz Sadiq informed the House that the chief minister immediately ordered an inquiry to probe the delay in registration of the FIR. MNA Wasim Akhtar said crimes against minorities have increased manifold, particularly in Sindh, and the provincial government was not doing enough to address the issue. He said the Sindh government has failed to improve the law and order situation and asked the federal government to take notice of this. Aasia Nasir urged the government for proper legal cover against child labour. She asked the Labour Ministry and the Social Welfare Ministry to take immediate steps to curb child labour in the country. She said the people responsible for Shazia's death should be severely punished. Condemning the incident of Shazia's killing, MNA Dr Darshan demanded those responsible for the 12-year-old maid's death be brought to justice. He also urged the government to take notice of increasing incidents of abduction for ransom in Sindh. Dr Nelson Azeem also called for effective legislation against child labour and

asked the government to provide free legal services to Shazia's family to contest the case in the court. MNA Sheikh Aftab, on a point of order, called Shazia Masih the "daughter of Pakistan".

[Daily Times -- January 26, 2010]

Over 1,000 Minors Languishing in Country's Jails, Senate told

More than 1,000 minor children are detained in various jails across the country, the Senate was informed on January 22. In a written reply submitted in the House, Interior Minister Rehman Malik said 795 of the children were detained in jails in Punjab, 248 in Sindh, 165 in the NWFP and 54 in Balochistan. Malik said that though the welfare of these prisoners is a provincial subject, the prime minister, the Interior Ministry and the National Reconstruction Bureau have proposed recommendations for the welfare of these minor prisoners. He said the Ministry was making all out efforts to improve the conditions of the prisons and prisoners, including juvenile detainees.

[Daily Times -- January 23, 2010]

Other HR Related Issues

Knowledge-Sharing and Capacity Development for Media and Parliamentarians on Human Rights

Speakers at a seminar asked the government to increase funding for the Ministry of Women Development as at present it stands at the 49th position on a list of 52 federal ministries in terms of annual budgetary allocations. The seminar "**Knowledge-Sharing and Capacity Development for Media and Parliamentarians on Human Rights**" was organised by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Ministry of Women Development. The two-day seminar that concluded on January 1 evening was attended by MNA and Parliamentary Secretary on Women Development Zile Huma, Parliamentary Secretary on Health Dr Mehreen Bhutto, Ghazala Gola, the minister for women development Balochistan; Tauqir Fatima Bhutto, the minister for women development Sindh; Amina Ansari, MLA from Gilgit-Baltistan and members of provincial assemblies of Punjab and NWFP.

The participants said legislatures should also make extraordinary efforts to increase allocations for the provincial women ministries as women affairs were being separated from the department of social development in order to focus exclusively on their issues. In different presentations, officials of the Ministry of Women Development and UNFPA highlighted the prevalent conditions of women and other marginalised segments of society regarding their basic rights. The parliamentarians spoke about problems and hurdles faced by them while getting finances and other facilities for their departments. They said bureaucracy always kept the relevant ministers in the dark about preparation of annual budgets and bypassed them when recommendations were made for budget preparations. Talking about reluctance of women in NWFP to come out of their houses, the MPA from the province said under the Benazir Income Support Programme cheques were being issued only to women of a family but about 48,000 cheques were still pending distribution in Parachinar as women did not turn up to collect them. With the help of presentations it was stated that Pakistan ranked low in different indexes relating to human development, gender development, gender employment and poverty in the year 2008.

[Dawn -- January 2, 2010]

Governance Watch

Political Governance

Legislative Business

NA Passes 15 Bills in 2009

The National Assembly (NA) worked in full swing in the year 2009 and passed 15 bills including money bill, which was passed unanimously on June 20. On April 10, the NA approved the formation of a body to discuss the implementation of the Charter of Democracy. After its unanimous approval by the Upper House, NA Speaker Fehmida Mirza on June 23 announced a 27-member special parliamentary committee to revisit the 17th Amendment and propose reforms in the constitution. Another Special Parliamentary Committee on National Security also met several times in 2009 to give parliamentary input to the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Defence regarding the security of the country in the context of regional geo-political situation with particular reference to the war on terror. The Senate elections were conducted on March 4 in the four provinces as well as in federal capital in which the PPP emerged as majority party in the Upper House. On March 8, PPP-backed Farooq Naik was elected the Chairman of the Senate. Raza Rabbani, who was expecting the slot, resigned from the positions of the leader of the House in the Senate and Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination. In 2009, three joint sessions of parliament were held. The first joint sitting was held on March 28, which was addressed by President Asif Ali Zardari. He had said he would lift governor's rule in Punjab and the PPP would support the Pakistan People's Party-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate for the slot of chief minister but the party would sit on opposition benches in the province. He had also asked the PPP government to make arrangements to repeal amendments introduced by dictatorships in the constitution. The second joint session of parliament was held on October 26, which was addressed by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The Aghaz-e-Haqooq Balochistan package was presented in the joint session of parliament on November 24.

Another important event in the country's parliamentary history took place on April 13 when the NA passed the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009. The MQM opposed the regulation and staged a walkout from the assembly. Later, President Zardari signed it after getting a nod from parliament.

As the security situation dominated parliamentary debates in the year 2009, the NA approved the first military operation in Swat on May 12. On June 13, State Minister for Finance Hina Rabbani Khar presented the 2009-2010 budget, which was unanimously passed on June 20. The government was compelled by the opposition parties as well as the MQM to withdraw the carbon tax from the money bill. On October 16, the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) was tabled in the NA and the Senate. The PML-N and the PML-Quaid announced that they would oppose the law. Consequently, after criticism by the opposition and PPP's coalition partner, the MQM, the government decided not to get the NRO passed by parliament.

During the year, the NA passed the following legislative bills: The Finance Bill 2009-10, the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act 2009, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2009, the Federal Board of Revenue (Amendment) Act 2009, the Modaraba Companies and Modaraba (Floatation and Control) (Amendment) Act 2009, the NFC Institute of Engineering and Technology Multan Act 2009, the Stock Exchanges (Corporatisation, Demutualisation and Integration) Act 2008, the Family Courts (Amendment) Act 2008, the Guardians and Wards (Amendment) Act 2008, the Election Law (Amendment) Bill 2009, the Cotton Standardisation (Amendment) Act 2008, the Anti-Dumping Duties (Amendment) Act 2008, the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act 2008, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2009 and the Rulers of Acceding States (Abolition of Privy Purses and Privileges) (Amendment) Act 2008. On October 6, the Senate approved the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill 2009, thus abolishing the condition of graduation for contesting elections.

[Daily Times -- January 1, 2010]

Bill Passed by NA in January 2010

1. January 29 -- The Institute of Space Technology Act, 2009
2. January 28 -- The National Command Authority Act, 2009
3. January 27 -- The Pakistan Engineering Council (Amendment) Act, 2009
4. January 27 -- The Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2009
5. January 27 -- The Competition Act, 2009
6. January 26 -- The Service Tribunals (Amendment) Act, 2010
7. January 26 -- Removal from Service (Special Powers) Ordinance, 2000 (Repeal) Act, 2010
8. January 21 -- The Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010
9. January 18, -- The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics Act, 2009
10. January 13 -- The Public Defender and Legal Aid Office Act, 2009

More details of each bill are available on www.na.gov.pk

[www.na.gov.pk]

Bills Approved by the Senate

Parliament [Salaries and Allowances (Amendment)] Bill 2009: The Senate on January 11 passed two legislative bills – including the Members of Parliament [Salaries and Allowances (Amendment)] Bill 2009 – approving privileges for former lawmakers who have served at least five years in Parliament. The bill – which had been moved by Senator Tariq Azeem of PML-Q – recommends the insertion of Section 14C in the ‘Members of Parliament (Salaries and Allowances) Act 1974’.

According to the text of Section 14C, a member of Parliament who served for at least five years would be entitled to the following facilities after his/her retirement or after he/she ceases to be a member: the use of all VIP lounges at airports in Pakistan, all standard “courtesies” provided to members of parliament at diplomatic missions abroad, the use of federal and provincial lodges and guest houses, the utilisation of leftover development funds of his/her grant at the time of his/her retirement or his/her ceasing to be a member until the conclusion of the financial year. Other facilities granted to retired MPs include the retention of official and gratis passports and the right to get the documents renewed on expiry, free medical treatment and facilities as admissible to Grade 22 government officers.

Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 2003: The Senate also passed the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 2003 – tabled by PML-Q Senator Muhammad Anwar Bhinder. Under the bill, interim reports of criminal cases would be submitted within 14 days to allow the start of trials, and final reports would be submitted within two months. The bill also prohibits lengthy proceedings and delay in the submission of the final report”. “The hearing of criminal cases be [held on a] ... day-to-day [basis] so that the cases are decided early,” it says.

[Daily Times -- January 12, 2010]

Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms

Amendment in Article 224

The special parliamentary committee on Constitutional Reforms on January 6 agreed to propose amendments to Article 224 of the constitution, which deals with the caretaker government. The constitutional reforms committee proposed that caretaker governments would be appointed by the President, in consultation with the outgoing Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition and all Chief Ministers. Article 224, at the moment, reads, “Provided that on dissolution of an assembly on completion of its term, the president, in his discretion, or, as the case may be, the governor, in his discretion but with the previous approval of the President, shall appoint a care-taker cabinet.”

[Daily Times -- January 7, 2010]

Establishment of IHC

The Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms on January 15 approved an amendment in the constitution to establish a High Court in the Federal Capital. The committee, chaired by Senator Raza Rabbani, agreed to amend Article 175 of the constitution that deals with the establishment and jurisdiction of courts. Former President Gen (R) Pervez Musharraf had established the Islamabad High Court (IHC) through an ordinance during the emergency rule he imposed in November 2007. The Supreme Court had declared the IHC unconstitutional in its July 31, 2009 verdict and ordered its abolition. Various political parties have almost reached a consensus to establish a high court in the federal capital while the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid has already submitted a bill in the National Assembly in this regard. The Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs minister has also repeatedly stated that the IHC would be established soon.

[Daily Times -- January 16, 2010]

Sindh Assembly

SA asks Punjab to Scrap Hydroelectric Power Project

In yet another show of rare unity, members on both sides of the aisle in the Sindh Assembly on January 28 unanimously rejected the Punjab government's plan to build a power plant at the tail of the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal. Vowing to oppose the plan tooth and nail, both the treasury and opposition members who spoke on the issue termed it a "matter of life and death for Sindh" and warned that it could trigger a "war for water" among the federating units if Punjab did not heed the call for scraping the project. The speakers were of the view that the project, envisaging installation of a 44MW hydro-electric power plant, was a conspiracy against the country's solidarity and provincial harmony. The Punjab move came under discussion on the floor of the house when more than half a dozen members requested the Speaker, Nisar Ahmad Khuhro, for permission to move their resolutions in this regard and take up the issue out of turn under Rule 211. Dr Sikander Mandhro, whose resolution appeared comprehensive and was endorsed by Jam Madad Ali, Shaheryar Maher, Heer Soho, Nusrat Sehar Abbasi, Sassui Palejo, Humera Alwani and Anwar Maher, was allowed to table it. After brief speeches by a dozen members, the resolution was unanimously adopted when it was put to a vote.

The resolution reads: "The Punjab government has proposed a 44MW power plant at the tail of the Chashma-Jhelum Link Canal to be operated by a private party. The Sindh government has been opposing this project as it is detrimental to the interest of the province and will add to the already acute water shortage being faced by the province.

[Dawn -- January 29, 2010]

Madaris Regulatory Authority (MRA)

Govt, Clerics Agree on Formation of Madaris Regulatory Authority

The Government and the country's clerics have unanimously approved the formation of the Madaris Regulatory Authority (MRA), and declared the registration of foreign students as mandatory at time of their enrollment in the country's madrassas. The second round of the talks between the Government and Ittehad Tanzeemul Madaris (ITM) concluded on January 28. Interior Minister Rehman Malik said the clerics agreed on the MRA's formation and had put forward the names of three people for the MRA's Chairman post. The MRA would be formed after the final approval from Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani. Malik said the MRA would function under the Education Ministry's wing. He said five separate boards would be set up for the five major schools of Islamic thought and a uniform syllabus would be introduced at all the boards. Madrassas across the country would be audited on a regular basis. Malik said no foreign students would be able to gain admission in Pakistani madrassa without getting registered. Any madrassa found to be involved in terror-related activities would be severely dealt with, he added. The Minister said the Government had completely banned the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and it was not involved in carrying out any activity in the country. Stern action would also be taken against those elements found to be involved in distributing extremists' literature at Government. He warned that the Government would not allow people to carry out terrorist activities under the country's madrassas.

[Daily Times -- January 29, 2010]

Elections & ECP Related Updates

Rehmat Ali of ANP Wins Swat Seat

Awami National Party's Rehmat Ali Khan won a provincial assembly seat from Swat in a by-election held on January 28. The seat fell vacant after Rehmat Ali's brother, Shamsher Ali Khan, was killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up at his home on December 1 last year. According to unofficial results, Rehmat Ali Khan received 6,952 votes against 3,304 polled by his close rival Jalat Khan of PML-Q. PTI candidate Sher Khan secured 3,124 votes while Hussain Ahmad Kanju of JI, a former Provincial Minister, got 2,820 votes. The ANP candidate was supported by the PPP, PPP (Sherpao), PML-like-minded and Swat Qaumi Amn Jirga. Of the 80 polling stations, 33 were exclusively meant for women but their turnout was extremely low. Polling was peaceful and orderly.

[Dawn -- January 29, 2010]

Nawaz among 23 in run for NA-123

At least 23 candidates, including former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, will be contesting for the National Assembly seat in 123 constituency, Lahore after the Supreme Court declared on Tuesday that its verdict on NA-55 by-polls was applicable to the by-election in the Lahore constituency.

By-polls for NA-123 seat, vacated by PML-N's Javed Hashmi, could not be held in June 2008, as one of the contestants challenged candidature of Mr Sharif, the chief of his own faction of the Muslim League.

The case was eventually decided in favour of Mr Sharif and the Election Commission decided to hold by-polls on Nov 7, but the Punjab government moved the Lahore High Court against the electoral exercise on the plea that the commission did not hear its point of view on the security situation.

The polls were delayed as the court directed the commission to hear the Punjab government before giving any schedule for by-polls in the province. The LHC orders were overturned by the apex court.

There were doubts that Mr Sharif would not contest the by-election under an alleged agreement with the Saudi government, which barred him from entering into the country's political arena till October 2010.

Although PML-N chief's spokesman Pervaiz Rashid denied all such reports, filing of papers for the constituency by PML-N leaders Pervaiz Malik and Khwaja Ahmad Hassaan gave credence to reports that the former prime minister might withdraw his nomination at the last stage.

It may be noted that on the directions of party's provincial cadre PPP candidates Azhar Mughal, Javed Shahbaz Heera, Abid Saqi and Haji Muhammad had already filed their nominations for the seat, election schedule for which will be issued by ECP soon.

[Dawn -- January 7, 2010]

Punjab By-Polls on March 10

By-election for an important National Assembly seat in Lahore will be held on March 10, after a lapse of about two years. According to a schedule announced by the Election Commission, the electoral process in NA-123 Lahore-VI, the home constituency of PML-N Chief Mian Nawaz Sharif will begin on January 30, when a public notice will be issued by the Returning Officer. Polling could not be held in the constituency during the general election of 2008 because a case pertaining to eligibility of Mr Sharif was pending in court. Even after Mr Sharif was declared eligible to contest, by-election could not be held despite several announcements of the poll schedule.

The Commission announced the schedule in accordance with a Supreme Court judgment which said that filling a vacant seat within 60 days was a constitutional requirement. Although Mr Sharif and Pervaz Rasheed of the PML-N had earlier submitted their nomination papers, the new schedule keeps the door open for new candidates. Under the schedule, nomination papers will be received from Feb 1 to 4 and scrutinised from Feb 6 to 8. February 11 will be the last date for filing appeals against acceptance or rejection of nomination papers by the Returning Officer. Appeals will be decided by Feb 16. The last date for withdrawing candidature is Feb 17 and the revised list of candidates will be published the following day. The Commission said that candidates who had already filed their nomination would not be required to file fresh papers. The same schedule will apply to by-elections in PP-82 Jhang-X and PP-284 Bahawalnagar-VIII.

[Dawn -- January 13, 2010]

Nawaz among 23 in Run for NA-123

At least 23 candidates, including former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, will be contesting for the National Assembly seat in 123 constituency, Lahore after the Supreme Court declared that its verdict on NA-55 by-polls was applicable to the by-election in the Lahore constituency.

[Dawn -- January 7, 2010]

Tough Fight Predicted between Shakeel Awan & Sheikh Rashid for the NA-55 Seat

Though there are several candidates in the run for NA-55 by-election on February 24, but the real contest is between Shakil Awan of PML-N and Sheikh Rashid of Awami Muslim League (AML). According to political pundits, the real contest would be between Sheikh Rashid Ahmed and Shakil Awan. They said that the major reason behind it is the absence of the PPP candidate in the bye-polls. They were of the view that votes of the PPP would be divided among the PML-N, AML and the JUI. PPP Rawalpindi District Information Secretary Nasir Mir said that the real contest would be between Sheikh Rashid and Shakil Awan. However he refused to predict who would be the ultimate winner. He said being the ruling party in the centre and coalition partner in Punjab government, PPP activists and leaders would support Shakil Awan. He said that the popularity of PML-N was less than the period before general elections in 2008.

[The News -- January 27, 2010]

By-polls in PF-75 Lakki Marwat-II on February 10

The NWFP Election Commission, on January 6, announced February 10 as the date for by-polls in PF-75 (Lakki Marwat-II) constituency, which fell vacant due to the death of MPA Dr Muhammad Khalid Reza. The Election Commission has appointed the Kohat Deputy Election Commissioner as the Returning Officer, while Lakki Marwat Executive District Officer (education) has been directed to assist the Returning Officer.

[Daily Times -- January 7, 2010]

Jaffarabad By-Poll

The Election Commission of Balochistan has announced the schedule for by-election for the Provincial Assembly seat PB-25, Jaffarabad-1, which had fallen vacant after the killing of Sardarzada Rustam Ali Jamali. Polling will be held on March 10.

[Dawn -- January 20, 2010]

Economic Governance

National Finance Commission (NFC) Award

NFC Award's Success Dependent on its Benefit to Masses

Experts have stressed that the success of NFC Award 2009 is dependent on the benefits given to the masses and the key responsibility lies with the provinces, which have been granted more resources in the seventh NFC Award. Speaking at a seminar organised by the Sustainable Development Institute of Pakistan, speakers said that addressing the issues of NFC is only setting the directions but the real problem would be the implementation of the decision made at the NFC.

National University of Science and Technology senior economist Dr Ashfaq Hassan Khan said that higher allocations mean more responsibility for the provinces but hardly anything is being done for capacity-building of the provincial departments. He lauded the settlement of NFC Award between the Centre and the provinces and termed it as a landmark achievement for the country. "However, the implementation issues have to be considered at this stage," he said. Highlighting his own in the capacity of being adviser to the Finance Ministry in previous years, Dr Hassan said that the distribution of amount depends on the revenue collection besides the Centre will get only 2 percent for development if infrastructure is according to the NFC Award, while it will leave social sector development to the provinces. The NFC has granted the responsibility to the provinces to collect GST on services. Meanwhile, former federal secretary Fazlullah Qureshi said that to meet fiscal deficit, provinces will have to generate surplus amounts, but they have already been under performing in this sector. "There are serious

leakages and problems at revenue departments in the provinces,” he said. Qureshi said that in the last fiscal year Punjab had the target to collect Rs 6 billion from urban property tax but only Rs 2 billion was recovered, similarly Rs 7 billion was to be collected from motor vehicle tax and Rs 3.3 billion was collected. Qureshi said that everybody knows that collection from the agriculture income is negligible. The real issue is governance and lack of fiscal discipline, if it is not taken care of the ordinary citizens will never benefit. However, Dr Kaiser Bengoli and Senator Haji Adeel Khan informed the achievements of the NFC Award 2009. Senator Haji Adeel said that the award has not only shown national cohesion but lingering issues of the provinces like the net hydel profit and gas development surcharge have also been settled. Dr Bengoli said that finalisation of the NFC Award is the beginning and moves would be made for greater provincial autonomy in the next awards.

[Daily Times -- January 7, 2010]

Donors' Financial Assistance

US to Give \$1b for Six Energy Projects

US will provide \$16 billion for the up-gradation of Pakistan's largest hydropower project Tarbela. This was stated by the US Special Envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke. Richard Holbrooke who is currently on a three-day official visit to Pakistan said that United States was well aware of the energy crisis confronting its trusted ally Pakistan. In order to help Pakistan in meeting its energy requirements, United States will help to upgrade Tarbela Hydropower Project on priority basis, Holbrooke said. He said a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has also been signed in this connection on Wednesday between the US and Pakistan. Commenting on the upcoming London meeting, Holbrooke said, "The meeting will have a major role to play regarding reconstruction process in Afghanistan. I believe this will be followed by international efforts to help elements which seek to abandon extremist groups there and lead a normal life in Afghanistan."

The United States will give Pakistan \$1 billion for six energy sector projects over the next four years to meet energy shortages. The projects include up-gradation of the Jamshoro Thermal Power Station in Sindh and Muzaffarabad Power Station in Punjab, Holbrooke said after signing an agreement for the projects.

[The Nation -- January 16, 2010]

US to Spend \$200m in Pakistan to Revamp Education

According to a report by Washington Post, the United States plans to spend USD 200 million this year on education in Pakistan, the U.S. Agency for International Development's largest education programme worldwide. The idea is to improve the capacity of Pakistan's fledgling civilian-led administration, and to promote trust between the two nations, the report said. The money comes from the Kerry-Lugar aid bill, which was passed in late 2009 and promises Pakistan USD 7.5 billion in civilian assistance over the next five years. The funds are intended to signal a substantial shift from earlier years, when U.S. assistance to Pakistan was overwhelmingly focused on helping the military, which is battling the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the nation's northwest.

[Dawn -- January 18, 2010]

World Bank to Provide \$6.5bn in 4 Years

The World Bank will provide about \$6.5 billion to Pakistan over the next four years (2010-13) to fight poverty and help overcome economic boom-and-bust cycles. WB Country Director Yusupha Crookes said Pakistan faced major challenges of macroeconomic imbalances, worsening social indicators, deteriorated infrastructure, lack of competitiveness and gender disparities. He said conflicts in borders areas were also posing serious challenges for Pakistan. He said the Bank's Board of Directors would be requested to resume its IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction & Development) lending facility under which Pakistan could receive about \$2.5 billion. Under the soft-term IDA (International Development Assistance), the country would get \$4 billion in equal instalments in four years.

Pakistan, he said, had been experiencing boom-and-bust cycles over the past 14 years of economic growth and stood among the top regional states of South Asia in terms of huge variables. The growth path was volatile and clearly indicated that macroeconomic shocks could quickly reverse macroeconomic achievements as decline in growth led to increasing poverty. He said incidence of poverty in Pakistan stood at 17.3 percent in 1986-87 and still hovered around 17.2 percent, which clearly showed results achieved in booms were quickly lost in busts.

[Dawn -- January 27, 2010]

Facts & Figures on Pakistan's Economy

External Debt to Rise by 43pc in Five Years

Pakistan's total external debt is likely to grow alarmingly by more than 43 percent over the next five years, to about \$73 billion in 2015-16 from about \$50.76 billion early this year. According a report released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the debt will increase by about 13 percent, or \$6.4 billion, to \$57.1 billion by the end of the current fiscal year and is estimated to increase by \$7 billion, or 12.3 percent, to \$64 billion by the end of the next fiscal year. IMF's estimate suggests that the external debt will increase by another \$2 billion in 2011-12 and cross \$72.6 billion in 2015-16. The public and publicly guaranteed debts, including IMF loans, are estimated to increase by 45 percent from \$47.26 billion on June 30, 2009, to more than \$68.1 billion in 2015-16. The amount will increase to \$53.3 billion during the current fiscal year and \$59.9 billion by end of next year. The total medium- and long-term debt which stood at about \$41.5 billion at the end of June last year, will increase to \$48.2 billion next year and reach \$67.6 billion in 2015-16 -- an increase of about 40 percent. The Asian Development Bank will have the single largest share in the external debt, which will increase from \$9 billion in July last year to about \$15.8 billion in 2015, by more than 75 percent in five years. The World Bank debt will increase by about 29 percent from \$12 billion to \$15.5 billion by 2015. Bilateral debt is likely to increase by 96 per cent from the current \$16 billion to \$31.28 billion in 2015-16.

However, the IMF believes that the country's external loan is sustainable; the debt stock will remain moderate when compared with the size of the economy and external debt servicing will remain manageable. The analysis is based on the forecast that the external debt stock which stands at 27 percent of the GDP would peak at 34.3 percent in 2011-12 and then start subsiding, to reach 31 percent in 2015-16. The estimates may change if underlying assumptions for economic growth, interest rate and external trade are not fulfilled. The economic growth rate has been projected at three per cent this year, four per cent next year and 5.5 percent in 2015-16. An increase in debt takes place generally because of large fiscal and current accounts deficits, depreciation in exchange rate and uncontrolled borrowing. In the medium term, such increases lead to a higher debt-servicing cost and restrict the government's ability to improve the condition of the people.

[Dawn -- January 11, 2010]

Income Tax Returns and Statements: FBR's Collection Increases in July-January

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has collected 1,916,300 income tax returns and statements during the first seven-month (July-January) period of the ongoing fiscal year 2009-10 as compared with 1,797,000 returns and statements in the same period of last fiscal year 2008-09. Total 755,671 income tax returns, excluding statements, have been received during July-January period of ongoing fiscal year 2009-10 as against 642,777 returns received during the same period of the last fiscal year, indicating an increase of 112,849 returns.

According to the FBR data as of January 25, 2010, FBR has received 16,281 corporate sector income tax returns in ongoing fiscal year as against 14,903 returns filed by the corporate sector in the same period of last fiscal year, projecting an increase of 1,378 returns. Association of Persons (AoPs) filed 41,863 returns by the said date during the ongoing fiscal year as compared with 28,154 returns in the same period of last fiscal year, indicating an increase of 13,709 returns. Salaried class in the country filed 114,495 returns in July-January period of this fiscal year as against 119,759 returns filed by the salaried class in the same period of last fiscal year, projecting a decline of 5,264 returns. Non-salaried class filed 583,032 income tax returns in the said period of the ongoing fiscal year and these taxpayers had filed 481,961 returns in the same period of last fiscal year, projecting an increase of 101,071 returns.

The FBR authorities received salary certificates to the tune of 18,828 in the said period as against the 20,745 certificated received in the same period of last fiscal year 2008-09. Number of employees covered in the statement was 1,053,708 during the said period of this fiscal year as compared with 1,055,954 employees in the same period of last fiscal year. Number of importers who filed their statements in the said period of the ongoing fiscal year was recorded at 12,262 and some 11,510 importers had filed their statements in the same period of last fiscal year. By January 25, 2010 some 8,473 exporters filed their statements as against 8,050 exporters in the same period of last fiscal year. Some 13,332 retailers having up to Rs 5 million annual turnover filed their statements during July-January period of this fiscal year as compared with 18,272 retailers filed in the same period of last fiscal year. Some 581 retailers having over Rs 5 million annual turnover filed their statements of

income during July-January period of the ongoing fiscal year 2009-10 as against 830 such retailers in the same period of last fiscal year. Some 24,378 contractors and suppliers filed their income statements during July-January period of the ongoing fiscal year as against some 24,030 statements during the same period of last fiscal year. Some 29,110 persons falling in the other category of taxpayers have filed their income statements during July-January period of this fiscal year as against 15,161 income statements that were received in the same period of last fiscal year.

[Daily Times -- January 30, 2010]

Local Governance

Future of Local Government System

Balochistan

Nazims' Reign Ends in Balochistan

The Balochistan Assembly unanimously adopted a bill to amend the Balochistan Local Government Act, empowering the Provincial Government to replace District, Town, Tehsil Nazims and Deputy Nazims with Administrators. The bill was tabled by the Minister for Local Government, Abdul Khaliq Bashardost, after deliberations at a parliamentary party meeting of coalition partners in the provincial government. The meeting was presided over by Chief Minister Nawab Aslam Raisani. The bill was supposed to be tabled in the assembly during the first winter session on January 4, but because of some reservations of JUI-F about the appointment of Administrators, it was delayed. The JUI-F's reservations were removed after discussions in the parliamentary party meeting. The house adopted the bill in 10 minutes after it was tabled by the Minister because no member opposed it. The act will come into force with immediate effect.

The act enables the provincial government to dissolve local bodies, remove district and town nazims and appoint administrators in their places. It calls for holding of local bodies elections in Balochistan within a year. The bill was introduced in the house with an objective to ensure transparency in the coming local bodies' elections because, according to some political parties, the existing form is not suitable for holding an impartial election. The Balochistan cabinet had already approved the dissolution of local bodies and appointment of administrators in place of nazims at a meeting on Dec 24.

The text of the bill follows:

- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Ordinance, for the purpose of holding next elections to the local governments, all Zila Councils, Town Councils, Tehsil Councils and Union Councils shall stand dissolved on the date notified by the government.
- (2) Consequent upon dissolution of the Local Councils under Sub-Section (1) all Nazims, Naib Nazims, Members of Local Councils shall cease to hold their respective offices.
- (3) The Government may appoint Administrators to perform the functions of the Nazim and respective Local Council as assigned to them under the Ordinance.
- (4) As soon as may be, but not later than one year from the dissolution of Local Councils under Sub-Section (1), the Government shall hold elections to the new Local Councils.

In order to ensure transparency and impartiality in the forthcoming local government elections, it is imperative to empower the Provincial Government to dissolve Local Councils and appoint Government Officers as Administrators. The Balochistan cabinet has empowered the government to dissolve the existing Local Councils and appoint government officers as administrators.

[Dawn -- January 10, 2010]

NWFP

NWFP PA passes LG Amendment Bill 2010

The NWFP Assembly, on January 25, passed the NWFP Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2010 with a majority, dissolving local councils and making transitional arrangements to run the LG system until the next LG elections. Under the amended LG act, administrators including District Coordination Officers (DCOs) and Tehsil Municipal Officers (TMOs) shall replace nazims and continue performing duties until the next LG elections. The electoral mandate of the current local government had expired on October 15, 2009. The act has dissolved the zila councils, tehsil councils, town councils and union councils and consequently all members of these councils shall cease to hold their respective offices in the NWFP. The government shall soon appoint administrators to run the LG system.

Leader of the Opposition Muhammad Akram Khan Durrani opposed the bill, saying that he did not 'trust' the government because it had not given any timeframe for conducting the LG polls. He said the LG system should not be abolished even temporarily, as it was the first step towards democracy. PML-Q leader Nighat Yasmin Orakzai said it was an undemocratic decision as the government had decided to remove the nazims who had been elected by the people. The opposition, mainly the JUI-F and the PPP-S staged a walkout to protest against the bill adopted by the NWFP Assembly. Minister for Information Mian Iftikhar Hussain said the LG system would remain intact.

[Daily Times -- January 26, 2010]

Punjab

PLGO 2010 Gets Only 'One Vote' from PML-N Parliamentary Party

Only one member of the PML-N voted in favour of the proposed Punjab Local Government Ordinance (PLGO) 2010 when it was discussed at a recently held parliamentary party meeting. Sources privy to the proceedings revealed that when it was brought up, the PLGO 2010 was met with harsh criticism from members, who opposed the wide range of administrative powers that would be conferred upon bureaucrats under the new law. The meeting was initially Chaired by Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Shahbaz Sharif. But when the CM was called away, his adviser Sardar Zulfiqar Khosa took over. One 'vote of confidence': After a presentation on the proposed ordinance by the local government Secretary, most members, both implicitly and explicitly, voiced support for the existing LGO 2001. Of the 56 members that wanted to speak, only 24 were allowed to do so. Of them, only one, Punjab Prisons Minister Chaudhry Abdul Ghafoor, spoke in favour of the proposed law.

{Daily Times -- January 13, 2010}

Salient Features of PLGF 'Concept Paper'

The 'concept paper' of the Punjab Local Governance Framework 2010, going to be distributed in the Punjab Assembly for MPAs' feedback, seeks 'strengthened supervisory and policy lead role' of the provincial government. Suggesting separate governance systems and apparatus for urban metropolis, and large as well as for intermediate cities, it retains some positive features of PLGO 2001 like Local Government Commission, Provincial Finance Commission and Musalihat Anjuman. Following are the salient features of the concept paper:

- The concept paper seeks to, in addition to municipal functions, devolve primary education (stand alone schools), basic health units & rural health centres, literacy/non-formal basic education/special education, extension wings of agriculture & livestock, forest and fisheries, community development, and as per requirement of devolved functions of communication & works and finance & planning.
- For 'geographical alignment', it bifurcates districts into union and district councils, restoring the urban-rural divide of the 1979 law but eliminating the third tier, tehsil/town, from the incumbent system.
- Urban local councils shall include town committee (from 10,000 to 30,000 population), municipal committee (30,000 to 250,000), municipal corporations (250,000 to 500,000) and metropolitan corporations (500,000 to 5,000,000), while the provincial capital shall be named as Lahore Metropolis.
- All union councils shall have nine directly elected councilors while five shall be elected against the reserved quota. Ensuring 33 per cent representation for women at all levels, elections in all councils shall be held on single ward basis proposed to be held on a party basis.

- Chairpersons of UCs and urban councils shall be elected by the houses who will also become members of district councils. Provincial election authority is proposed to be set up under the chair of a retired high court judge.
- Chairperson shall be executive head of the local council while chief executive officer/DCO of the district shall act as administrative head as well as countersigning authority.
- Led by district council chairperson and comprising all mayors/chairpersons of urban councils, DCO (ex-officio secretary), heads of all devolved departments as well as CEOs of municipal corporations and committees (non-voting members), there shall be a District Coordination Committee (DCC) to resolve disputes between different local councils and seek compliance to annual budget and ADP integration.
- It will be tasked to prepare regional plan, coordinate and comply with local master plans, enforce service delivery regulations and coordinate with provincial priorities.
- DCO's office shall act as secretariat of the DCC.

[Dawn -- January 27, 2010]

Punjab Cabinet Passes LB Amendment Bill

Punjab Cabinet has ratified the appointment of administrators in Local Bodies system on Wednesday.

The amendments in the Local Government Bill have been passed during a meeting, which was presided over by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif at CM House in Lahore.

Talking to media after attending the meeting, Provincial Minister Chaudhry Abdul Ghafoor said that the cabinet has also approved holding of LBs polls.

After getting it approved from the Provincial Assembly, Punjab Government would be entitled to appoint administrators on provincial level. Law Minister Rana Sanaullah has told the media that directives have been passed to form Election Authority for holding of local bodies' polls, adding that the chairman of the said Authority would either be a Supreme Court's judge or anyone having the same capabilities. He noted that number of Election Authority members has been increased to 4. He also divulged that LG polls would be held within six months.

[Daily Times -- January 28, 2010]

Sindh

Local Govt Polls in Sindh within 4 Months: Zardari

Local bodies elections will be held in four months in Sindh on party basis, President Asif Ali Zardari announced on January 28. Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of a Cardiac Institute at the Lyari General Hospital, the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Medical College in Lyari, the Behan Benazir Basti and the Thatta-Sajawal Road, the president said, "You will see significant results in these elections and we will also fulfil the dream of transferring power to the grassroots."

[Daily Times -- January 29, 2010]

MQM, PPP Sort out Differences Over LG System

Differences over appointment of administrators for replacing Nazims were sorted out in a meeting between Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ibad and Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah on January 15. Dr. Ibad told that all matters pertaining to local bodies elections had been settled between the MQM and the PPP. Details and "finer points" of the agreement would be announced by the Chief Minister soon, he said. On January 13, members of the core committee of PPP and MQM had finalised the proposals, but left the decision to their respective parties' high command. On January 15, the chief minister visited the Governor House and addressed MQM's reservations during their one-to-one meeting. It was agreed that administrators would replace the sitting Nazims in Sindh and local government elections would be held within three months, sources said. A draft bill containing salient features of the agreement would be prepared for introducing the new local government system in the province, the sources said. They, however, did not say whether the proposed bill would include restoration the commissionerate system or make necessary amendment in the current local government system. The PPP favours restoration of the commissionerate system while the MQM wants the current local government system to continue with certain amendments. Sources said that the two sides had agreed to the appointment of administrators in Karachi and Hyderabad in consultation with MQM. A press release by the Governor House said both Governor Ibad and Chief Minister Shah had expressed the determination to keep the coalition intact.

[Dawn -- January 16, 2010]

Regional Politics and Election Watch

Pakistan's Foreign Relations

Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project

IP Gas Project

Pakistan has told Iran in clear terms that it is not ready to extend any guarantee to India under the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project at a time when Islamabad and Tehran have already inked the Gas Sales Purchase Agreement (GSPA) on the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project, and are on way to finalising the heads of the agreement. Tehran wants to include India in the project to make the IP gas pipeline project the IPI, but Pakistan is not willing to give India any guarantee on security for provision of gas and other issues such as transposition cost and transit fee.

a senior official at the Petroleum and Natural Resources Ministry told that in case Islamabad agrees to come up with the new desire of Tehran, the project would be further delayed and Pakistan cannot afford to hold up this project of paramount importance any longer. India had earlier skipped the trilateral talks on the IPI project on its own as it succumbed to the pressure of Washington, which extended the civil nuclear cooperation to New Delhi. Because of that particular ugly move by India to skip the talks on the IPI gas pipeline project and apparently not becoming part of the 'peace pipeline', the project delayed further and Pakistan, which is producing 4.2 billion cubic feet gas per day, suffered a lot. "Now when both countries are in an advanced stage to formally seal the deal, India again wishes to become part of the project," the official added. He further said that the authorities in Pakistan consider the move by India at this crucial stage as a fatal attempt to further delay the project. Now we want the execution of the IP gas pipeline project first and after that if India wants to become its part, Islamabad would certainly come to initiate dialogue with India. When contacted, Petroleum and Natural Resources Minister Naveed Qamar said a Pakistani delegation was in Tehran currently with regard to finalising the heads of the agreement. He said Pakistan wanted the execution of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project not the IPI, due to which Islamabad had shown its inability to give any sort of guarantee to India as desired by Tehran. Another senior official said there existed no guarantee that India would become part of the project, even if Islamabad extended the guarantee to New Delhi as desired by Tehran, adding India had earlier emerged as an unpredictable country when it cleverly skipped the talks on the project at the time when the three countries were moving fast towards finalising the GSPA. The official disclosed that the US wanted to bail out Pakistan from energy crisis by extending its support in a big way on making LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) available in abundance in the energy-deficit country to wrap up the IP project.

Although Richard Holbrooke, special envoy of US on Afghanistan and Pakistan, in his recent meeting with Naveed Qamar did not mention the IP project at all, but he came up with lavish support to ensure the LNG availability in abundance in the country in such a way that Pakistan did not need any imported piped gas. Pakistan, the official said, asked the US that it wanted the LNG availability and a supporting infrastructure pivotal to provide it to all categories of consumers.

[January 18, 2010]

Sino-Pakistan Relations

Sino-Pak Trade to Boost from \$7b to \$15b: FO

Pakistan says its relations with China in 2009 have witnessed "unprecedented" bilateral activities with bilateral trade at present around \$7 billion with a commitment to increase it to \$15 billion. "We are confident that our

allweather friendship with China will continue achieving ever new heights in the times to come," said a spokesman at the Foreign Office at the end of year review of bilateral relations.

Since October 2008 till October 2009, both countries have signed nearly 36 Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and framework agreements. During 2009, President Asif Ali Zardari visited China three times while Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani also paid an official visit there.

Some of these MoUs and agreements include:

- Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation
- Amending Protocol of Free Trade Agreement
- Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Minerals
- MoU on Cooperation between the Ministry of Land Resources PARC and the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources
- Agreement on Environmental Protection
- Framework Agreement for Cooperation in the Field of Radio and Television
- PAKSAT-IR Satellite Procurement Contract
- MoU on Scientific Collaboration in Agricultural Research and Technical Cooperation
- Agreement on Properties Exchange between MFA, PRC and MOFA Pakistan
- Cooperation Agreement between Beijing Museum of Natural History and the Museum of Natural History, Islamabad
- MoU on Cooperation on Cricket
- MoU regarding Project of X-ray Container/Vehicle Inspection System
- MoU for Friendly Exchange between Sindh Province of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Hubei Province of the People's Republic of China
- MoU between the Government of Sindh and Hubei Seed Group Corporation for Development of Rice Hybrid Seed
- MoU between the Government of Pakistan and China Harbour Engineering Company for Dredging
- MoU between Pakistan Agriculture and Research Council (PARC) and Hubei Seed Group Corporation for Development of Oil Seeds
- Agreement between the Government of Pakistan and the Government of the People's Republic of China on FTA on Trade in Services
- MoU between PARC and Xinjiang Production and Construction Corporation on BT Coloured Cotton
- MoU between PARC and Xinjiang Tianye Water Saving Irrigation System Company on Drip Irrigation
- MoU on Cooperation in the Field of Drug Regulation between Drug Control Organization, Government of Pakistan and State Food and Drug Administration of People's Republic of China
- MoU on Investment Promotion Cooperation between Board of Investment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Investment Promotion Agency of the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China
- MoU between Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam, Pakistan and South China Agricultural University (SCAU) Guangzhou, China
- MoU on Cooperation on River Fisheries and Related Technologies between the Department of Fisheries, Government of Sindh, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Pearl River Fisheries Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences
- MoU on Cooperation on Marine Fisheries and Related Technologies between the Department of Fisheries, Government of Sindh, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and South China Sea Fisheries Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences
- MoU on Global Open Trunking Architecture (GOTA) for Emergency Communication and Disaster Control Management in Pakistan between Ministry of IT and Telecom (National Telecommunication Corporation) and ZTE Corporation, People's Republic of China
- MoU between China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Guangdong Sub-Council (China Chamber of International Commerce) and the Board of Investment, Pakistan
- MoU between Ministry of Water and Power, Government of Pakistan and China Three Gorges Dam Project Corporation on Bunji Hydropower Project
- Concessional Loan Agreement for PAKSAT-IR

- Agreement between Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) and China Great Wall Industry
- Corporation (CGWIC) for PAKSAT-IR Satellite Ground Stations at Karachi and Lahore
- MoU between Alternative Energy Development Board (AEDB) and SUNTECH Power for Cooperation in Alternate Energy Projects
- MoU between AEDB and CEEG SI for Alternate Energy Projects

[The News -- January 4, 2010]

Sino-Pak Talks on Joint Strategy to Meet Challenges

Pakistan and China decided on January 17 to work out a joint strategy to effectively respond to threats to regional peace and security and to raise the level of their strategic partnership. During the seventh round of annual bilateral defence and security talks, the two sides reviewed military cooperation and progress of various defence projects. Proposals were made for collaboration in operational, training, intelligence, logistics and defence industrial fields, including indigenisation projects and joint ventures. An official told that this time the dialogue had a greater significance because it took place against the backdrop of a statement made by Indian Army Chief Gen Deepak Kapoor about moving from a cold start doctrine to a proactive strategy of simultaneously waging a war against Pakistan and China. He said both sides had taken the remarks seriously and vowed to frustrate attempts to jeopardise regional security.

The eight-member Chinese delegation was headed by Gen Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of General Staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), while the Pakistani delegation was led by Gen Tariq Majid, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC). The dialogue was aimed at sharing perspectives on a fast evolving regional security situation for developing a common insight into the emerging scenarios and coordinating common responses. The discussion focussed on the impact of changing global security dynamics, progress in efforts against terrorism and violent extremism, the revised US strategy for Afghanistan, intra-regional disputes and posturing of involved states and strategic stability in the region. It also focused on terrorism-related threats and measures for the security of the Chinese manpower working in Pakistan. Reiterating China's solidarity and continuing support in meeting the challenges, Gen Ma said: "We acknowledge the great sacrifices rendered by Pakistan, its people and armed forces in combating terrorism for which Pakistan deserves the praise and gratitude of the entire world, indeed the mankind." Gen Tariq lauded China's spectacular economic progress and technological modernisation to rise as a reckonable power in global politics and economy playing a crucial stabilising role in different regions. He described the Pakistan-China strategic partnership as the bedrock of stability in the region.

[Dawn -- January 19, 2010]

Indo-Pak Relations

MPs ask Govt to Raise Water Issues with India at World Fora

Forty-three parliamentarians from the ruling PPP and allied parties, like the ANP and the MQM together with opposition parties PML-Q and PML-N, while calling for resumption of the Composite Dialogue between Pakistan and India, have submitted a resolution in the National Assembly, asking the government to raise the issue of blockage of Pakistani water by India internationally to put pressure on New Delhi. The resolution comes at a time when the region faces the possibility of water wars as this life-saving commodity is becoming scarce at an alarming pace. The resolution, authored by PML's Marvi Memon, has also been signed, amongst others, by Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi (PML-Q), Attiya Inatuallah, Asfandyar Wali Khan of the ANP and Abdul Waseem, MQM. The resolution seeks to make the Indus Water Treaty transparent and the parliamentarians have endorsed setting up of a joint watershed management in the Indian-held Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh to reinstate its ecology and forest canopy. The resolution says: "**Both countries can jointly manage watershed in the Indian-held Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh to avert possible conflict over water. There are numerous models of trans-boundary watershed management in the world. In Europe, the watershed of Danube River is being managed by 19 countries. In Africa, Nile River watershed management is being managed by 10 most poor countries of the world. Similarly, in Asia, Mekong River's watershed is being managed by six countries**". The parliamentarians have also endorsed the experts' recommendations that to make the Indus Water Treaty absolutely transparent, a state-of-art satellite-based monitoring telemetry mechanism ought to be installed on all tributaries of Indus, Chenab and Jhelum in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh to disseminate real-time data to

enforce distribution of water. A three dimensional real-time image ought to be made available to check the construction of dams or any other water related infrastructure in line with the IWT.

The resolution has condemned the Indian deforestation and Pakistan's inaction over it, which has reduced water flows in Chenab, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. "The Indian government has also allowed their corporate farmers direct pumping on massive scale from the Chenab and its tributaries for which free electricity is being provided. The data shows that the annual flow of River Chenab was 26 MAF between 1922 and 1984, which increased up to 27.5 MAF between 1985 and 1999. However, reduction in the annual flow started in 2008-09, but during the last two years, there has been visible decline in the water flow by 24 per cent to just 20 MAF. The GoP should have agitated on this," points out the resolution. The resolution condemns India for building Baglihar on the Murree-Jhelum seismic fault-line, which can severely impact the downstream areas of Pakistan in case of a tremor. As per the definition set by the International Commission of Large Dam (ICOLD), the Baglihar Dam falls under the category of large dams and both Pakistan and India are members of this esteemed organisation. It is the duty of the MOWP (Ministry of Water and Power) to check the design detail and reassess. Enquiry ought to be initiated against experts who have cleared the design of Baglihar dam while recently the Indian geological experts have raised serious questions about its stability. The dam experts have pointed out that the dam was built on the Murree-Jhelum fault lines and in case of a tremor, it could be catastrophic for downstream areas, including Pakistan. Pakistan needs to challenge the interpretation of the Baglihar dispute that allows draw-down below dead storage level since otherwise it would mean acceptance of design features as given by India.

[The News -- January 22, 2010]

Pakistan's Relations with Middle East

Pak, Kuwait Ink \$50 million Accord

Pakistan and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development on January 4 signed a loan agreement amounting to \$50 million to finance the Reconstruction of Higher Education Institution Project in the earthquake affected areas of AJK. Economic Affairs Division Secretary Sibtain Fazal Halim and Deputy Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Director-General Hesham Al-Waqayan signed the loan agreement on behalf of their respective governments. The project aims at the reconstruction of selected higher education institutions damaged by the October 2005 earthquake in the areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir through seismically safe and improved designs, in order to restore equitable access to higher quality education. The project comprises about 30 colleges that were badly damaged and includes reconstruction works, provision of furniture and educational equipment, and engineering services for the design and supervision. The loan bears an interest rate at 0.5 percent per annum and another 0.5 percent per annum to cover administration costs and other expenses. The repayment period of the loan will be 20 years with 5-year grace period.

[Daily Times -- January 5, 2010]

UAE to Invest in Pakistan's Energy and Farm Sectors

The United Arab Emirates has decided to make robust investments in Pakistan's energy agriculture, education and health sectors, which need huge investment, official sources said. UAE Special Representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan (SRAP) Ambassador Ali Mohamed al-Shamsi, who enjoys a senior position in the UAE Ministry for External Affairs, has worked out major plans for the purpose, the sources said, adding that as soon both governments involved in projects reach an understanding they would be announced. The UAE hosted a conference of SRAPs from at last 26 countries in Abu Dhabi last week to discuss the current situation in the region.

[Gulf Times -- January 16, 2010]

Post-Election Scenario in Afghanistan

Afghan Tribe Signs Pact to Keep Taliban Out

An eastern Afghan tribe has signed a pact to keep the Taliban out of their lands, pledging to burn down the houses of those who shelter insurgents and force them to pay fines high as \$20,000. US military officials on January 27 welcomed the decision by the Shinwari tribe with a pledge of \$1 million for a tribal fund and \$200,000 in jobs programs. But they acknowledged that the tribe was uniquely positioned to defy the Taliban with its sizable militia and a history of unity against outsiders. The Shinwari, which dominate five districts of about 600,000 people in Nangarhar province, agreed in the document signed by 170 elders to stand unified against the Taliban. Tribal

leaders said the agreement was borne as much out of frustration with the Afghan government as the desire to keep out militants. The agreement affirms that the tribe "recognizes that the Afghan government supports their cause." But it adds that "defensive preparations have to be taken" in case of a fallout with the government.

The Shinwari tribe spans the volatile Pakistan-Afghanistan border area that serves as a sanctuary for the Taliban. However, the Afghan Shinwari faction is not commonly seen as a major supporter of the extremist group, partly because of the strength of its traditional hierarchy.

[AP -- January 27, 2010]

Afghan Parliament to Adjourn without Finalising Cabinet

The Afghan parliament prolonged months of political uncertainty on January 17 by shutting for its winter recess without waiting for President Hamid Karzai to fill nearly half of his cabinet. The announcement means Karzai will appear at an international conference on his country's future on January 28 with 11 of 25 cabinet seats vacant. Confirming his cabinet is the first big test for Karzai since his re-election in a vote last August that was marred by fraud, which took months to resolve. He has promised to name competent ministers but also owes favours to regional bosses who helped get him elected. Parliament has twice rejected most of his picks. Western countries with troops serving in Afghanistan are anxious for Karzai to put his new government in place and to build the institutions needed to withstand a Taliban insurgency that is fiercer than at any time in the eight-year-old war.

The United Nations Special Representative in Afghanistan, Kai Eide, praised the ministers agreed on so far but lamented delays in getting the full cabinet in place, saying this had an impact on the government's ability to deliver. "It is a handicap that you will now go on for a protracted period without a fully-functioning government in one of the most challenging periods the government has been in since the fall of the Taliban," Eide told in an interview. Before breaking, lawmakers also demanded reforms for parliamentary elections due this year, setting the country back on a path toward political confrontation after the botched presidential poll last year. Parliament spokesman Haseeb Noori said lawmakers would now break until February 20. Karzai ordered them to delay their leave earlier this month to allow him to pick new names after the bulk were rejected, but this time he did not forbid them to go.

[Reuters -- January 17, 2010]

Afghanistan's Karzai Sacks Convicted Kabul Mayor

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has fired the Mayor of Kabul, who was sentenced to a jail term over corruption charges last month, and appointed an engineer to take over in the capital. Mir Abdul Ahad Sahebi was convicted in a primary court in early December and sentenced to four years in prison on charges linked to corruption. He was released on bail pending appeal and swiftly returned to work. Karzai had previously defended Sahebi, calling him "a clean person" and ordering an investigation into the charges against him.

[AFP -- January 4, 2010]

Presidential Elections in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka President Declared Re-Elected, Top Rival Claims Results Rigged

Sri Lanka has declared President Mahinda Rajapaksa the victor over his former top general, Sarath Fonseka, in the country's first peacetime election in decades after the long civil war against the Tamil Tiger rebels. But the rival to the President is refusing to concede defeat, saying that although voting was peaceful the results have been rigged to give Mr. Rajapaksa another six-year term in office.

Sri Lanka's Election Commissioner says the incumbent President captured nearly 58 percent of the vote, 17 percent more than the former army commander. President Mahinda Rajapaksa called for his former opponents and their supporters to join him in building the country. Mr. Rajapaksa says from today onward he is the President of everyone, whether they voted for him or not. But his top rival is having none of it. Sarath Fonseka told reporters the results have been rigged and displaced minority Tamils, in districts where he enjoyed support, were prevented from voting.

[VOA News -- January 27, 2010]

Rights Groups Query Sri Lankan Election

Poll monitors and human rights groups criticised the election that swept Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse back to power amid claims of fraud from his defeated rival. The Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights

Commission cited counting irregularities, as well as blatant misuse of state resources by Rajapakse, who comfortably won a second term in January 26's poll.

The Group said in a statement, "very clearly, the question as to whether Sri Lanka is any longer capable of conducting a free and fair election has been raised in this election. It is not only the electoral process that is under challenge. The very process of receiving, preserving and counting the ballot at the commissioner's office itself is an issue that has been prominently raised". The government insisted that the election was free and fair but the United States has pressed for a probe into the charges of vote fraud. Before polling day, the Country's Independent Election Commissioner had complained about the misuse of state resources for the president's re-election campaign and bias in the state media.

A team of poll experts from the Commonwealth Secretariat said the election day itself had been "well-administered" but highlighted what it called a "compromised" pre-election environment. Separately, in an interview with The Australian at his home in Colombo, the former Sri Lankan army chief turned Presidential challenger said he was planning to speak to the Australian high commissioner about the possibility of temporary asylum.

[Daily Times -- January 30, 2010]

Sri Lanka President to Dissolve Parliament, Call Poll

Re-elected President Mahinda Rajapaksa will dissolve parliament shortly and call a legislative election, his office said on January 28, in a move that could enable him to reshape the unwieldy coalition now backing him. Rajapaksa had sought a new mandate to endorse his plans to develop Sri Lanka by exploiting its geographically strategic position astride air and sea lanes, rebuilding infrastructure and encouraging foreign investment and local productivity. As President, Rajapaksa holds the reins of a \$40 billion economy that has enjoyed a partial peace dividend, and is on the path to recovery with big Chinese and Indian investments into infrastructure and plans to put \$4 billion into development. Development of local industry, business and agriculture are what Rajapaksa says will be the key to healing Sri Lanka's divisions, by building a national identity and reconnecting the formerly Tiger-held areas to the rest of the country.

[Reuters -- January 28, 2010]

Myanmar's Polls

Myanmar Pushes Poll 20 Years after Ignoring NLD Win

Reclusive Myanmar ruling General Than Shwe urged the country to make "correct choices" in this year's general election, but gave no hint about exactly when the long-awaited polls will take place. Myanmar's last election, in 1990, ended with a landslide win for Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) but the junta ignored the result and has since jailed more than 2,000 activists and political opponents, many for minor offences. In a message to mark the 62nd anniversary of Myanmar's independence, Than Shwe championed the junta's much-criticised "road map" as the only route to democratic change, but gave no timeframe for the vote. "Plans are under way to hold elections in a systematic way this year," he said in the address, read out on television by a senior junta official and carried in state-run newspapers. The 76-year-old gave no new details about the election in the former British colony, and described the junta's seven-stage reform plan as "the sole process of transition to democracy". The election has already been widely dismissed as a means to entrench nearly five decades of unbroken military rule, with the junta hoping a public vote would legitimise its monopoly of national politics. The NLD has not said whether it will run in the polls and has rejected the constitution promulgated in 2008 because of the power it grants to the military. On January 4 it urged the regime to release all political prisoners and engage with all the parties involved. "All the stakeholders need to hold a dialogue with a sincere intention towards national reconciliation and for the benefit of the country and the people," said Khin Muang Swe, the head of the NLD's central executive committee.

[Reuters -- January 4, 2010]

Myanmar tells Neighbors Elections will be Free

Myanmar's first general elections in two decades will be free, fair and credible, the country's Foreign Minister told his Southeast Asian neighbors at a regional conference in Vietnam on January 14. Myanmar's ruling junta has promised to hold the elections this year but has yet to set a date. Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi will not be allowed to participate, and critics have argued that the balloting will only extend the military's authoritarian leadership. At a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Myanmar Foreign Minister U Nyan Win

reiterated his government's stance that elections will be held this year and are part of its roadmap to democracy, said Surin Pitsuwan, the group's secretary-general.

Indonesia has been outspoken about the need for Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy, or NLD, to be allowed to participate in the elections. The Nobel Peace Prize laureate has been detained for 14 of the past 20 years, mostly under house arrest. Myanmar's dismal human rights record and the ruling generals' tightfisted hold on power have been a thorny issue among the members of ASEAN, which is built on a foundation of noninterference. Western countries, including the US, have urged ASEAN leaders to pressure Myanmar to move forward with democratic elections. Natalegawa said he felt the situation with Myanmar had improved over last year because at least now the generals are engaging with the US and the European Union.

[AP -- January 14, 2010]