



**PAKISTAN
GOVERNANCE
FORUM**

An Initiative of The Researchers

November 2010

VOLUME V, EDITION IX

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Gender & Women Empowerment

Women & Laws

Resolutions Passed on Trafficking of Women

Female legislators managed to pass two resolutions on women trafficking and violence against women on November 04. The assembly also passed a resolution against unregistered NGOs. The first resolution was moved by Minister for Women Development Tauqeer Fatima Bhutto and was supported by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). In 2002, the government had promulgated the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance but it was not implemented. According to the PPP's Humera Alwani, most cases take place near the Punjab-Sindh border in areas such as Ubaro, Rahim Yar Khan and Ghotki. She said that innocent women are lured with job or marriage prospects and then sold at throwaway prices. She added that since this happens so frequently, the police have stopped registering cases. Later the resolution was passed unanimously. PPP legislator Kulsoom Chandio moved another resolution demanding strict action against people responsible for committing violence against women in Sindh. Her resolution was supported by MPAs Shama Mithani, Rashida Panhwar, Dr Sajeela Leghari, Ayesha Khoso, Rainaz Bozdar, Alwani and Bhutto. The MPAs agreed that a change in mindset is what is needed to bring about an end to violence. Raza put the motion to the House and it was passed unanimously.

[The Express Tribune – November 05, 2010]

New Initiatives for Women

Ministry to Draft Policy for Women Empowerment

The Ministry of Women Development plans to draft a comprehensive policy for women titled 'Vision 2020' that will recommend concrete steps for economic, social and political empowerment of women while keeping in mind the religious and cultural norms of the society. **Federal Minister for Population Welfare and Women Development Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan stated on November 04 at an expert meeting on 'Restoring Employment and Livelihood for Flood Affected Women.' The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) organised the meeting.** The minister called for stronger action to support women and children put in place through a sustainable mechanism. She stressed for proper identification of the constraints faced by the flood affected women to earn decent income, inclusion of women in agriculture extension services, livelihood compensations, access to credit and the required skills to empower women heading households. Speaking on the occasion National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman Lieutenant General (R) Nadeem Ahmed said that NDMA is seeking to support the full inclusion of women in all programmes such as agriculture extension services, livelihood compensation, and access to credit, seed banks and needed equipment in the early recovery and rehabilitation. International Labour Organisation (ILO) Country Director Donglin Li in his remarks said that more than 5.3 million jobs have been lost or affected due to floods among which 1.2 million are women, who need productive and labour intensive job creation programmes to lift millions of people out of poverty that has further been aggravated by flood damage.

[The News – November 06, 2010]

10 Wagons Reserved for Women Passengers

A campaign has been launched in the twin cities to create women-friendly public transport and sensitise transporters about the difficulties women face while travelling in wagons and coaches. At least 10 wagons of route No 1 plying between Rawalpindi and Islamabad have been reserved for women passengers under the pilot project launched by a private organisation in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Twin City Transports Union. Posters have been pasted on the 10 selected wagons that they are only meant for women aimed to provide them relief and easiness as they have been facing a lot of hardship while travelling in public transport. Shehzad Bukhari, whose organisation - Four Corners - has launched the project said that the transporters have been taught about the kinds of sexual harassment women faced after the

passage of sexual harassment laws. He said the project would be completed in 40 days and feedback would be taken from the transporters and passengers to make recommendations to ILO for further action.

[Dawn – November 07, 2010]

16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence

Activism against Gender Violence' Campaign Launched

Government representatives, United Nations officials and prominent civil society members gathered on November 26 to officially launch the annual campaign of "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence." Along with international community, Pakistan observes 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence from 25 November, "International Day against Violence against Women," to 10 December, "International Human Rights Day." This yearly returning international campaign emphasises that violence against women is a violation of human rights and calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against women, including at local, national, regional and international levels. **The 2010 theme of the campaign is "Structures of Violence: Defining the Intersections of Militarism and Violence against Women."** Jointly organized by the Ministry of Women Development, the United Nations and Netherlands Embassy, the event was a beginning of the series of activities designed by the public and private sector with an aim to create awareness and start a debate on issues related to violence against women. The participants were of the opinion that both civil society and state should enhance coordination and cooperation to improve the support system already available for the violence victims. **Executive Director Rozan Maria Rashid said that there are total 77 Darul Amaans and Women Crisis Centres operating in different parts of the country with the sole purpose of facilitating violence victims.** The only issue is to make them a real help for those who dare to stand against violence. She said that Islam is a complete charter of human rights but few people having nefarious designs are distorting the image of Islam. "Islam is a religion of peace and ensures rights of all human beings including women, children and minorities but a hand full of people are executing wrong practices on the name of Islam." Ambassador of Netherlands to Pakistan Joost Reintjes said that all over the world, the major cause of deaths among women aged 15 to 44 is sexual violence. He said that there is a dire need to address these issues and work on concrete policies. Executive Director UNIFEM Ines Alberdi and United Nations Resident Coordinator Timo Pakkala said that the effort against gender violence is a continuing process and it should not end with the end of the campaign.

[The News – November 27, 2010]

"Still Much to be Done" to Protect Women Against Violence, Says UN Women Chief

Michelle Bachelet, the head of a newly-established UN body promoting women's welfare, said on November 24 that while "significant progress" has been made to protect women against violence, "there still is much to be done. Under-Secretary-General for UN Women Bachelet, who was former Chilean president, told reporters in a press conference ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which is observed annually on November 25, but commemorated on November 25 that for more than 100 countries, there are no specific laws against domestic violence. This year's International Day spotlights leadership by the corporate sector in ending gender-based violence. Ban said that this is no longer just the concern of women's organizations. More and more people realize that gender-based violence is everybody's problem and that everybody is responsible for stopping it. He also stressed his 2008 "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" campaign which calls on countries to implement stronger laws, action plans, preventive measures, data collection, and systematic efforts to address sexual violence by 2015. Within the campaign, a specific target to raise 100 million U.S. dollars annually for the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women by 2015, is set through private sector contributions.

[The Nation – November 25, 2010]

Gilani Pledges Steps to End Violence Against Women

Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has pledged to take all possible steps to seek an end to violence perpetrated against women. In a message on the occasion of International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women, the prime minister said that I urge all stakeholders, including women activists, political leaders, religious scholars and opinion leaders to come forward and play their due role in this regard. He said Pakistan was proud to join the world community to observe the International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25. The PM said that Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), the largest social

safety net, was a world-acclaimed initiative of the government that focused on women. He added that the women of rural hinterland happened to be the major beneficiaries of this programme, which sought to enable them to stand on their feet.

[The News – November 25, 2010]

HR Watch

Women & HR

Awareness about Section 174-A CrPC Stressed

The Project Coordination Committee (PCC), formed to monitor the progress made under the UN-funded 'Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Programme', reviewing the activities and the achievements of the programme in its meeting November 01 expressed its satisfaction with the outcome at the end of the project. The chairperson of the PCC, Kamal A. Abbasi, apprised the participants of the meeting about the progress made under the programme, which was launched back in May 2009. The objective of the programme was to create awareness in the society about the gender-based violence, with particular emphasis on Section 174-A CrPC, which relates to burning/acid throwing of women. **He said that the GBV project was one of many undertaken by the Rahnuma-Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP) to create awareness about this sensitive issue and most horrifying, particularly against women in the society.** Mr Abbasi said that under the GBV Project extensive efforts were made to create awareness about Section 174-A CrPC, which if properly projected would serve as a strong deterrent against this specific and most painful form of violence against women in the society. He said that extensive efforts were made in form of holding interactive social forums, workshops, trainings and seminars to highlight the importance of Section 174-A CrPC and how it should be implemented while dealing with any unfortunate incident of burning of a person.

[The News – November 02, 2010]

Judicial Response to Gender-Based Violence

The Human Rights Watch in their 1999 report explain how such customary practices sometimes even influenced the court's verdict: "The Court explained that the Quranic verse 34 of Sura Al-Nisa establishes men as the "custodian of women"; hence a man who kills another man for defiling the honour of his wife or daughter is protecting his property and acting in self-defence. Quoting Sura Al-Nisa, the judge concluded, "I am of the view that the appellant, as the custodian of honour of his wife, had the right to kill the deceased while he was engaged in [a] sex act with his wife and he had not earned liability of qisas or tazir or even diyat, and is hereby acquitted. The afore-referred opinion reflects a misinterpretation and not a correct understanding of the religious tenet on the issue. Because Islam does not stand for taking the law into one's hand. The practice of 'honour killing' is a form of murder without trial, which is contrary to Islam. Islam upholds the sanctity of human life, as the Holy Quran declares that killing one innocent human being is akin to killing the entire human race. In reality, honour killings are a direct outcome of forced marriages and have nothing to do with Islam. Forced Marriages and crimes in the name of honour cannot be separated from one another. Both practices are forms of violence which primarily affect girls and women and are grounded in a patriarchal image of family honour. Forced marriage is a complete negation of the Islamic concept of marriage. In Pakistan tribal and feudal customs relating to women's rights particularly marital rights are undergoing a change through progressive legislation and liberal interpretation of the law. The Muslim Family Law Ordinance (MFLO) is the main body of law regulating marriage in Pakistan. The MFLO mainly deals with the procedural aspects of marriage, meaning that the courts enjoy wide discretionary power to decide what the substantive, uncodified Muslim personal law says.

[The News – November 04, 2010]

Vani Case in AJK: Police Arrested Father, Two Others

Launching probe into an alleged incident of vani in Azad Kashmir, police have booked 18 persons and arrested three of them, including father of the girl. Officials said on November 01 that the case has been registered on an application by an official of the Social Welfare department under section 11 of Zina Ordinance and 328 of Azad (Kashmir) Penal Code. Police also recorded statement of 11-year old Kiran. Assistant Superintendent of Police Kamran Sikandar told Dawn that they had detained Kiran's father Abdul Khaliq, Maulvi Zafarullah Zia, who solemnized the nikah, and Amjad Ahmed, who belongs to the girl's family. Kiran, who lives in Sangar Pathara village in Dhirkot, was allegedly forcibly married to Sarfraz, 28, of Rahimkot village in Chikar, under the decision of a jirga on October 20. Dhirkot and Chikar are located in Bagh and Muzaffarabad districts respectively.

[Dawn – November 02, 2010]

Women Prisoners in Adiala Jail

The Senate Standing Committee on Health chairperson expressed the hope the process of releasing around 35 prisoners (mostly females) from Adiala Jail will not be impeded after the jail superintendent and his deputy were recently held. About three weeks back, a delegation of the Senate's panel had visited the jail and was shocked to see the miseries of female prisoners, who had no health cover whatsoever. They paid the jail administration Rs1 million for fulfillment of formalities for the release of inmates. Senator Kalsoom Perveen said that we look forward to seeing the plight of jail inmates ending as early as possible, who are still languishing just because they don't have money to fulfill legal formalities. The forum plans to hold its next meeting on November 12 to review the measures that were promised by the jail administration during their hair-raising visit of the prison.

[The News – November 08, 2010]

Punjab Leads in Violence against Women Cases: NA

During the year 2010 upto August, total 6,221 cases of violence against women were registered and according to the break-up, 5,042 cases in Punjab, 618 in Sindh, 362 in KP, 83 in Balochistan, 53 in Islamabad, 9 in Railways, 5 in Gilgit-Baltistan and 49 in AJK. During the year 2010 till August, in **domestic violence**, 502 cases of murder, 502 cases of beating and 139 other cases were registered in Punjab, 130 cases of murder, 58 cases of beating and 45 other cases in Sindh, 121 cases of murder, 43 cases of beating and 29 other cases in KP, 14 cases of murder and 8 cases of beating in Balochistan, 5 cases of murder, 8 cases of beating and no other cases were registered in Islamabad. In the name of **honour killing**, 159 cases were registered in Punjab, 102 in Sindh, 25 in KP, 15 in Balochistan and no such cases were registered in Islamabad during 2010. In burning incidents, 13 acid burnings and 1 stove burning cases in Punjab, no cases of acid in Sindh, KP, 1 case in Balochistan and 10 cases Islamabad were registered during 2010. Three cases of **Vani** in Punjab and no cases in Sindh, KP, Balochistan and Islamabad were registered during 2010. In **sexual violence**, 1,415 cases of rape and 134 cases of gang rape in Punjab, 130 cases of rape and 39 gang rape in Sindh, 48 rape cases and 2 gang rapes in KP, 11 cases of **rape** in Balochistan, 2 rape case in Islamabad, 1 rape case in Gilgit-Baltistan and 4 rape cases and 3 gang rape cases in AJK were registered during 2010. In **harassment at work places**, 59 sexual harassment cases in Punjab, 21 physical harassment and 31 sexual harassment cases in Sindh, 55 physical harassment cases in KP, 6 physical harassment and one sexual harassment case in Balochistan were registered during the year 2010.

[The News – November 05, 2010]

1,200 Women Killed this Year, 98 were Raped

The country has laws to protect women from violence, but they appear of little help to the fair sex, whose vulnerability to excesses by men in the male-dominated society has refused to recede. Enough to confirm this view are the figures compiled by 'The Madadgaar Helpline', which reports the killing of 1,195 women countrywide over the last 11 months. Ironically, 98 of these women were killed after being raped. 'The Madadgaar Helpline', the country's first helpline for women and children, compiled the numbers after examining reports, which appeared in the mainstream media. According to the statistics, 321 women were raped and 194 gang raped between January and November 2010, while 1,091 were tortured, 126 burnt, 383 kidnapped and 316 tortured by police. A total of 491 women committed suicide during the said period. The data also said that a total of 4,870 cases of violence against women were registered by police in the country during the last 11 months and thus, taking the total number of such cases reported since the year 2000 to 79,909. Of the violence against women cases reported this year so far, over 2,400 were reported in the Punjab, 1,070 in Sindh, 998 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and 313 in Balochistan. The number of cases was comparatively less in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan reportedly due to a strong tribal culture and lack of access to the media.

[The News – November 27, 2010]

Child Rights

Children Parliamentarians Demand Child Affairs Ministry

The Children' Parliament Pakistan (CCP) urged the government to establish a Child Affairs Ministry to take care of children's rights and deal child labour issues properly. The CCP members put forward these demands in the form of resolutions in Islamabad during the one-day session of the Rawalpindi Regional Assembly (RRA), Punjab on November 24. CCP' former speaker Bakht Jamshed said that the CPP is an initiative of Society for

the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), supported by Strengthening Democracy through Parliamentary Development (SDPD). RRA Speaker Arslan Latif told Daily Times that democracy is a system which gives voice to common man. National Project Manager of SDPD (UNDP) Marvi Sirmed said that parliamentary procedure should not only be kept to the parliament but it should be made part of their lives. She said that the basic aim of this project is to politically aware the children hence making them responsible citizens who were aware of their rights and duties. Some 300 members of the CPP from 30 districts of Pakistan are serving as the representatives of the children of Pakistan in 10 Regional Assemblies.

[Daily Times – November 25, 2010]

Children’s Complaint Office Established in Islamabad

Wafaqi Mohtasib and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has established a Children’s Complaint Office (CCO), the first children’s ombudsman office in South Asia, to receive complaints from or on behalf of children whose rights have been violated by a federal department or agency and to resolve those issues. Media person learnt this while attending a workshop organised by the CCO to engage media in highlighting the issues of vulnerable children in Pakistan and to explain the working mechanism of CCO. The basic purpose of setting up the CCO is to receive, examine and investigate complaints made by or on behalf of children and young people. The organisation also aims at promoting children’s rights and welfare; create awareness about the child rights issues in Pakistan and to take proper measures to solve them. Head of CCO, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi said that the Child Ombudsman has received 272 complaints till now since August 2009, of which 90 percent complaints have been redressed within three to six months. Mansoor Ahmed, Advisor and Investigation Officer of CCO explained the procedure of making complaints. He said apart from individual complaints; the CCO was also addressing systematic issues, which are the root cause of these complaints. He added that we are making federal agencies and ministries accountable for their policy and legislative action.

[Daily Times – November 25, 2010]

Child Rights’ Issues Discussed

The concerns of Children Complaint Office (CSO) on child rights, implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the government’s role in child rights protection were discussed in a meeting held at a local hotel on November 29. CSO Advisor Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi chaired the meeting. Prominent CSOs working on child rights issues discussed policy matters and shared constraints and proposed recommendations for effective implementation of national plan of action (NPA) and baseline studies. All CSOs reiterated the need for a coordinated networking of addressing child rights issues. This conference built a mutual relationship. Measures being taken by CSOs to implement the UNCRC were discussed. Innovative ideas to propagate child rights and bring new partners on board for the effective implementation of the UNCRC, within the government and related organizations were discussed.

[Daily Times – November 30, 2010]

Minorities’ Rights

Death Sentence not Applicable to Non-Muslims, Women

A petition likely to be filed in the Federal Shariat Court on November 19 states that the blasphemy law does not apply to non-Muslims and women, thus capital punishment under this law cannot be accorded to non-Muslims or women. The petition drawn by Dr Aslam Khaki, a Supreme Court lawyer, states that according to Muslim jurists, capital punishment under blasphemy could not be accorded to non-Muslims or women. Dr Khaki disagreed with the government’s decision of pardoning Aasia Bibi, a Christian woman awarded death sentence by a subordinate court, and sending her abroad, probably the US, on asylum. “If she is sent abroad, she will be a source of negative propaganda against the country and the religion like Mukhtaran Mai,” he added. He said if the subordinate court had wrongly awarded capital punishment to Aasia, she could approach the FSC for justice.

[Daily Times – November 25, 2010]

HRW Calls for Repealing Law

The Human Rights Watch has called upon the government of Pakistan to immediately introduce a legislation to repeal the blasphemy law and other discriminatory legislations. The New York-based rights watchdog said in a statement on November 23 that the government should also take legal action against militant groups responsible for threats and violence against minorities and other vulnerable groups. While international and Pakistani human rights groups have long called for the repeal of the blasphemy law, it has come under renewed scrutiny in recent weeks as a consequence of a death sentence imposed on Nov 8 on Asia Bibi, an illiterate farmhand from Sheikhpura district in Punjab.

[Dawn – November 24, 2010]

Petition Filed Against Governor for Support to Asia Bibi

A petition has been filed before the Lahore High Court against Punjab Governor Salman Taseer for his support and effort for the release of Christian lady, Asia Bibi, who has been condemned by the trial court Nankana on the charges of blasphemy. The petitioner, Shahid Iqbal, a local advocate, has prayed that the proceedings carried out by the Punjab government, the Punjab governor and the federal law ministry to get Asia Bibi acquitted of the blasphemous charge when her offence stands proved under the law, may be declared illegal, unlawful and without lawful authority. The petitioner, represented by a seven-member panel of lawyers, has further prayed that the personal secretary to the governor be directed to explain under what authority of law the governor has given the statement declaring the convict innocent. He submitted the secretary be further directed to ensure that no further interference is done from the office of governor in this matter. The petitioner submitted that according to the FIR under section 295-C of PPC registered against Asia, she had uttered derogatory remarks against the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He said after being tried by a competent court she was sentenced to death penalty with a fine of Rs100,000. He said after the announcement of the death sentence, the governor visited district jail Sheikhpura to see her following which he claimed that he had found Asia innocent after perusal of her record and got a mercy appeal signed by her for its onward submission to president of Pakistan.

[The News – November 28, 2010]

Govt Will Protect Rights of Minorities: Gilani

Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani has said that the Pakistan People's Party's government will ensure protection of minorities' rights. Speaking to a 25-member delegation of Sikh pilgrims who called on him at the State Guest House on November 27, the prime minister said the government was taking steps to look after the worship places of all minorities. He said the government would ensure availability of funds for projects relating to socio-economic development of minorities in Pakistan. He said that I have asked Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Chairman Syed Asif Hashmi to submit proposals and requisitions for funds to start development schemes for the minorities. He praised Hashmi for making proper arrangements for the 542nd birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak in Nankana Sahib.

[Dawn – November 28, 2010]

Sherry Submits Bill in NA for Amendment to Blasphemy Laws

Pakistan People's Party MNA Sherry Rehman, while lending support to blasphemy convict Aasia Bibi, on November 29 called for urgent amendments to the country's blasphemy laws. Rehman submitted a private members' bill in the National Assembly Secretariat calling for an end to death penalty for blasphemy, and will chair a roundtable conference today (Tuesday) on amendments to these laws. The conference, to be organised under the auspices of the Jinnah Institute, of which Rehman is president, will engage academics, lawyers and other members of civil society in an open discussion on the amendments to the blasphemy laws. It will highlight the case of Aasia Bibi and the blatant abuse of the legislation in bringing false claims against members of minority communities. The participants will include Supreme Court Bar Association President Asma Jahangir, HRCP General Secretary Hina Jilani, National Commission on the status of Women Chairman Anis Haroon, Minister for Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti, Ali Dayan Hasan, former chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology Dr Khalid Masood and religious scholar Javed Ghamdi. A press release issued by the Jinnah Institute on Monday read: "The blasphemy laws as set out in the Pakistan Penal Code (sections 295 and 298) find their roots in British colonial law and have in their present form become a source of victimisation and persecution of the minorities in the country. The amendments to the blasphemy laws is intended to ensure that all citizens of

the country have an equal right to constitutional protection and that miscarriages of justice in the name of blasphemy are avoided at all costs. The bill amends both the Pakistan Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, the two main sources of criminal law. The aim is to amend the codes to ensure protection of minorities and vulnerable citizens.”

[Daily Times- November 30, 2010]

Conflict Watch

Five Dead in Suicide Attack on Swabi Police

Five people, including two suicide bombers, were killed while 10 people were injured in the first-ever suicide attack in the district when the Shahmansoor Police Line was targeted here on November 01. According to details, two suicide bombers blew themselves up outside the Police Line at 8.45 a.m. during rush hours when schools and offices were opened and there was a great hustle and bustle on roads. At that important area of the district, not only the Police Line, Swabi Judicial Complex and District Nazim Office are situated but the offices of the education department, District Accounts Office and Excise and Taxation are also present there.

[The Nation – November 02, 2010]

74 Died in Darra, Peshawar Mosque Hit

Terrorists struck on November 05 when a suicide bomber blew himself up prior to prayers in Masjid Wali Muhammad in Akhurwal area of the volatile Darra Adamkhel semi-tribal region, killing over 70 people and wounding more than 100. District Coordination Officer (DCO), Kohat, Shahidullah, confirmed the death of around 70 people and injuries to another 70 in the devastating explosion. Sources in security forces said the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) Tariq Afridi group had claimed responsibility for the attack.

[The News – November 06, 2010]

Six Killed in Balochistan Violence

At least six people, including three settlers, were gunned down and four others suffered injuries in different incidents of firing and landmine blasts in Turbat, Quetta and Dera Bugti district of Balochistan on November 09. According to official sources, a group of armed men barged into the house of a tailor in the main Turbat Bazaar and opened indiscriminate firing on inmates. As a result of firing, three people who have been identified as Akthar, Mohin and Sabir were killed on the spot while Muhammad Ayub and Sabir received multiple bullet injuries. Meanwhile, three people were shot dead by unidentified assailants near Qambrani Road of Quetta. Police said the incident was the result of a land dispute. Police said the three were travelling in a car at Qambrani Road when unidentified assailants, were on a motorbike opened indiscriminate fire at them. Resultantly, Manzoor Ahmed, Adam Khan and an unidentified man died on the spot. Separately, two tribesmen received serious wounds in a landmine explosion in Dera Bugti district. Police sources said that Nabi Dad and Alam were on their way to agricultural field from home when their tractor trolley hit by a landmine placed along with the road.

[Daily Times – November 10, 2010]

ANP Activist Among 4 killed in Karachi

Police told Daily Times that four people were killed in the city on November 13. The SITE 'A' police said that according to details, an Awami National Party (ANP) activist's bullet-riddled body was found from a car in Metroville. The body of Shahbaz Guldad Khan, 42, was recovered from a car. The victim, a resident of Baldia Town, had left home on Friday to attend a relative's funeral. His body was found in the early hours of Saturday, with five bullet wounds. ANP Spokesman Qadir Khan said that the victim was the president of the Ittehad Town ward of the party. He condemned the murder and demanded the government to arrest the murderers. Police said that the victim's family suspected that their relatives, Iqbal and Ishtiaq, might be involved in the murder. A case against the relatives has been registered on the complaint of the victim's brother. An Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ) activist was gunned down near his shoe factory in Ranchore Line, the police said. Ikhtlaq Muhammad Niaz, 27, was on his way to his shoe factory situated near Ramaswamy, when two men on a motorcycle opened fire on him, killing him on the spot. His body was shifted to the Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK).

[Daily Times – November 14, 2010]

Other HR Related Issues

Pakistan at Bottom in World Prosperity Index

Pakistan is placed at 109 among 110 nations, way below other South Asian countries in the World Prosperity Index due to poor healthcare and education systems coupled with weak entrepreneurial infrastructure. Only Zimbabwe is below Pakistan in the rating for 2010 released by London's Legatum Institute on October 31. The prosperity index is based on 89 variables over 110 countries, grouped into eight sub-indices, and claims to comprehensively rank the level of prosperity in 110 nations of the world. It is done by taking into account both economic growth and citizens' quality of life, drawing on data from various sources, including the Gallup World Poll 2009 and UN development Report. Legatum Institute Senior Fellow Ashley Lenihan said that the Legatum Prosperity Index is the world's only global assessment of wealth and well being. It uses a holistic definition of prosperity, which includes factors ranging from economic growth to health and education, to personal freedom and governance.

[The News – November 01, 2010]

Pakistan Ranks 125 on UN's Human Development Index

Pakistan ranked 125 among 169 countries on UN's 2010 Human Development Index (HDI) that measures achievements in health, education and income indicators, as an alternative to purely macroeconomic assessments of national progress. The HDI forms part of the Human Development Report 2010, a flagship study produced annually by the United Nations Development Programme. The report, titled "The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development", was released at the UN Headquarters in New York. Launching the report, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that the HDR had radically changed conventional thinking on development. He said that we have learned that while economic growth is very important, what ultimately matters is using national income to give all people a chance at a longer, healthier and more productive life. The report covers the period from 2005-2010. It said the ranking should not be compared to previous human development reports due to the use of different indicators and calculations. India ranked 119, Sri Lanka 99, Bangladesh 129, Maldives 107 and Nepal 138. Bhutan apparently did not provide any data this year. Oil-rich Norway was ranked number 1 on the HDI. Zimbabwe was at the bottom at 169, behind Mozambique, Burundi, Niger and Democratic Republic of Congo. The report said the majority of developing countries have made dramatic but underestimated gains in health and education in recent decades, although severe inequalities within and between countries persist. The report reviews trends over the past four decades and concludes that people today are generally healthier, wealthier and better educated than they were in 1970. On gender equality, the report said a higher percentage of women in Pakistan and Bangladesh feel they are treated with respect as compared to India. The report said that 79 percent women in India say they are treated with respect against 81 percent in Pakistan and 86 percent in Bangladesh. On job satisfaction, 86 percent of employed respondents in Sri Lanka, 80 percent in Nepal, 76 percent in Bangladesh, 77 percent in Pakistan and 74 percent in India said they were satisfied with their jobs. Among the top ten countries showing marked improvement in HDI are Oman, Nepal and Laos, while Ethiopia, Cambodia and Benin are in the top 20 countries, which the report notes are not typically described as success stories. However, it also highlights serious inequalities, both within and between countries.

[The News – November 06, 2010]

Labour Unions Slam 'Anti-Labour Articles' in 18th Amendment

All prominent labour organisations, along with media-related unions, on November 11 jointly protested against anti-labour articles of the 18th Amendment and urged Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry to take suo moto action and provide relief to the working class of the country. The organisations, under the umbrella of the joint Labour Coordination Committee (LCC), held a seminar on 'Impact of 18th Amendment on Labour Rights' at the Nisar Usmani Auditorium and later, held a rally in front of the Lahore Press Club. The organisations which are part of the committee are: the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Punjab Union of Journalists (PUJ), Pakistan Worker Confederation (PWC), Muttahida Labour Federation (MLF), Progressive Workers Federation (PWF), All Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF), National Trade Union Federation (NTUF), Employees Old-age Benefit Institution (EOBI), People's Trade Union Workers Federation (PTUWF), Women Workers Union (WWU), Working Women Organisation (WWO) and Sustainable Participatory Organisation (SPO). Presiding over the seminar, PFUJ representative

Nasir Naqvi urged CJ Chaudhry to take suo moto action and issue orders to the government to remove all anti-labour articles of the 18th Amendment when the government tables the next amendment in the constitution.

[Daily Times – November 12, 2010

Governance Watch

Political Governance

Govt Launched Campaign to Fight Corruption

The Interior Ministry on November 11, in a high level meeting, finalised guidelines of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy based on the Singapore Model aimed at zero tolerance on corruption for achieving corruption free-friendly public dealing in all federal ministries and departments. According to official sources, the FIA has been empowered to carry out sting operations and raids based on solid evidence on authorities involved in corruption, even with the help of victims from whom the bribes are being demanded. The FIA has been asked to carryout its activities without any harassment and go ahead with a soft start for corruption free and friendly public dealing in all departments. Federal secretaries and heads of departments will be required to report to the FIA about the persons involved in corruption, failing which will mean that the heads of departments will be considered as colluders and will be taken to task. All ministries and departments have been directed to constitute integrity committees for elimination of corruption from their departments. All inquires being finalised by the heads of departments against corrupt elements will now onwards be dealt with by the FIA, the sources said, adding that cases of corruption will be heard in special courts of the Special Central Judge.

[Daily Times – November 12, 2010]

ECP & Election Related News

ECP Has Many Fake Degree Cases Ready But Does Not Move

It is learnt that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has finalised over a dozen cases of fake degrees for prosecution but is unable to move forward and send them to the district and sessions' judges for trial because of non-composition of the ECP. However, former ECP Secretary Kanwar Dilshad does not agree with this view and told The News that the ECP had the power to refer these cases to the judges even in the absence of a duly constituted ECP as it was a functioning organisation and had held a number of by-elections. These cases, which were established by the ECP during its own investigation after receiving confirmation from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) about the fake degrees, were apart from others relating to the established cheats including Malik Yasir Raza, Rizwan Gill, Mudassir Qayyum Nehra and Haji Nasir and Nazir Jutt, who were unseated by superior courts after it was proved that they held phony degrees. Under the court rulings, the ECP has no choice to dilly-dally but to send their cases to the sessions' judges for conviction. Dilshad said that the sitting high court judges, who were members of the ECP before the 18th Amendment was enacted, were supposed to be functional till the time the new ones were appointed in their place. Not a single MP has so far been disqualified as a result of the massive exercise launched by the HEC and ECP spanning nearly six months against the counterfeit degree holding MPs on the orders of the Supreme Court because everything has got stuck up at the He

[The News – November 01, 2010]

ECP Issued Notice in Degree Case

The Lahore High Court on November 22 issued fresh notice to the Election Commission of Pakistan seeking written comments in response to a petition filed by former federal minister Yar Mohammad Rind challenging the legality of the ECP to question his education degree. Mr Rind, the only opposition member in Balochistan Assembly, has moved the court to stop the re-examination of his education documents by a four-member committee of the ECP. Justice Khwaja Imtiaz Ahmed directed the standing counsel for federation to obtain the written comments from the secretary and the joint secretary of ECP within one week as the petitioner has also challenged the constitutional status of the commission. The BHC on September 11, 2002, upheld the decision of the returning officer and declared Mr Rind's degree genuine and duly recognised by the then University Grants Commission. The high court decision was never challenged in the Supreme Court, he added. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has, however, declared the degree obtained from Madrassa Jamia Anwarul Islam, Sukkur, as fake after which the ECP committee directed the MPA to submit the documents. Mr

Rind said the committee cannot issue him notice regarding his degree as the matter had already been decided by BHC and the fresh initiative had been taken only at the behest of his political rivals. He said the qualification of an elected member could only be challenged at two stages: before election in front of the presiding officer and through a petition after election.

[Dawn – November 23, 2010]

Four Fake Degree Cases Sent to CEC

A committee set up by the Election Commission to supervise the verification of lawmakers' graduation degrees decided on November 01 to close the cases of four legislators and forward them to the chief election commissioner (CEC) for action. The lawmakers facing action are MNA Ghulam Dastgir Rajar of the PML-F, who has already been disqualified, and Punjab MPAs Mohammad Safdar Gill, Afshan Farooq and Farah Deeba belonging to the PML-N. But the cases can be sent to the district and sessions judges only by the Election Commission comprising the CEC and four members. The government is yet to appoint the four members, despite communications to that effect sent by the Election Commission to the prime minister and the law minister. The Election Commission has sought guidance from the Supreme Court on whether the CEC can act against lawmakers holding fake degrees in the absence of members from all the provinces.

[Dawn – November 02, 2010]

Election Commission Drags Degree Verification Process

In violation of a Supreme Court directive, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is dragging its feet on the degree verification process of 54 federal and provincial legislators, who allegedly contested the 2008 elections with fake academic degrees. An extraordinarily lenient procedure adopted by the ECP for degree verification has proved to be the main cause for the delay. The apex court had further directed the ECP to ensure that the investigations in the matter should be conducted "honestly, efficiently and expeditiously before sending them for trial." In any case, it should not take each sessions judge who gets seized of the matter, more than three months to conclude the same, the apex court judgment had said. However, despite the passage of five months, the ECP has not been able to refer a single case against the accused for prosecution. In fact, Minister for Postal Services Mir Israrullah Zehri, who had flatly refused to appear before the commission, was not put on trial. It appears that it will take the ECP at least two more months to fulfil its constitutional and legal obligations and prosecute the accused legislators.

[The Express Tribune – November 29, 2010]

No Chance of Mid-Term Polls: Fazl

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on November 06 that there was no chance of mid-term election in the country and the present assemblies would complete their tenure. Talking to a TV channel, Rehman said that idea of mid-term election was the wishful thinking on part of certain elements otherwise there was not a bleak chance of this happening so he would not comment on this topic anymore. About the cooperation of his party with the government despite having differences, Fazl said that it is better to play the role of opposition while remaining in the government rather than extending cooperation by remaining in the opposition.

[Daily Times – November 07, 2010]

Political Parties' News

MQM, PML-Q, JI, ANP Submitted Dissenting Notes

The Senate Standing Committee on Finance on November 24, in an unscheduled emergency meeting, endorsed the proceedings of the committee's meeting held on November 22-23 with some more recommendations and dissenting notes from various parties. The Senate body, in its meeting of November 22-23, had cleared the General Sales Tax Act, 2010 and The Finance (Amendment) Act, 2010 for imposition of Flood Income Tax Surcharge and increase in Special Excise Duty rate from 1 percent to 2 percent.

[Daily Times – November 25, 2010]

PPP Suspends Naheed Khan's Party Membership

The Pakistan People's Party on November 29 suspended the party membership of Naheed Khan after she accused the party leadership of nepotism and cronyism. Naheed Khan's membership was suspended on the charge of violating party discipline despite warnings. Earlier on November 28, disgruntled PPP activists led by Naheed Khan had accused the party leadership of promoting cronyism and nepotism in the party and the government at the cost of ideologues and 'true workers'. The charges were part of a resolution adopted at a ceremony organised by the dissident group in Lahore on Sunday at the residence of Sardar Hur Bukhari to mark the 44th Foundation Day of the party.

[Dawn – November, 2010]

Judiciary Updates

JC Approved Justice Ijaz as LHC Chief Justice

The Judicial Commission, headed by Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry, on November 13 approved the name of Justice Ijaz Ahmed Chaudhry to succeed Justice Khwaja Mohammad Sharif, Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court, who is due to reach superannuation on Dec 8. The second meeting this month of the seven-member commission was attended by eleven individuals since the matter involved the appointment of chief justice of a high court. The nomination of Justice Ijaz will be discussed by a yet to be established eight-member Parliamentary Committee. Four members from the Senate (two each from the treasury and the opposition) and two opposition members from the National Assembly for the committee have been appointed. However, the government has yet to appoint two members of the treasury benches in the National Assembly.

[Dawn – November 14, 2010]

SC Summoned Punjab Chief Secy on Abduction of Prisoners

The Supreme Court on November 01 summoned the Punjab chief secretary for (November 02) to explain alleged abduction of 11 prisoners from Adiala Jail. A three-member SC bench comprising Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Justice Ghulam Rabbani and Justice Khalilur Rehman Ramday was hearing a case regarding the abduction of 11 prisoners from Adiala Jail by intelligence agencies. The court reprimanded the Punjab home secretary and Prisons inspector general (IG) after the Punjab additional advocate general informed it that police had failed to make any headway into the recovery of the abducted prisoners. Punjab Home Secretary Shahid Khan, Punjab Prisons IG Kokab Nadeem Warraich, Punjab Additional Advocate General (AAG) Khadim Hussain Qaisar, Rawalpindi CPO Fakhar Sultan, Rawalpindi DCO Imdadullah Bosal and Deputy Attorney General KK Agha appeared before the court on notice.

[Daily Times – November 02, 2010]

Economic Governance

Facts & Figures on Pakistan's Economy

Assessment of the Macroeconomic Indicators

By Mehmood-UI-Hassan Khan

Recently, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) issued its annual report for the year 2009-10. In a nutshell, the SBP strongly criticised the government on failing to implement RGST, demonstrate strict financial discipline and good governance, streamline the affairs of PSEs, and resolve circular debt issue on a permanent basis. In the wake of the unprecedented flooding, it forecasted a 2 to 3 per cent real GDP growth rate against the target of 4.5 per cent for FY11.

Budget Deficit

According to the report, the overall budget deficit soared to 6.3 per cent of the GDP at Rs929.1 billion against the target of Rs722.1 billion. But, the government had assured to narrow it down from 5.3 per cent of the GDP to 4.9 per cent with a sharp rise in revenues in FY10.

Fiscal Targets

The core fiscal targets of the government were missed during the year under review. The worsening of the financial outlook was broadly a result of greater than budgeted disbursement of subsidies, enhanced security outlays on war against terrorism and below target tax revenue generation, both by the FBR and provinces, during FY10.

Agriculture

Agriculture growth dwindled to 2.0 per cent from 4.0 per cent in FY10. Moreover, growth rate of agriculture sector's credit disbursement decreased to a decade low of 6.5 per cent in FY10 and agri-credit disbursement target was missed by 4.6 per cent in FY10.

Industry

Despite numerous natural and economic hurdles the industrial sector managed to recover from the previous year and recorded a growth of 4.9 per cent during FY10.

Services Sector

The services sector rebounded strongly in FY10 with a growth figure of 4.6 per cent. Wholesale and retail trade, public services, telecom, and personal services were the main contributors in this regard.

Investment and Savings

The annual report of SBP disclosed that the investment level dropped for the second consecutive year in FY10. Furthermore, investment-to-GDP ratio plunged for the third consecutive year. Investments in industrial and services sectors were lowest during the year. Sharp decline in foreign direct investments (FDIs), purchase of government papers by domestic banks, and fragility attached to global economic recovery were the main reasons for the low investment level in the country. The SBP report illustrated that national savings as a percentage of GDP stood at 13.8 per cent in FY10, up by 0.6 percentage points over the preceding year. Minimum savings of public sector, high current expenditures, low per capita income and tax-to-GDP ratio, and limited access of financial services to the rural population were the main factors responsible for low savings in the country.

Inflation

The consumer price index (CPI) decreased to 11.7 per cent during FY10 compared with 20.8 per cent in FY09. But, inflation was higher than the 9.0 per cent target set for FY10.

Money and Banking

According to the report, the SBP's monetary policy did its level best to strike a balance between supporting domestic recovery and arresting resurgent inflationary pressures. Broad money (M2) grew by 12.5 per cent in FY10, compared with 9.6 per cent in the previous year. Moreover, the central bank said that the government borrowings registered a phenomenal increase of being three-times higher than the previous figure of Rs46.65 billion for the period ended on October 17, 2009.

It has been forecasted that due to the colossal damages owing to floods, targets set for GDP, inflation, monetary growth, fiscal and current account deficits would be missed. SBP's report mentioned that average annual inflation is expected to range between 13.5 to 14.5 per cent against the target of 9.5 per cent, while the fiscal and current account deficits are likely to be between 5.0 to 6.0 per cent and 3.0 to 4.0 per cent of the GDP over the targets of 4 per cent and 3.4 per cent respectively.

Concluding Remarks

The annual report 2009-10 of the central bank clearly pinpoints structural weaknesses in the economic system along with remedies to rectify the faults. High tax-to-GDP ratio, high inflows of FDIs, financial discipline, good governance, a business friendly environment and widespread social security nets would pave the way for a stable and sustainable economic recovery in the days to come.

[The News – November 01, 2010]

Critical Need to Put the Economy in Order

By Rashid Ahmed Mughal

The economy is in a bad shape. International financial institutions (IFIs) and foreign donor countries have expressed serious concerns about the way the government is managing the financial state of affairs. They expressed their concern by giving a cold shoulder to the Pakistani delegation's request for more flood-related aid in Brussels recently. US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said that Pakistan's wealthy needed to dig into their own pockets to match international efforts to aid the ravaged nation's long term recovery. Clinton Said that the government must require that economically affluent and elite support the government and people of Pakistan. Incompetent political administration, rising inflation, fiscal deficit and debt, cash-starved public sector enterprises (PSEs), circular debt, and above all rampant corruption, have marked the country's image. Why has the economy reached such a crumbling state? Only a detailed analysis can answer this question. The budgetary targets became redundant even before the beginning of the current fiscal year, owing to financial indiscipline exhibited by the government in the form of irrational (50 per cent) increase in the salaries of government servants. The fiscal deficit target for the first quarter was fixed at 1.4 per cent of the GDP, equivalent to Rs240 billion, but it went up to 1.7 per cent of the GDP (Rs292 billion) by end September, 2010. The Federal Board of Revenue's (FBR) inability to achieve the desired tax collection target of Rs335 billion for the first quarter also attributed to the increase in fiscal deficit.

Coming to the surging prices, the government has revised its estimate for current year's rate of inflation to 14 per cent from the set target of 9.5 per cent owing to a number of factors, particularly rising food prices as a result of devastations caused by floods. Even so, the current account deficit is likely to widen by 0.7 per cent of the GDP to 3.1 per cent of the GDP and the private capital flows are projected to decline by around 0.1 per cent of the GDP. The budget deficit has to be brought down to less than 3 per cent of the GDP in the next three years from the current level of 6.3 per cent. The cash-strapped PSEs should be sold in a transparent manner. Circular debt, another problem that has emerged as a drag on the economy, needs to be resolved immediately. In this regard, energy audit of Wapda and independent power producers should be undertaken. Economic governance has fallen victim to the ongoing political confrontation. It is imperative that the political parties come together and form well planned strategies to bring the country on the road to economic recovery and stability.

[The News – November 01, 2010]

Pakistani Exports Surge by 26pc on Weak Rupee

Data released by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) said on November 23 that Pakistan has achieved an all-time high export growth of 26 percent in exports during October over the same month last year. The growth in goods' value was in dollar terms, amounting to \$1.989 billion in October against \$1.577 billion recorded during the corresponding month last year. TDAP Chief Executive Tariq Iqbal Puri said that the demand of goods has yet not recovered to the pre-recession levels. On the contrary, the value of dollar has surged in parity with the rupee over the period, which was reflected in the export figures. **The provided situation will augur well to achieve \$20 billion exports mark for the fiscal 2010/11.** Puri said that European Union and USA were the two major sufferers of the recession and simultaneously the two major markets of Pakistan and both the world powers were yet to recover from the slump. More than 50 percent exports of Pakistan go to EU and US. The main drivers of this export growth for the last month were knitwear, which earned nearly \$207.65 million in exports with over 39 percent growth. Sector wise, the exports of textile topped the list of exports with 31.55 percent growth to \$1.189 billion, followed by food and manufacturing. Both the last two sectors showed a growth of above 19 percent to \$273.85 million and \$323.5 million, respectively. The petroleum group and cola exports declined by over 26 percent to \$66 million from \$89.5 million in October 2009. Consolidated export figures for July/October period, which was \$7.17 billion, was 19.2 percent higher than the similar period of last financial year. Knitwear and cotton cloth were the driving agents in reaching this level of exports.

[The News – November 24, 2010]

Over 1,500 industrial Units Closed in 5 Years

Of the 1,579 industrial units shut down over the past five years, 700 were from Sindh and 688 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Senate was informed on November 04. In a written reply to a question raised by Prof Khursheed Ahmed, the ministry of industries and production said that 115 industries had been closed in Punjab

and 29 in Balochistan since 2005. Another 47 units were closed in the export processing zones, rendering 530 workers jobless.

[Dawn – November 05, 2010]

Forex Reserves Down to \$16.94Bn

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves fell marginally to \$16.948 billion on routine outflows, but analysts expect the reserves to cross \$18 billion mark after receiving sixth installment from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) next month. According to the central bank data, the reserves held by the central bank remained unchanged at \$13.177 billion by the week ended on November 5. The central bank said on November 11 that however, commercial banks' reserves in the same period came down to \$3.770 billion from \$3.778 billion a week earlier. Experts said that the approval of Reformed General Sales Tax (RGST) bill by the federal cabinet has paved the way for the release of the IMF's sixth tranche. The IMF board will hold a meeting by the end of this month to approve the tranche of \$1.7 billion. The government now seeks a go ahead from the lawmakers to impose the tax from January 2011, which is likely to generate Rs30 billion in the last six month of the current fiscal year ending June 30, 2011.

[The News – November 12, 2010]

SBP Arranged Rs 62Bn through Sukuk Bonds for Deficit Financing

Official sources said on November 13 that to arrange finances to meet budget deficit, the State Bank of Pakistan has accepted offers of around Rs 62 billion against an initial target of Rs 40 billion against three-year Sukuk bonds. The State Bank of Pakistan had offered investment opportunity to Islamic bank institutions through Sukuk bonds, which received overwhelming response and against the initial target of Rs 40 billion, received offers up to Rs 67 billion. The bank, however, accepted the offers worth Rs 62 billion on six-month Treasury bill rate for Sukuk bond, while the government has pledged some 22 acres of Jinnah terminal land against this financing. This money would be provided to the federal government to finance budget deficit during the ongoing fiscal year 2010-11, the official sources added. The budget deficit had been projected at Rs 684 billion or four percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the start of the fiscal year 2010-11, however, due to the floods, the projection had been revised upwards in consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Rs 4.7 percent of the GDP for the ongoing fiscal year. This would increase the budget deficit from Rs 684 billion to Rs 745 billion in the ongoing fiscal year, showing an increase of Rs 105 billion. Budget deficit during the first quarter of July-September had been recorded at Rs 272 billion, which is on the higher side against the projection for this quarter.

[Daily Times – November 14, 2010]

Development Funds Slashed to Meet IMF Targets

Government sources said that Pakistan is cutting its development spending by almost half, squeezed by worsening economic conditions and International Monetary Fund demands. According to government sources who declined to be identified said that the US ally will cut its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) budget by 46 percent to Rs 150 billion for the fiscal year 2010/11. One source said that we had to cut the PSDP to reduce expenditure, especially after the floods. Failure to make the cuts, however, could endanger relations with the IMF, which loaned Pakistan \$11 billion in 2008 to rescue an economy in free fall, because it would not be able to meet deficit targets set as a condition of the loan. The IMF and Pakistan agreed on a revised fiscal deficit target of 4.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product in 2010/11 following the summer floods, compared with an original target of 4 percent of GDP. To hit that target, the IMF told Pakistan to raise revenue. The country has been unable to do so, however, so it has chosen to cut spending. The floods are estimated to have caused \$9.7 billion in damages including vital infrastructure. The new cuts will further impact investment in roads, bridges and dams, which Pakistan needs to grow its economy.

[Daily Times – November 25, 2010]

Reformed General Sales Tax (RGST)

Industry Rejected Flood Tax, RGST

The trade and industry of Karachi has categorically rejected the government's intention to impose flood tax and Reformed GST (RGST), which seems all set to bring another flood of "price hike". The Patron In-Chief, Korangi

Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Syed Johar Ali Qandhari, Chairman, Standing Committee on Finance and Taxation, Mian Zahid Hussain in a statement said that the business community had already objected to any new tax considering the grim situation of the economy and the growing unemployment in the country. They said the 'real stakeholders' have not been taken into confidence and the government is taking the new taxation measures without any proper consultation with trade and industry's representatives, which could have a disastrous impact on the already ailing economy. The RGST will encourage tax evaders instead of bringing more tax-payers into the tax net due to its haphazard way of implementation, Qandhari said adding that no government measures could be successful without implementing proper exercise or taking the stakeholders into confidence. Qandhari while rejecting flood tax said that the people who are already overburdened with the skyrocketing prices and struggling for survival would not be able to pay any further tax. They demanded that the government, national assembly and senate refrain from approving any anti-people and anti-nation decision that creates hatred against the government and trouble for democracy. Chairman, Pakistan Tanners Association, Aziz Ahmed and Vice Chairman, Hamid Zahoor have also termed the imposition of any new tax as an 'act' against the national interest. They said that the government is trying to impose new taxes on the people when they are already struggling for survival amidst ever-increasing unemployment. They said that industry and exports are suffering badly due to government's cruel acts of increasing prices of POL and utilities.

[Daily Times – November 13, 2010]

Senators Rejected RGST

The legislators on both treasury as well as opposition benches in the Upper House of the Parliament stressed upon the Government to eradicate corruption, revamp Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for improving tax collection system and recover written off loans instead of introducing Reformed General Sales Tax (RGST). There was consensus on one point among all the Senators who took part in the debate for making recommendations to the National Assembly on General Sales Tax Bill, 2010 and Finance (Amendment) Bill, 2010 that the Government should check corruption in public sector organizations to generate revenue. They viewed that imposition of new tax in the form of RGST would increase inflation and would be another burden on the poor. The recommendations of the Senate Standing Committee of Finance on RGST Bill and Flood Tax Bill would be presented before the House at a time when Finance Minister Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh would conclude the debate November 26. The legislators belonging to the allied parties of the PPP-led Government including MQM and JUI-F while reiterating their resolve to oppose the RGST Bill also criticized the Government for its failure to check the menace of corruption that was rampant in the public sector organizations.

[The Nation – November 26, 2010]

FBR to Raise Rs 42 Billion through Proposed 'Flood Relief Surcharge'

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is estimated to generate additional revenues of Rs 42 billion through revenue measures for meeting extra budgetary expenditures through Flood Relief Surcharge 2010. FBR sources told APP that to raise additional resources to provide relief to 20 million flood affectees and to fund the rehabilitation and reconstruction work, extra budgetary revenue measures are required. They said that introduction of the proposed Flood Relief Surcharge and increase in Special Excise Duty on imports as well as on domestic produce or manufactures under the Federal Excise Act, 2005 is estimated to generate additional revenues to the extent of Rs 42 billion for the remainder of financial year 2010-11. They said it has been proposed that the existing rate of one percent (1%) Special Excise Duty may be enhanced to two percent (2%) adding that the additional revenue yield of the proposed measures up to June 30, 2011 is estimated at Rs 11 billion. These amendments are proposed to take effect immediately till the period ending on 30th of June 2011. Federal government is empowered to carry out such amendments through amendment in finance act, 2010.

[Daily Times – November 24, 2010]

Doing Business: Pakistan Falls by Nine Places

The country has slipped to the 83rd spot in 2011 against the 75th position in 2010, indicating the growing misgovernance and mismanagement. **According to the WB's report on Doing Business 2011 titled 'Making a Difference for Entrepreneurs', Pakistan's ranking went down in eight categories out of the total nine as the country, in terms of starting a business, nosedived to the 85th position in 2011 against the 69th position in 2010, indicating that the ranking declined by 16 notches in one go.** The WB's report pointed out serious flaws related to overall governance that created impediments in the way of doing business in Pakistan but praised the institution of judiciary. Pakistan's ranking is the lowest in terms of enforcing contracts as it stood

at the 155th position against 156th in 2010. Only 47 procedures are required to enforce contracts, which took at least 976 days to complete it. In the category of paying taxes, the WB report found that Pakistan's ranking stood at 145th in 2011 against the 139th position in 2010. There are different 47 taxes, which are being paid by taxpayers who took 560 hours to pay their due taxes in the whole year. For trading across the borders, Pakistan's ranking was at 81st as documents for export purposes stood at nine and the time to exports took 21 days while the cost to export per container stood at \$611. For import purposes, eight documents are required and it took 18 days to complete this process while the cost of import of each container stands at \$680. For protecting investors, the country ranked at 28th in 2011 against 27th in 2010.

The extent of disclosure index stood at 6th position out of total 0 to 10 and strength of investor index is 6.3 out of 0 to 10 points. In Pakistan, for starting any business, there are 10 procedures required to go ahead, which took at least 21 days to complete the whole process. The cost in terms of percentage of income per capita stands at 10.7 percent for starting any business. The country's ranking in dealing with construction permits improved in 2011 as it stood at the 98th position in accordance with the latest report against 102nd position in 2010. For obtaining construction permits, there is requirement to fulfil 12 procedures, which took at least 223 days to complete it. The WB's report pointed out that Pakistan's ranking was downgraded in terms of registering property because of an increase in taxation rate from 2 to 4 percent as it declined to 126th position in 2011 against the 18th position in 2010. Six procedures are required to register the property, which took 50 days at least to complete it. The cost of registration in terms of percentage of property value stood at 9.2 percent. Pakistan's ranking in terms of getting credit stood at the 65th position in 2011 against the 61st position in 2010. On the strength of legal right index (0 to 10), it stands at the 6th position. The depth of credit information index (0 to 10), Pakistan is at the 4th position.

[The News – November 05, 2010]

Foreign Assistance & Pakistan's Economy

IMF Linked \$1.7Bn Tranche with RGST

A senior official at the Finance Ministry said on November 03 that an International Monetary Fund mission visiting Pakistan has linked the possible release of the \$1.7 billion tranche – under the \$11.3 billion stand-by arrangement (SBA) – with at least the introduction of the Reformed General Sales Tax bill in the National Assembly and all provincial assemblies before the fund's Executive Board meeting. The IMF mission, that was supposed to conclude its talks with Pakistan's economic managers on November 03 on the SBA programme, has extended its stay in Pakistan until October 31. The IMF has also allowed Pakistani authorities to increase the country's budget deficit target from four percent of the GDP to 4.7 percent due to additional expenditures on three phases of flood rescue, early recovery and reconstruction.

[Daily Times – November 04, 2010]

US to Spend \$7.5bn on Infrastructure in Pakistan: Raphel

United States Coordinator for Civilian Assistance to Pakistan Robin Raphel has said on November 23 that US will be spending \$7.5 billion in the next five years under the Kerry-Lugar plan to strengthen infrastructure in different areas, including energy, health and education. She was talking to journalists during a press briefing at the US Consulate. Raphel said that the US was aware of the problems that Pakistan was going through and it wanted to help the common Pakistani to get out of this crisis. She said that the assistance programme will mainly be focused on the neglected areas but all the development process will be carried out through the government institutions and the civil society to some extent. She said that the programme would mainly target the remote areas in Southern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Balochistan and Sindh. She added that the focus will mainly remain on the development of infrastructure in all sectors, and the US believed that Pakistan needed immediate relief to cope with the energy crisis so the US is assisting the country to overhaul and upgrade the thermal power stations, turbines at Tarbela, development of Gomal Zam Dam in DI Khan and Satpara Dam in Gilgit-Baltistan. She added that a sum of around \$1 billion would be spent on the energy sector in Pakistan alone along with \$2 billion on agriculture as well as \$750 million on health and education sectors. She also added that US has already spent \$500 million to the flood victims while some portion of the aid will be given for the development of schools and hospitals in the flood-hit areas along with the distribution of cash among the victims for future development. She said that US had spent a large amount on

the distribution of emergency relief goods for the flood victims through the best aid agencies, like World Food Programme, UNICEF and UNHCR for being extremely efficient for the purpose but most of the remaining assistance will be disbursed through other sources.

[Daily Times – November 24, 2010]

Pakistan Paid \$30m to ADB for Default

Pakistan, mired in poor governance and rampant corruption, has paid almost Rs 2.6 billion (\$30 million) as commitment charges to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for not using efficiently, timely and in a transparent manner the credit lines amounting to \$4 billion. The ADB approved a whopping \$4 billion for 30 projects some years ago, but the government has failed to utilise the facility efficiently and timely due to which Pakistan has to pay the commitment charges every year. A senior official of the finance ministry told The News that the country paid \$8 million in 2007 as commitment charges to the ADB and \$22 million during two-and-a-half years of the PPP government. If the trend continues, then these charges could swell by 100 per cent by the time this government completes its term. The official explained that the PPP government paid \$7 million in 2008, \$9 million in 2009 and \$6 million in September 2010. The sources in the EAD confided to The News that both banks had refused to extend any additional financing to the government, saying they advanced loans, not grants. When contacted, EAD spokesman Zafar Hasan Raza confirmed that Pakistan had paid \$30 million to the ADB as commitment charges on 30 projects from 2007 to September 2010.

[The News – November 02, 2010]

Common Facility Centres ADB Warned of Withdrawing Loan

The Asian Development Bank has warned the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) that it might withdraw the \$12 million loan extended for establishing common facility centres. The ADB has sought assurances from the EAD and Finance Division that the government will allocate and timely disburse these funds as per the agreement. An official letter of the Bank addressed to the EAD and available with The News says that the funds intended for the CFC programme as per the Loan Agreement will not be utilised for some other processes. It adds that ADB will be constrained to request the government to return the \$12 million intended for this programme.

[The News – November 11, 2010]

Local Governance

Zardari Asks PPP's Sindh Ministers to Get Ready for LG Polls

President Asif Ali Zardari on November 01 advised ministers belonging to the People's Party to start preparations for local government elections, which would be held in the "not too distant future". During a meeting with members of the Sindh cabinet belonging to PPP at the Bilawal House, Mr Zardari directed the provincial government to reach out to people and try to solve their problems. The much talked about meeting of an MQM delegation with the president, which was scheduled for November 01, had to be rescheduled as PPP's top leadership decided to sort out matters with Mr Altaf Hussain first. As such, Interior Minister Rahman Malik was sent to London for talks with Mr Hussain on issues that have created bitterness between the two coalition partners. These issues include target killings and the matters connected with the local government set-up.

[Dawn – November 02, 2010]

Assembly Chides 'Unregulated' Non-Govt Bodies

The Sindh Assembly on November 04 unanimously adopted three resolutions, one of them urging the government to ensure registration of all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regulate their functioning, besides getting their accounts audited in accordance with the relevant laws. Mover of the resolution, Ghulam Majaddid Irsan, told the house that many NGOs were receiving foreign funds and collecting donations for the welfare of the general public in the wake of a natural calamity but their presence remained restricted to donation collection points. Mr Irsan urged the provincial government to ensure audit of the accounts of all registered and unregistered NGOs and make them strictly observe the laws governing the formation, operation and affairs of NGOs. He said any NGO found breaching the relevant laws should be liable to punishment, including cancellation of its registration. Law Minister Ayaz Soomro endorsed Mr Irsan's resolution, and agreed with him that many NGOs were getting foreign funding and evading an audit of their accounts. He said the audit of their accounts should be carried out by independent auditors. When the chair put the resolution to a vote, it was passed unanimously.

[Dawn – November 05, 2010]

Provinces Told to Finalize Local Govt Legislation

The Election Commission has asked the provincial governments to complete their legislation on the local government system in light of observations already delivered to them (the provinces) for conducting local body elections without any further delay. Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan, Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan said that as provincial governments intimate/announce a date for holding local government elections, the Election Commission shall issue the schedule for conduct of elections in all four provinces. He added that the Election Commission could not announce the schedule for the LG elections in provinces on its own initiative. He said that in the case of Balochistan, the province has also been requested to reconsider its legislation on local government system in light of the observations made by the Election Commission in its letter, dated October 21. Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan stated that after the adoption of the 18th Amendment, responsibility for holding local government elections has been entrusted to the Election Commission, which has not yet been constituted. However, holding of local government elections depends upon various factors, including the legislation to be finalized by the provincial governments, delimitation of union councils, etc. And, if the elections are to be held on party basis, the resolution of the issue of allocation of symbols to the political parties and their candidates is also required in advance.

[The Express Tribune – November 09, 2010]

LG Election Split Resolved: Ibad

Sindh Governor Dr Ishratul Ibad has said that differences between the Pakistan People's Party and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement over the local government system have been resolved and a draft law on the subject would soon be finalized. Describing 2011 as the year for local government elections, the governor said that the delay in holding elections of the local government was caused by preparations for the 18th amendment in the constitution, followed by the flood situation. But, he added, both parties were now prepared for the local government elections. He was speaking to a group of media persons at the Governor's House on November 10 after reviewing a plan for a housing project where flood-affected people would have clean drinking water facilities through solar energy.

[Dawn – November 11, 2010]

Devolution Process to be Completed in 3 Phases: Rabbani

Implementation Commission on the 18th Amendment Chairman Senator Raza Rabbani on November 10 said the devolution of federal ministries to provinces will be completed in three phases and under the plan, five ministries will be shifted to the provinces by the beginning of next month. Updating the Senate on the performance of the commission, Rabbani said the commission was working on a programme to devolve functions of five federal ministries to provinces by the start of December, and similarly in the second phase it plans to complete the same by the first week of February, 2011 while the remaining will be devolved during the period from February to June 30, 2011 to meet the constitutional deadline. **Rabbani said the process of devolution had been divided into three segments namely administrative, financial including assets and liabilities and legal issues.** He said the commission had held 19 meetings during the period of six months since its formation on May 4 and all decisions taken so far had been unanimous.

[Daily Times – November 11, 2010]

Cell on the Cards to Resolve Post-Devolution Issues

The Sindh government has decided to establish Provincial Implementation Cell (PIC) in order to resolve the post-devolution problems of ministries and divisions which would be shifted to Sindh government from federal government in the light of 18th Constitutional Amendment. Inter-provincial Co-ordination Department has forwarded a summary in this regard to Chief Minister Sindh Syed Qaim Ali Shah for approval. Implementation Commission on the 18th Amendment has been working on devolution process, and it has given the deadline of 30th November regarding the handover of five ministries - Population Welfare, Special Initiatives, Youth Affairs, Zakat, Ushr and Local Government and Rural Development - to the provinces. According to the summary, Secretary Inter-Provincial Co-ordination Department would be the head of Provincial Implementation Cell (PIC), while Consultant (Legal), Director/Financial Analyst, two coordinators and four deputy coordinators would be the part of the proposed basic structure of PIC. This Cell would work under the Inter-provincial Coordination Department and would remake the financial mechanism, rules and regulations and administrative structures as well as resolving other problems of the devolved ministries and divisions. Inter-provincial Coordination Department has mentioned in the summary that initially Rs25.02 million would be required to meet the nine-

month expenses of the cell from 1st October 2010 to 30th June 2011. Initially, PIC would work as temporary body but, if needed, only the chief minister can extend its period or make it regular. Inter-provincial Coordination Department had made the proposal in this regard about five months ago and it was presented on 15th July before the Chief Secretary Sindh. The chief secretary had formed a committee to review the proposed document of PIC, which had recommended that PIC would be established to solve the post-devolution problems when ministries and divisions would be shifted to Sindh government from the federation.

[The Nation – November 24, 2010]

Regional Politics & Election Watch

Pakistan Foreign Relations

Pakistan, Afghanistan Urged to Work Jointly for Security

A two-day conference titled ‘Pakistan-Afghanistan: Towards Mutual Security, Stability and Trade’ concluded on November 13 with a consensus that Pakistan and Afghanistan should leave the past behind and strive together for a secure and prosperous future of their peoples. Participants of the conference, organised by the Institute of Strategic Studies in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), recommended enhancing cross-border economic opportunities, more interaction between the two civil societies, better border management, and ratification of Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, liberalisation of visa regimes, more educational and cultural contacts and harmonising of tariffs to curb informal trade between the two countries. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who inaugurated the conference, said the two countries had joined destinies and stressed united efforts towards establishing peace and security in the region. He said any ill afflicting Pakistan would have implications for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the troubles plaguing Afghan society would adversely affect Pakistan as well. In his concluding remarks, Institute of Strategic Studies Chairman/Director General Tanvir Ahmad Khan said Pakistan’s civil and military leadership were absolutely committed to peace and stability in Afghanistan. Former ambassador Ross Masood Husain and Resident Representative of KAS Dr Babak Khatalbari also addressed the concluding session of the conference.

[Daily Times – November 14, 2010]

Damning Wikileaks Secrets Threaten Pak-Saudi Relations

Relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, two of the most important Islamic countries, appeared headed towards a serious crisis as secret cables unveiled by Wikileaks on November 28 quoted Saudi King Abdullah calling President Asif Ali Zardari as “the greatest obstacle to Pakistan’s progress”. As part of millions of documents dumped on the Internet, Wikileaks put one cable, which gave details of what King Abdullah really thought about President Zardari. The king called the Pakistani president as “the greatest obstacle to that country’s progress. He said that when the head is rotten it affects the whole body.”The scathing remarks by the Saudi King explain why relations between Pakistan and the Saudi kingdom have remained cool and almost frozen during the current rule of the PPP.

[The News – November 29, 2010]

Afghan Parliamentary Elections

Afghanistan Drops Charges against Karzai Aide

An official said on November 09 that The Afghan government has dropped corruption charges against a top aide to President Hamid Karzai who was indicted by a US-backed task force for taking a bribe. Mohammad Zia Salehi, a senior official in Karzai's National Security Council, was arrested by the Major Crimes Task Force, a US-funded anti-graft body, in July after he was caught on a wiretap soliciting a bribe. In return, Salehi reportedly held up an investigation into a company suspected of moving money for Afghan leaders, drug traffickers and insurgents. At the time, Karzai ordered Salehi to be released, saying that his arrest was unconstitutional and violated human rights. Rahmatullah Nazari, Afghanistan's deputy attorney general told AFP that Salehi had been cleared of the charges, seemingly on a technicality.

[The Nation – November 10, 2010]

Afghan Diplomat Set Free after Two Years

Abdul Khaliq Farahi, the Afghan consul general in Peshawar who had been kidnapped two years ago, was released by his captors on November 13 night. An Afghan diplomat in Islamabad confirmed his release. “Yes, Abdul Khaliq Farahi has been freed,” Abdul Jalil told Dawn on telephone. But he did not disclose the place where he was set free. Sources said the diplomat had been handed over to Afghan authorities by the kidnappers somewhere in eastern Afghanistan. Mr Farahi was kidnapped by armed men on Sept 22, 2008, in Peshawar’s Hayatabad area while he was going to his office in an official vehicle.

[Dawn – November 14, 2010]

What Went Wrong with Afghanistan's Election?

The election for the 249-seat lower house of parliament, or wolesi jirga, got off to a bad start. Originally scheduled for May, it was postponed until September after international donors demanded electoral reforms. Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced most of the long-delayed results from a September 18 parliamentary poll on November 24, but more candidates were disqualified and protests over fraud continued. The election went ahead, despite threats from the Taliban, without any major attacks. At least 17 people were killed on the day. Poor security in many areas meant more than 1,500 polling centres remained closed out of around 6,800 slated to open. Turnout was also low. The IEC has put the total figure at 5.6 million voters, considerably higher than the 4 million estimated shortly after polling day. Calculating an exact turnout is next to impossible because Afghanistan has no electoral register. The IEC announced preliminary results on Oct. 20, almost two weeks late, after delays to allow more time for auditing and recounting suspicious votes. While announcing those results, the IEC said it had disqualified nearly a quarter of all votes – 1.3 million – for various reasons including fraud and intimidation. On November 21, the UN-backed Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) said it had disqualified 21 successful candidates – almost one in 10 – and had finished adjudicating all major complaints. The IEC said on Wednesday another three candidates had been disqualified and announced “final” results for 33 of the 34 provinces, and one for Kuchi nomads. Results for volatile Ghazni, which has 11 allocated seats, have not yet been declared, leaving 238 out of 249 seats declared. Thousands of complaints poured in since polling day. The ECC said this month it had received more than 6,000 formal complaints, a third of which could have affected the final outcome. Of those, about 40 percent related to polling irregularities and some 17 percent to violence and intimidation. Karzai's reputation took a nosedive at home and abroad after more than a third of his votes last year were thrown out as fake. His standing will likely figure largely when US President Barack Obama reviews his Afghanistan war strategy next month. There is also the issue of his cabinet. Several of his ministries are still being run by caretakers after parliament rejected swathes of his nominations earlier this year. He cannot put forward new nominations until the new parliament is formed.

[Daily Times – November 25, 2010]

India's Domestic & Foreign Policies

Obama Announced \$10 Billion Trade Deals with India

US President Barack Obama announced on November 06 that 10 billion dollars in trade deals with India to create 50,000 US jobs, and said Washington and New Delhi stood “united” in their fight against terror. Kicking off a four-nation Asian tour weighted towards prying open new markets for US goods, Obama also said he would relax technology export restrictions imposed after India's nuclear tests back in 1998. The announcements were made in India's financial hub Mumbai, where the president earlier paid tribute to the victims and survivors of the November 2008 militant attacks that claimed 166 lives. The commercial agreements included a 7.7 billion dollar contract for Boeing to supply 30 of its 737 aircraft to India's Spice Airlines. Obama said that today's deals will lead to more than 50,000 jobs in the United States — everything from hi-tech jobs in southern California to manufacturing jobs in Ohio.

[The News – November 07, 2010]

India Elected to key UN Committee

India has been elected to a key committee that controls the purse strings of the United Nations, which has an annual budget of nearly \$ 22 billion. Namgya Khampa, serving in the Indian mission to the UN, was elected to the 16-member Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for a three-year term. Khampa, a First Secretary who had earlier served in Indian missions in China, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Besides India, candidates from China, Japan and Pakistan all stood for the elections for the Asian region. India got the highest number of 164 votes out of a total of 570, which according to Hardeep Singh Puri, India's envoy to the UN, is the highest number of votes received by a candidate.

[The Express Tribune – November 07, 2010]

India Suspected UN Activities in Nepal yet Aspired for UNSC Membership

While Indian academics, diplomats and leadership hail US President Barrack Obama for his verbal assurance to support India, November 8, 2010, for acquiring permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC), the Indian ambassador in Nepal, reports reveal, has become suspicious of the activities of one of the agencies working under the direct aegis of the UNSC in Nepal. The UNMIN was established on 23 January 2007 by United

Nations Security Council Resolution 1740 at the request of the Government of Nepal. In the informal letter forwarded personally by Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood to Nepal's foreign secretary Mr. Madan Kumar Bhattarai, Sood had claimed that Nepal's Maoists' combatants were providing trainings to their Indian counterparts in the UNMIN monitored cantonments in Nepal. The Nagarik Daily reports quoting unnamed Foreign Ministry sources said that while he handed over the letter to Secretary Bhattarai, he also verbally expressed that he was quite suspicious of the activities of UNMIN.

[The Nation – November 10, 2010]

BJP Ally Sweeps Bihar Polls; Congress, Lalu Wiped Out

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on November 24 steered the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to a historic electoral triumph by bagging 84 per cent of the state assembly seats and decimating the Lalu Prasad-led opposition while virtually erasing the Congress from the state. In a verdict that left even experts groping for words, Bihar's ruling Janata Dal-United (JD-U)-Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance rode to victory on its development plank and was projected to win an incredible 204 of the 243 seats. (NDA lost only one of 11 seats in Muzaffarpur). The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) combine, led by Lalu Prasad and Ram Vilas Paswan, considered kingmakers until just a few years ago, was trailing at number two with 29 seats. And the Congress, which rules India and contested all 243 seats, was left lagging at a humiliating third with a dismal five seats – less than even the nine it mustered in the 2005 poll. Congress has struggled to tame high inflation and has been hampered in its ability to govern by a series of crises, mostly over corruption, since its re-election last year. This could hurt its chances in upcoming state elections and 2014 federal polls. Bihar accounts for 40 of the 545 seats in the national parliament – the fifth largest parliamentary bloc in India. It can play a crucial role in federal coalition politics. The BJP termed the landslide a victory of merit over dynastic politics. It was largely seen as a victory of development versus the regressive politics of caste that had for long dominated the state. As wild celebrations broke out in the JD-U and BJP headquarters in Delhi and Patna, BJP leaders stepped out one by one to hail the victory – Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Prakash Javadekar.

[Dawn – November 25, 2010]

Political Situation in Nepal

Nepal Failed for 16th Time to Elect New PM

Lawmakers in Nepal have failed for a 16th time to vote in a new prime minister. Only one candidate, Ram Chandra Poudel from the centrist Nepali Congress party, stood - but he was unable to win enough votes to secure a majority because several key parties boycotted the election.

[Daily Times – November 05, 2010]

Nepal Rebutted Indian Charge of Training Maoists

The diplomatic standoff between India and Nepal after the former's allegation that Nepal's Maoist party was training Indian Maoists deepened on November 13 with a senior Nepali minister rebutting the charge. Almost three weeks after India lodged a formal protest with Nepal's foreign and home ministries, saying Nepal's Maoist party had given arms training in two camps in Nepal, one of them involving a member of the Islamist Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) providing a crash course in explosives, Nepal's Peace and Reconstruction Minister Rakam Chemjong said neither the Indian Maoists nor the LeT have any network in Nepal, reported the Hindustan Times.

[Daily Times – November 14, 2010]

Post Election Scenario in Myanmar

Turnout Appears Light in Myanmar's Election

Polling places appeared nearly empty around Yangon on November 07 as the rest of the city went about its business during the first election in 20 years in this closed and tightly controlled nation. The process was expected to cement military rule behind a civilian facade but also to open the door slightly to possible shifts in the dynamics of power. Though the new Constitution guarantees the military a leading role in the state apparatus, this will be the first civilian government in the country, formerly called Burma, since a military coup in 1962. With votes being tabulated locally, it was not known how soon the results would be announced. The

appearance of electoral legitimacy and civilian institutions may make it easier for Myanmar's neighbors to embrace what has been a pariah state, but it is unlikely by itself to ease a policy of isolation and economic sanctions among Western nations.

[The Express Tribune – November 07, 2010]

Myanmar Democracy Icon Suu Kyi Freed

Myanmar's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi walked free on November 13 after seven years as a prisoner in her own home, calling on a sea of jubilant supporters to unite in the face of repression. Waving and smiling, the Nobel Peace Prize winner appeared outside the crumbling lakeside mansion where she had been locked up by the military rulers, to huge cheers and clapping from the waiting crowds. She told thousands of waiting people, suggesting she has no intention of giving up her long fight for democracy in what is one of the world's oldest dictatorships.

[Daily Times – November 14, 2010]

Magazines Suspended for Highlighting Suu Kyi

Eight magazines in military-controlled Myanmar were suspended by government censors after they prominently published news and photos about pro-democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi's release from seven and half years in continuous detention. An editor of one publication said the Press Scrutiny board cited the size of a supplementary section about her as a violation of regulations

[Daily Times – November 23, 2010]

Myanmar's Suu Kyi to Appeal in Party Dissolution Case

Aung San Suu Kyi lawyer said on November 25 that Myanmar's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi will appeal the Supreme Court's refusal to hear her lawsuit against the junta for dissolving her party. The Nobel Peace Prize winner's National League for Democracy (NLD) was disbanded for boycotting the military-ruled country's first election in 20 years in response to rules that seemed designed to bar her from taking part. Suu Kyi 'has said to continue the legal process until it finishes,' said her lawyer Nyan Win. 'We will file a special appeal at the Supreme Court in Naypyidaw to hear the case,' he told AFP. The Supreme Court on Monday declined to consider the lawsuit. Suu Kyi, who co-founded the NLD, had unsuccessfully filed an earlier suit with the Supreme Court aimed at preventing its abolition. Court verdicts rarely favour opposition activists in Myanmar, one of the world's oldest dictatorships with more than 2,200 political prisoners. The European Parliament called on Myanmar's military rulers on Thursday to hold talks with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and lift restrictions imposed on her following her release. The parliament adopted a resolution welcoming Suu Kyi's release from house detention on November 13 but criticising the fact that it happened after the country's first elections in 20 years. After being confined to her home for the better part of the last two decades, Suu Kyi's newfound freedom "could be interpreted as a first step in the right direction," the resolution said. Her freedom "must be unconditional and unrestricted," the resolution said. The Euro MPs also urged Myanmar's main trading partners, China, India, Russia and the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to "stop supporting the undemocratic regime that thrives at the expense of its people and to exert more pressure for positive change in the country." Suu Kyi swept her NLD to victory in 1990 elections but was never allowed to take power. Her party was disbanded after boycotting this month's poll, in response to rules that seemed designed to bar its leader from participating.

[Daily Times – November 26, 2010]

Politics in Central Asian Countries

Kyrgyz Get Multi-Party Parliament After Final Results

Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary elections, triggered by the April overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and the worst ethnic violence in decades, saw five parties win representation, although none have a majority. Weeks after October 10 vote, the Central Election Commission on November 01 announced the final results, which will mean heated negotiations lie ahead to form a coalition government in the mountainous nation, which hosts US and Russian air bases. The Butun Kyrgyzstan party, with a strong support base in the south and which finished sixth with 4.6 percent of the vote, has held vocal protests and threatened the authorities with new upheavals, saying it was robbed of representation in parliament. Under new rules, parliament will be the country's main decision-making body, assuming more power than the president. In interim leader Roza Otunbayeva's plans for

parliamentary democracy, the prime minister will have more power than the president. Under the new charter, Otunbayeva will be acting president until Dec. 31, 2011. Parliamentary elections will take place every five years.
[Daily Times – November 02, 2010]

New Kyrgyz Parliament Held First Session

Some 90 out of 120 members of the new Kyrgyz parliament attended their first session on November 10, marking the Central Asian state's transformation from a presidential to a parliamentary republic. Representatives from all five parties, three opposition and two pro-government that won the Oct. 10 elections, attended the session chaired by the oldest lawmaker.

[Daily Times – November 11, 2010]