

January 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 18TH TO JANURAY 24TH 2016

SKILLS TO SELF-SUSTAIN: FATA WOMEN TO GET VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The Express Tribune, January 18th, 2016.

KHAR : The government will set up a vocational training centre for women in Bajaur Agency to help them learn income-generating skills and earn respectable livelihood, said the head of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Marvi Memon.

Speaking to a tribal jirga on her visit to the area on Sunday, she said the federal government wanted to improve the living standards of the tribal people.

Poverty levels in Fata are higher than in other parts of the country where the BISP provides a Rs1,500 monthly financial assistance to the poorest of poor of the society.

Marvi added that apart from providing vocational training, the government will also extend interest-free loans so that women in Fata can start their own businesses.

Marvi said that Operation Zarb-e-Azb has not only brought peace but also paved way for empowering of womenfolk in the tribal areas.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1029563/skills-to-self-sustain-fata-women-to-get-vocational-training/>

DRAFT OF PROPOSED BILL AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE DISCUSSED

Dawn, January 20th, 2016

QUETTA: Balochistan Assembly Speaker Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani said on Tuesday that Islamic Ideological Council, religious scholars and other stakeholders would be taken into confidence on proposed bills against child marriage, cases of acid throwing on women and welfare of disabled people.

Speaking at a consultative meeting on the drafts of proposed bills, she said all these issues were very important, therefore, drafts should be prepared with consensus of all stakeholders.

The meeting was organised by Aurat Foundation.

The speaker said consultations before legislation on the proposed bills would make them acceptable to all members of the society.

She said the standing committees of Balochistan Assembly were working on the proposed bills in consultation with people from different walks of life.

The committee, she added, would review all aspects of the proposed bills before they would be tabled in the provincial assembly.

Chairman of Public Service Commission retired Justice Kailash Nath Kohli briefed the meeting on the draft of the proposed bill against child marriage.

Aurat Foundation's Resident Director in Quetta Haroon Daud Durrani and Deputy Director Saima Haroon presented a draft on the proposed bill on child marriage.

Others who attended the meeting were MPAs Dr Shama Ishaq, Kishwar Jattak, Masooma Hayat, Spozmai and Arifa Siddique, Director of Women Development Department Salma Qureshi, Aurat Foundation representative Ashfaq Mengal and Alauddin Khilji.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1234181>

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: 4,000 WOMEN BEING TRAINED, SAYS MINISTER

The Express Tribune, January 22nd, 2016

LAHORE: Minister for Women Development Hameeda Waheedud Din said on Thursday that a programme for training 4,000 women had been launched under the Punjab Skill Development Fund. She said 10,000 domestic workers would be imparted training under the Domestic Workers Programme.

She was talking to a delegation of the Canadian High Commission. The delegation discussed steps taken by the government for welfare of women and their economic uplift and protection. The minister said that the government was providing soft loans under a self-employment scheme. She said Rs4.8 billion loans had been distributed so far, 40 per cent of these going to women. She also mentioned the Women on Wheels campaign.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1031998/skills-development-4000-women-being-trained-says-minister/>

RAPE INCIDENTS ON THE RISE IN INDIA

The News January 22, 2016

Sabir Shah

Delhi dubbed 'rape capital'; 37,413 cases reported in country in 2014; crimes against women have increased by 200 per cent since 2012

LAHORE: Although unabated rape incidents have been a regular feature across the length and breadth of India for ages, a spate of cases involving sexual molestation of very young children in recent past has literally stunned, horrified and shocked the residents of the world's largest democracy, where 13,766 such cases were reported in 2014, 12,363 in 2013 and 8,541 in 2012.

Overall, according to the Indian National Crime Records Bureau, 89,423 cases of crimes against children were reported in the country during 2014. Research conducted by the "Jang Group and the Geo Television Network" reveals that while nearly one in three rape victims was below the age of 18 years in India during 2014, 12.5 per cent of total or 3,125 rape victims happened to be minors.

One in 10 of the raped Indian females are under 14 and every 20 minutes, a woman is raped in the country that boasts highly of its magnificence, history, architecture and cultural values! According to the Indian National Crime Records Bureau, whose offices are attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi, the total number of rape cases in India for the year 2014 had stood at 37,413.

However, only 4,944 people were convicted for rape, whereas a whopping 12,705 accused were acquitted in 2014. Apart from rapes, the country had recorded nearly 34,000 murders by August 2015 and there were 66,000 incidents of rioting.

In 2014, 131,666 people had committed suicide in India and two South Indian states- Tamil Nadu and Karnataka-had earned the dubious distinction of being the states with the highest incidence of child marriage in the country in 2014.

Remember, sexual assault in India is dramatically underreported as victims keep mum due to fears of being shamed and smeared. In its August 19, 2015 edition, a top Indian newspaper “The Hindu” had viewed: “For the first time in history, Delhi is officially the “rape capital” of India. Even while the pace of increase in the number of reported rapes in the city has slowed down, the number of such cases proportionate to its women population was higher than for any other city or State last year.

Analysing the data released by the country’s National Crime Records Bureau, “The Hindu” had written: “During the past years, Delhi reported a larger actual number of reported rapes than other cities, but cities in Madhya Pradesh, including Gwalior and Jabalpur, reported higher numbers of rapes proportionate to their populations. This year, Delhi is higher in both absolute and proportionate terms.”

It had reported: “The city reported 1,813 rapes in 2014, up from 1,441 in 2013. While Delhi continues to lead other big cities in the number of reported rapes, the increase in reported cases has tapered after a sharp spike in 2013. In Mumbai, in contrast, while the number of reported rapes was comparatively lower, there was a sharp spike between 2013 and 2014, from 391 to 607 cases. Nearly all of India’s custodial rape — 189 of 197 cases — was reported in Uttar Pradesh, which along with Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest numbers of alleged gang rapes.”

The premier Indian media house had added: “For the country as a whole, as the number of reported crimes against women increased to over 3.3 lakh, or 56 incidents per lakh women, the rate of increase has tapered off. There was a sharp rise in reported crimes against women between 2012 and 2013, as a result of increased awareness following the December 2012 gang-rape, but the increase was sharply lower between 2013 and 2014, the police say. While the share of reported rape cases in which the offender was known to the victim remained significantly high at 86 per cent, it was substantially lower than in past years, when the proportion was 94 per cent or higher.”

Rape, the fourth most common crime against women in all Indian cities is thus haunting Premier Narendra Modi’s “Shining India” despite the passage of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 in March 2013.

This law was enacted following protests in the widely-publicised December 2012 Delhi gang rape when a 23-year-old female student Jyoti Singh was sexually molested in a private bus by six men.

Jyoti had succumbed to her injuries in a Singapore hospital on December 29, 2012 and the globally-condemned gory incident had generated widespread national and international coverage. Several new laws were passed and six new fast-track courts were created to hear rape cases, but to no avail.

A leading Indian newspaper “India Today,” while quoting Union Minister of Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi’s statement in the Lok Sabha last year, had added: “As per the available data, a total of 8,904 cases were registered under the Act during 2014. Sections 28, 32, 33, 35, 36 and 37 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act provide safeguards for protecting the children at every stage of judicial processes by incorporating child-friendly mechanisms for speedy trial of offences in designated special courts. However, child rights activists have been expressing concern over the lengthy legal process in such cases.”

However, the 30-year old National Crime Records Bureau of India, which has estimated that crimes against women have increased by 200 per cent since 2012, had come up with much higher figures for 2013.

“The Indian Express” had highlighted this report too. In its 2014 report, the National Crime Records Bureau had stated: “There were 33,764 victims of rape out of 33,707 reported rape cases in the country during the year 2013. And 13.1 per cent (4,427 out of 33,764) of the total victims of rape were girls under 14 years of age, while 26.3 per cent (8,877 victims out of 33,764) were teenage girls (14–18 years). Not less than 46.1 per cent (15,556 victims) were women in the age-group 18–30 years. However, 13.8 per cent (4,648 victims) victims were in the age-group of 30–50 years while 0.7 per cent (256 victims) were over 50 years of age.”

The Bureau had further revealed: “As many as 24,923 rape cases were reported across India in 2012, while the five-year average over 2007-2011 was 22,000 rapes per annum. Adjusted for population growth over time, the annual rape rate in India has increased from 1.9 to 2.0 per 100,000 people over 2008-2012 period.

This compares to a reported rape rate of 1.2 per 100,000 in Japan, 3.6 per 100,000 in Morocco, 4.6 rapes per 100,000 in Bahrain, 12.3 per 100,000 in Mexico, 24.1 per 100,000 in United Kingdom, 28.6 per 100,000 in United States, 66.5 per 100,000 in Sweden and world’s highest rate of 114.9 rapes per 100,000 in South Africa. Adjusted for population, the rape rate per 100,000 women in 2013 was highest in Delhi (20 per lakh), followed by Mizoram (15.8 per lakh), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (14.9 per lakh), Sikkim (14.7 per lakh) and Tripura (12.6 per lakh). The rape rate per 100,000 women in 2013 was lowest in Bihar, followed by Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry etc.”

It had further held in 2013 that 24,923 rape cases were reported across India in 2012. Out of these, 24,470 were committed by someone known to the victim.

In 2012, out of 1,01,041 cases before Courts, 3,563 convictions took place in comparison to 11,154 acquittals and 292 cases withdrawn.

The already over-burdened Indian courts had completed the trial process of an estimated of 14,717 rape cases in 2012, while many cases remained pending in its trial process.

Although 2015 figures are not yet available, they are expected to be much worse than 2014.

Just days ago, a minor was raped and killed in the state of Madhya Pradesh by a man who used to work for victim’s father.

Just to cite a couple of the hundreds of such cases, another child was allegedly gang-raped by two of her neighbours in outer Delhi on September 15, 2015.

Angry locals had beaten up the two accused after shaving off their heads.

In October 2015, two teenagers were arrested for the alleged abduction and rape of a two-and-a-half year old girl, who had gone missing from outside her home in Western Delhi.

In May 2014, two teenagers were gang-raped in Uttar Pradesh. The unfortunate girls were later found hanging from a tree.

Even the elderly women are not spared.

On March 14, 2015, a 71-year-old nun was allegedly molested in West Bengal by intruders at the Convent of Jesus and Mary. The CCTV footage showed the culprits ransacking the chapel, destroying religious items, looting cash and the gang raping the poor nun.

Rape cases against female foreign visitors, tourists and professionals have led several countries to issue travel advisories that women travellers should exercise caution when travelling to India.

In November 2015, a 23-year-old Russian national suffered an acid attack in Varanasi,

In September 2015; an American woman was gang-raped in Dharamshala. The 46-year-old Californian woman was visiting Dharamshala, the home of Dalai Lama, when she was grabbed by two men and assaulted.

In January 2015, six local men in Kolkata were charged with kidnapping and gang-raping a 22-year-old Japanese tourist. The woman was allegedly held hostage for a month after travelling to the Buddhist shrine of Bodhi Gaya in Bihar state.

In February 2015, a Japanese girl was raped in Jaipur by a tour guide. She had accused the local guide of drugging and then raping her.

According to the AFP, the woman said she was given food laced with drugs before being attacked by the man thought to be aged about 25.

Last year, Britain and France had revised their travel advisories for India, whereby warning their citizens about the risk of sexual attacks.

In January 2015, six men from the eastern city of Kolkata were charged with kidnapping and gang-raping a 22-year-old Japanese tourist.

The woman was allegedly held hostage for a month after travelling to the Buddhist shrine of Bodhi Gaya in Bihar state.

In January 2014 a 51-year-old Danish tourist was robbed and gang-raped at knifepoint in New Delhi.

In March 2013 a Swiss cyclist holidaying in the central state of Madhya Pradesh was robbed and raped by five men, all of whom were later jailed for life. The woman and her husband, who were cycling to Agra, said they were attacked by six men as they camped en route. The husband was tied up and the woman was raped.

Also in March 2013, a 31-year-old British woman had told police she had to jump from the balcony of her second-floor Agra hotel room to escape harassment by the manager of the hotel and another man. The hotel manager and a security guard were charged with attempted sexual offences and taken in to judicial custody.

In February 2013, a Chinese woman had filed a police complaint against a man who allegedly raped her after the two had met at a south Delhi party.

In June 2013, an Irish woman had filed a complaint with police in Kolkata against a man who had allegedly raped her after the two met at her birthday party.

The woman used to volunteer at a children's charity in the city.

Just before this incident, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs had updated its travel advisory for India.

The Irish advisory had stated: "Women should use caution when traveling in India. Recent sexual attacks against female visitors in tourist areas and cities show that foreign women are at risk."

In June 2013, an American woman was raped by three men near the northern Indian town of Manali. Police said the 30-year-old had accepted an offer from a truck driver to take her from a small village to her guesthouse, and was raped by the driver and two others after she boarded the truck.

All these afore-cited incidents were reported by reputed British and American newspapers like the Telegraph, the Guardian and the Wall Street Journal etc.

In 2013, this is what "The Guardian" had viewed: "Though officials stress that such cases are infrequent and that millions of visitors travel through India every year, the growing problem has hit tourism. The number of foreign tourists arriving in the country dropped by 25 per cent during the first three months of 2013, largely because of fears about the risk of sexual assault."

According to official data, more than 132,000 cases of sexual violence against women were reported in the country of 1.3 billion.

In January 2015, the Tourism Ministry of India had introduced emergency help lines in 12 foreign languages for female tourists, later announcing in April 2015 that tourists would be given a “welcome card” by the immigration officer on arrival with resources to ensure their safety.

The Indian government had also pledged that GPS-embedded tracking system would be introduced in all taxis and for tourists.

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/92912-Rape-incidents-on-the-rise-in-India>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD JANUARY 11TH TO JANUARY 17TH, 2016
BALOCHISTAN ADOPTS BILL AGAINST HARASSMENT OF WOMEN
Dawn, January 17th, 2016

QUETTA: The Balochistan Assembly unanimously adopted on Saturday a bill aimed at curbing the harassment women face at workplaces.

The bill titled “Harassment Against Balochistan Women at Workplace Bill 2015” was tabled by Information Minister Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal.

It was adopted on the basis of recommendations made by the assembly’s standing committee on women development.

Dr Shama Ishaq, the chairperson of the committee, said: “I congratulate all members of the standing committee, organisations working for ending violence against women and members of the assembly over approval of the bill without any opposition.”

Now, she said, women in Balochistan could work freely and without fear.

Dr Ishaq urged the government and institutions concerned to create awareness among women about the new law.

Ministers Sarfaraz Bugti and Mujeebur Rehman Mohammad Hasni and lawmakers Abdul Rehman Khetran and Izhar Hussain Khosa expressed the hope that the law would deter people from harassing women at the workplaces.

They said that women enjoyed respect and honour in the tribal society of Balochistan. They praised Dr Ishaq, the Aurat Foundation, members of the standing committee and other institutions for their role in preparing the bill.

Speaker Raheela Hameed Durrani said that the law should not be misused for personal motives.

The assembly also unanimously passed a resolution, calling upon the Centre to bind the federal information technology ministry to consult the provincial government on its work in Balochistan.

Mr Ziaratwal tabled the resolution jointly moved by him and Nasrullah Khan Zeeray, Syed Liaquat Agha, Manzoor Ahmed Kakar, Abdul Majeed Achakzai, William Barkat, Spozmai Achakzai, Masooma Hayat and Arifa Siddiq.

It said that billions of rupees had been allocated but the ministry could execute only seven per cent of the work of laying optic fibre cables in Balochistan, adding that it had failed to provide other facilities.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1233545>

Child marriage bill
Dawn, January 17th, 2016

ANY proposal that seeks to place restrictions on male ‘privilege’ where it pertains to women triggers a predictable storm of protest in this country. Whether the issue is that of sexual harassment, domestic violence or child marriage, good sense and empathy are in scarce supply. Instead, self-righteous pontification and regressive obduracy animate the most vocal participants in the debate. So it was on Thursday, when the National Assembly Standing Committee on Religious Affairs declared as ‘un-Islamic’ the amendment suggested by PML-N MNA Marvi Memon to the Child Marriage Restraint Bill 2014, which proposed that the minimum marriageable age for girls in Pakistan be raised to 18. Under the extant Child Marriage Act 1929, the minimum threshold is stipulated as 16 years. Members of the committee, after seeking the opinion of the Council of Islamic Ideology members, rejected the notion of placing any such limit, decrying it as a ‘Western’ idea and one that went against the culture, traditions and family values of Muslims.

The smokescreen of faith is a handy recourse in this country to counter attempts at ameliorating the rights of women and girls. Tradition is no excuse for retaining customs that are out of sync with modern thinking. Indeed, customs change over time — if that were not so, the practice of slavery would not be illegal in Pakistan. Marriage is not a relationship fit for those categorised as minors in other aspects of life. Operating a vehicle or casting a vote in this country require individuals to be aged 18 and above. And quite rightly so, for 18 is legal age of maturity in Pakistan. Why should marriage, navigating the many complexities of which requires not only physical maturity but also — and far more importantly — mental maturity, be any different? The pernicious custom of child marriage, still widely prevalent in many parts of the country, robs girls of their childhood and deprives them of opportunities to access education and gainful employment. It also puts their immature bodies at risk of conditions such as obstetric fistulae and increases their chances of dying in childbirth. The legislators’ callous disregard for the lives of Pakistani girls in rejecting the amendment could well slow the momentum created by Sindh, which in 2014 became the first — and so far only — province to raise the minimum marriageable age for girls to 18. It will, however, be welcomed by misogynistic sections of society, of which there are sadly too many.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1233472>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD JANUARY 4TH TO JANUARY 10TH, 2016

RAPE PROBE

Editorial, Dawn, January 5th, 2016

THE alleged gang rape of a young girl, reported to be a minor, in Lahore in late December has drawn the usual — and for some still the most shocking — reactions.

In more recent days, a relative of the victim claimed that the girl had attempted suicide because of the pressures that she had come under during the police investigation of her complaint.

On the other hand, lawyers of the accused — who include a man said to have held office in the PML-N youth wing — have called for a fair trial.

There have been some reports doing the rounds in the media that either do not tally with the facts confirmed by police or that are one-sided. Apparently, some of the stories in the media amount to an attempt at influencing the probe. We are, sadly, once more hearing painful remarks about how the powerful can — and will — escape the clutches of the law.

One again we are witnessing society’s tendency of subjecting a rape complainant to the cruellest of inquiries. These are genuine concerns and cry out for the imposition of the unwritten code dictated by a most basic principle: respect for human dignity.

This critique of the role of the media, of the influential politicians trying to absolve their party of blame, and of society in general has drawn the usual round of vows about the dire need for corrective measures.

But the danger is that all these promises of restraint are going to lose out to a hard-to-suppress urge to protect, report and comment.

There is as yet not sufficient evidence around to inspire hope that the demands for fairness by all parties will not go unheeded.

There is surely a need for civil society to counter the urge to resort to the sensational through debate and popular censure. The government still has a bigger role. This is as good a time as any for the government to display its commitment to investigate without fear or favour.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1230836>

WOMAN STONED TO DEATH IN YEMEN ON ADULTERY CHARGE

Dawn, January 5th, 2016

ADEN: Al Qaeda militants have stoned a woman to death in a southeastern Yemeni city that they control after accusing her of adultery and prostitution, several witnesses said on Monday.

The militants on Sunday “placed the woman in a hole in the middle of the courtyard of a military building and stoned her to death in the presence of dozens of residents” of Hadramawt provincial capital Mukalla, one witness said.

A local journalist at the scene confirmed the rare stoning, saying that the gunmen prevented photography of the execution.

“This was the first time we have seen such a thing,” another witness said.

A copy of the purported verdict issued by the so-called Hadramawt court of Al Qaeda’s Ansar al-Sharia in December said the married woman had “confessed in front of the judges to committing adultery”.

The verdict said the woman also admitted “without any coercion that she practised prostitution, as a pimp... and that she worked with a group of women in brothels”.

She also confessed to smoking hashish, it added.

The verdict said that the woman was sentenced to be stoned to death for “committing adultery as a married woman... and eighty lashes for consuming hashish”.

On Friday, Al Qaeda militants killed a woman in the southern port city of Aden after accusing her of practising sorcery, a security source said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1230808>

BREAST CANCER NOT ‘DEATH SENTENCE’ ANYMORE: EXPERTS

Dawn, January 5th, 2016

LAHORE, Oct 9: Breast cancer is no longer a “death sentence” and to get this message across there must be efforts to dispel fears and infuse optimism into the lives of hundreds of women, their families and the community at large.

These views were expressed by experts during a seminar on breast cancer held at the University of Health Sciences (UHS) on Wednesday. Organised in collaboration with Pink Ribbon Campaign Pakistan, the seminar was attended by a large number of girl students from various colleges.

Addressing the seminar, Pink Ribbon Campaign CEO Omer Aftab said in Pakistan recent trends had shown breast cancer was increasing at an alarming rate among women aged from 18 to 22. He said the country had the highest rate of breast cancer in Asia and one out of nine women in Pakistan were at risk of contracting the disease in their lifetimes. He added around 40,000 women died of this disease every year.

Aftab emphasised it was the right of every woman to know about fatal diseases and society should support their cause rather than considering the issue a social taboo. He informed the audience 100,000 young women would be educated about breast cancer in October in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission.

UHS Vice-Chancellor Maj Gen Prof Muhammad Aslam retired said early detection of breast cancer was the mantra to improve treatment outcomes, longevity and quality of life.

While sharing the challenges in combating breast cancer, he said Pakistan had to overcome countless barriers such as illiteracy, misconception, social stigma and lack of medical facility. Prof Aslam announced UHS would hold an open day for women to have regular check-up, including ultrasound.

UHS director and consultant oncoplastic breast surgeon Dr Arif Rashid Khawaja said awareness about breast cancer was catching up.

“Girls should start self-examination of their breasts from the age of 18. Women are still hesitant to come in for screening. They are afraid of cancer and think they will never get it. Even educated persons think cancer means death, but it is not so,” he added. He called breast cancer a “sad disease” as it occurred at an early age and was diagnosed very late.

Dr Hamda Khawaja, consultant radiologist from Ittefaq Hospital Lahore, said ultrasound was the cheapest and most common method used for detection of breast cancer.

Dr Samina Khokhar said every girl of 18 years of age must self-examine her breasts once a month whereas women aged 18 to 40 must get themselves examined by a doctor after every three years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1048641>

GIRL SHOT DEAD BY BROTHER OVER ‘FREE WILL MARRIAGE’

The Express Tribune, January 5th, 2016.

SUKKUR: A girl was killed by her younger brother in Gul Muhammad Paryo village in Naushero Feroz district on Sunday for choosing the right to marry of her own free will.

Abdul Waheed Paryo gunned down his elder sister, Uzma, when she demanded going back to her husband following her homecoming after an intervention by the local police.

The suspected murderer also tried to bury his sister without performing the last rites. Meanwhile, neighbours informed Phull police who confiscated the body before the planned burial but failed to nab the accused who had reportedly escaped.

However, a local journalist claimed the police later managed to arrest Paryo but are not ready to declare it owing to pressure from some influential persons.

Phull police station SHO Niaz Mazari told The Express Tribune the police had recovered the girl’s body but the accused was still at large. He negated the accusation that police were hiding the boy’s arrest due to pressure from some quarters, and claimed they are carrying out raids to arrest him.

According to the residents, six months ago Uzma eloped with Abdul Aziz Hattar, who lived in the nearby Sadhuja village. This marriage of free will angered her parents, who asked her to return and then promised to send her back to her husband 'in a respectable way'.

Trusting her parents, the girl along with her husband went to the local police, which produced the couple in the Sindh High Court's Larkana bench. In her statement before the court, Uzma said she had married Hattar of her free will and now her parents had asked her to come back because they are ready to accept the marriage. On this, the court handed her over to her parents.

Uzma reportedly started living with her parents and kept waiting for her 'rukhsati'. On Sunday, when she decided to put her foot down after three months had lapsed in a state of limbo, a heated family debate was triggered, which led to her brother taking out his pistol and shooting her dead.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1021934/honour-killing-girl-shot-dead-by-brother-over-free-will-marriage/>

February 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 22n TO FEBRUARY 28th 2016

NO HONOUR IN HONOUR KILLING: PM

Dawn, February 23rd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that killing in the name of honour is a despicable act, adding that his government's priorities included eliminating violence against women by empowering them.

Speaking at the launch of a documentary by Oscar award-winning filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy on Monday, he expressed the resolve to 'build a progressive Pakistan by giving an equal and respectable status to women'.

Ms Chinoy's latest documentary, 'A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness', which has been nominated for the 88th Academy Awards, was screened at the PM office to highlight the issue of so-called 'honour killing'.

Mr Sharif said the launching ceremony was a manifestation of the government's resolve to address the issue of honour killing, 'which has nothing to do with religion'.

He recited a saying of Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) that 'the most honourable man is the one who shows respect towards women'.

"There is no honour in honour killing," he said, adding that he was proud that a 'daughter of Pakistan' through the art of filmmaking was contributing to the betterment of society by working on challenging themes. He praised Ms Chinoy for her remarkable work and wished her success in the Academy Awards to be distributed later this month.

Talking to journalists after watching the film, the prime minister said the society's mindset about honour killings must be changed. The issue needs to be highlighted at different platforms to create awareness among the masses.

Mr Sharif said he was keen to provide women a level-playing field in accordance with the vision of the Quaid-i-Azam for the development and prosperity of country.

Ms Chinoy said women were the greatest asset of the country with their diverse potential ranging from scaling highest peaks of the world to proving their mettle in sports, or working strong as parliamentarians, lawyers and scientists.

Despite all these strides, she deplored, women were being subjected to honour killing and acid attacks. She called for collective efforts to pave the way for strong legislation against honour killing, which she termed as "premeditated murder".

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241354>

HOW SOCIETY PAYS WHEN WOMEN'S WORK IS UNPAID

International New York Times, Feb. 22, 2016

Claire Cain Miller

In countries around the world, the ways in which men and women spend their time are unbalanced. Men spend more time working for money. Women do the bulk of the unpaid work — cooking, cleaning and child care.

This unpaid work is essential for households and societies to function. But it is also valued less than paid work, and when it is women's responsibility, it prevents them from doing other things.

“This is one of those root inequalities that exist all over in society and we just don't talk about it very much,” Melinda Gates, co-founder of the Gates Foundation, said in an interview. She said she was inspired by her own observations when traveling to other countries as well as by time-use data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. “If we don't bring it forward, we basically won't unlock the potential of women.”

Ms. Gates and her husband, Bill Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft, released their annual letter Monday night in which they outlined priorities for the year, and hers was “time poverty” because of unpaid work. Over all, richer countries like the United States tend to have a smaller time gap for unpaid work than poorer countries like Mexico. Japan, which has one of the largest gaps, has recently started a host of initiatives to try to increase the number of women who work for pay instead of doing full-time child care, because leaders said it was essential to economic growth.

Worldwide, women spend an average of 4.5 hours a day on unpaid work, including grocery shopping, child care and laundry. That is more than double the amount of time men spend, according to O.E.C.D. data. Men spend significantly more time on paid work and also on leisure activities, which include playing sports, watching TV and hanging out with friends.

Relative to women, men spend the most time doing chores in the Scandinavian countries, and the least time in India, Mexico, Turkey and Japan. In Norway, for instance, women spend just over 3.5 hours a day on unpaid work and men spend three hours. In India, women spend six hours and men spend less than an hour. When not making a comparison with women, South Korean men come out last at 0.7 hours.

In the United States, women spend about four hours a day on unpaid work, compared with about 2.5 hours for men. The difference starts early: American girls ages 10 to 17 spend two more hours than boys on chores each week, and boys are 15 percent more likely to be paid for doing chores, according to a University of Michigan study.

When the time women spend on unpaid work shrinks to three hours a day from five hours, their labor force participation increases 10 percent, according to the O.E.C.D. When women are not able to go to school, their children are less healthy and more likely to stay in poverty. Women could do more paid work and get more education if men did more unpaid work, or if both did fewer chores.

“We need to call work what it is — work — whether you do it at home or whether you do it out in the labor force, and then give men and women options to choose what they want to do,” Ms. Gates said.

There are several ways to close the time gap. Diane Elson, a sociologist and economist at the University of Essex in Britain and an adviser on women's issues and development to the United Nations, has written that unpaid work must be recognized, reduced and redistributed.

Technology plays a key role in reducing the time chores take: Think about the time American women spent washing clothes and cooking before the invention of modern appliances.

Redistributing more unpaid work to men can happen through policies, like paid family leave. Women are more likely to return to work after having a baby when they have paid leave, and men who take paternity leave spend more time on child care later.

Ms. Gates said the foundation planned to increase its support for ways to reduce the gap in unpaid work, such as providing contraceptives and cellphones for women, which could help women in developing countries. Cellphones allow women to more quickly access information like a clinic's vaccine supply or the price of a crop at the market.

Cultural change is also important, Ms. Gates said.

She recalled being unhappy about the long commute to her oldest daughter's preschool. Mr. Gates, then chief executive of Microsoft, said he would drive their daughter two days a week.

"Moms started going home and saying to their husbands, 'If Bill Gates can drive his daughter, you better darn well drive our daughter or son,' " Ms. Gates said. "If you're going to get behavior change, you have to role-model it publicly."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/upshot/how-society-pays-when-womens-work-is-unpaid.html>

WOMEN PROTECTION LAW WINS ACCLAIM

Dawn, February 26th, 2016

XARI JALIL

LAHORE: People from all walks of life have welcomed the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Bill passage in the Punjab Assembly, with some of them criticising the MPAs "who objected to certain clauses".

The Bill was passed on Wednesday after remaining pending since May 2015.

One PPP MPA who sat through the assembly session was Faiza Malik, who herself had moved a Domestic Violence Bill in 2012, which differed in the sense that it aimed to protect all vulnerable persons living under the same roof. These included domestic help, children and elderly persons. However, these are not included in the current bill.

Ms Malik fully supported the bill that came through the Social Welfare Department.

"The Bill is originally drafted by Salman Sufi who launched a 'Violence against Women Centre' (VAWC) in Multan, where the idea is to have protection and rehabilitation of the women survivors or victims under one roof, including medical counseling and checkups, police procedures and also basic legal documentation," she said.

She said "the men in the assembly, especially from the PTI, were the most to cause an issue." "They were of the view that the bill would cause domestic and family problems, and would interfere with personal issues. They also said divorce rates would go up. It is unbelievable the kind of attitude we have among lawmakers. One male MPA even said to me that religion allows women to be beaten up and that she has no right to let the news out of the house."

When asked why other PPP MPAs did not appear, she said most lived out of Lahore and were usually absent, and said many other party members were also not present. From the PPP she and Mian Khurram Jahangir Wattoo were the only ones present. She specified that the members were not told beforehand about the bill, and that was one reason why they were not present.

"The PTI members did not even want to discuss the bill and state their reservations," she said referring to her own discussions with some of them.

Human rights lawyer Ali Imran, who was present in the assembly's Speaker Box on Wednesday, said that in particular one of the reservations that caused an issue was the clause that said a court could order a GPS tracker to be installed to monitor movement of the defendant, in case he was accused of an act of grave violence or was deemed likely to be committed.

"Some of the male MPAs found this very derogatory," he said. "In fact, even the ruling

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“Some of the male MPAs found this very derogatory,” he said. “In fact, even the ruling party had trouble finding support. There was an issue of quorum in the assembly as members were very few.”

He said there was dissent over another clause according to which in order to protect “life, dignity and reputation of the aggrieved, a woman protection officer (WPO) may direct the defendant to move out of the house for 48 hours.

Aurat Foundation Resident Director Mumtaz Mughal said the bill had originally come into the assembly in April and was approved by the cabinet in May and in the same month returned to the assembly, but since then it had taken a very long time to be passed. She said the bill had originally been an executive order but now was a legal order and this protected its status.

“We had worked on a bill in 2008 at the National Assembly level, but after the devolution took place a new bill for Punjab had to be introduced,” she said.

“Sindh and Balochistan assemblies had passed similar bills but did not have a good implementation mechanism, so we learnt from that and though the definition of domestic violence was not included, there are various forms of violence that the bill aims to protect against.”

PTI MPA Shunila Ruth says that while they did not embrace the bill, they did not oppose it either. “I do admit the running thought of most men in the assembly is that they feel they are being plotted against,” she admitted.

SP Nabila Ghanzanfar endorsed not just the bill but also the VAWCs that it supports. “We have launched women-friendly front desks in about 10 police stations, but the complaint will still be handled later by investigation wings that have the same chauvinistic attitude,” she says.

“But this makes life very easy for a woman complainant and eventually more women will become aware of their rights.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1242010>

‘WOMEN PRISONERS IN HARIPUR VULNERABLE TO ASSAULT’

Dawn, February 27th, 2016

IFTIKHAR A. KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Women prisoners housed in Haripur Central Jail are residing near the male prison, making them vulnerable to sexual violence in case of jail riots.

The male prison also houses hardcore criminals and even Taliban militants; there are over 1,700 male prisoners, and 31 female prisoners.

Compiled by members of the federal ombudsman advisory committee, which visited the prison in July 2015, the detailed report on prisoners – with special focus on women and children – claims that prisons in close vicinity of hardcore criminals should be separated.

The report cites complaints by women prisoners, who say they are not allowed to use cots. This could potentially risk their lives, due to the presence of snakes and scorpions. The report calls for the provision of humane bedding for all inmates.

It also calls for limited use of restraints on pregnant prisoners, and the provision of routine reproductive healthcare. The report also recommends that women prisoners be allowed to retain custody of their newborns while incarcerated.

The report states that most women prisoners had been awarded long-term sentences, which was why it was imperative that plans for normal education and skill development be introduced. The report said this would allow for constructive use of their time, and said that demoralised prisoners can undergo psychological pressures.

A vocational school for women prisoners was established at the jail in 2001, but was closed down around three years ago. Presently there are no arrangements in place to provide the prisoners with vocational training.

The report also said that some juvenile prisoners had no contact with their families and were in prison due to non-prosecution. Most of the prisoners said they had been implicated in false cases. The report stated that most young prisoners were keen to continue their education.

During their interaction with senior jail officials, members of the committee found most of them dissatisfied with their service structure because they had been at the same prison for the last two decades. Most did not expect to be promoted before their retirement.

The report recommended that the government take note of the conditions facing jail officials, and offer promotions and a higher rate of pay. It also suggested bonuses and incentives for extra duty hours. The committee also found jail officials' and employees' accommodation in bad shape and lacking in steady maintenance.

The report added that inmates are not dressed in the prison uniform, which makes it difficult to distinguish them from visitors and makes the premises vulnerable to a security breach.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1242243/women-prisoners-in-haripur-vulnerable-to-assault>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 15th TO FEBRUARY 21st 2016

LABOUR, LOVE AND WOMEN

Dawn, February 17th, 2016

RAFIA ZAKARIA

SEVERAL times a day, in almost all Pakistan's larger cities, planes fill up with passengers, doors close and the flight is ready to take off. Flight attendants, many of them women, begin their circuit up and down the aisle, serving drinks or snacks to the passengers, ensuring that they are comfortable.

As in most other parts of the world, the job of the flight attendant is one usually occupied by women, and there is a reason for that: the experience (at least theoretically and possibly not at all on some Pakistani airlines) is that the flight attendant is there to take care of you on your journey. In this sense, her job is not simply physical but also emotional. Most jobs that hire women, from teaching to nursing, tend to possess this particular component.

The problems it produced were recently pointed out by author Adia Wingfield in an article entitled How 'Service with a Smile' Takes a Toll on Working Women. While dealing mostly with Western contexts, Wingfield pointed out that the emotional expectation of how women must conduct themselves within the context of service industry workplaces is not tabulated when considering the effort involved in doing these jobs. The concept of 'emotional labour', the project of making customers or passengers or students feel cared for, something that goes beyond the job as it appears, is not usually considered at all when pay scales for this sort of work are considered.

The thorniness of the issue is further revealed when one considers the fact that men doing the same jobs are not held to the same standards of expressing care or emotional connection. A male secretary in this sense is not expected to manage the personal aspects of his boss's life, ensure not simply that the administrative tasks that are part of his job are done, but that the boss feels like things are taken care of.

The kicker for women lies in the fact that these expectations do not cease when they start making inroads into male-dominated professions. A female boss is again expected and evaluated by her staff not simply on the way she manages and executes but also based on whether and how much caring she expresses for her employees.

Female bosses who fail to do so are routinely judged harshly by male and female employees, labelled harsh, abrasive and patently unlikeable. Male bosses, of course, face no such burden of establishing likeability, of tempering the fact of their authority with apologetic niceties that say to everyone: 'I am so sorry for being your boss and a female; let me go out of my way to prove that I am caring and nice.'

Detachment, then, is something unavailable to women. If not fitting into these general scenarios, others amass in which women in the workplace must function as confidantes, agony aunts, and emotional anchors for a wide variety of people within the professional environment. Their refusal to fit into these roles, the ones that most societies are insistent on saddling them with, has the consequence of making them even less welcome in the workplace.

To make it even more of a loser's game, these tasks of emotional management (and the fact that they routinely bleed into texts and phone calls and other infringements on personal time beyond the workplace) are to be handed out for free.

Never recognising that emotional labour is labour, and that women are required to do it, works well for men. What cannot be described must not exist, even if it is a real and often weighty task for those undertaking it.

Women must care, and care for free, and it's not simply the workplace that makes such demands. Whether or not women work outside the home, they are also supposed to manage and attend to the emotional needs of everyone at home.

The unmarried son who returns home from work can shut himself up in his room and chill; the daughter or daughter-in-law has accrued no such licence. There are people to be interacted with, niceties to be exchanged, a plethora of emotional complexities navigated.

More often than not, the relationships that are managed are not their own, providing any real support or enrichment to the women themselves, but rather the accrued demands of others.

To neglect them is to say that the working world has claimed the essential feminine tenderness that is required to be loved at home; that the demand of this intimate realm are now judged as secondary by the cold and careerist woman who does not make herself available to attend to the emotional needs of others.

The emotional landscape of a society is crucial to its wellbeing. As women enter workplaces, the extra responsibilities and expectations placed on them need to be considered seriously.

The terms of an equitable workplace cannot simply be tabulated based on standards and markers based on the old male model. There is unfairness in these extra intangible expectations, whose reality is felt by all women, but never discussed or attended to.

Similarly, the burdens of maintaining emotional harmony within the private sphere also requires a consideration of the labour and effort that goes into fulfilling expectations of time and caring that are the burden of women and rarely, if ever, of men.

Women, it seems, are easily and unthinkingly being saddled with providing the emotional lubrication for a changing society, where they must do it all, but conveniently be paid or lauded for only half. Gender equality requires not simply women being treated fairly in the workplace, but men taking responsibility for their equivalent shares of emotional work, all the management of tempers and feelings and frustrations that they conveniently expect women to do.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1240027>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 8th TO FEBRUARY 14th 2016
ENTREPRENEURSHIP EXTENSION SERVICES FOR RURAL FEMALES
Dawn, Business & Finance weekly, February 8th, 2016

DR TEHMINA MANGAN | GHULAM MUSTAFA NANGRAJ

RURAL women work 16 hours a day and are heavily burdened by their double roles as paid or unpaid workers and family care providers. About 70pc rural female labour force is engaged in farm production and related jobs.

Women are also responsible for performing household activities, looking after their family members, preparing food for them three times a day and fetching drinking water and fuel for cooking.

They are the least empowered segment of society and do not have professional/entrepreneurial ability to do agribusiness and avail themselves of earning opportunities. Gender norms dictate the role of women and their nature of work restricting their time and mobility for schooling, training and for economic activities that could empower them.

Rural females, with limited access to productive assets, are socially, physically, economically, politically and educationally deprived and need to be empowered in their own environment and within the ambit of local customs.

For sound and sustainable economic activities, "Agriculture and Livestock Rural Female Entrepreneurship" is, for now, the best option. As rural females are deeply involved in agriculture and livestock activities, they just need to shift from their paid and unpaid labour to entrepreneurship. For achieving this objective their professional/entrepreneurial capacity building becomes essential.

The writers of this article conducted a research study in eight districts of Sindh to assess the status and potential of rural females and tested best options for their empowerment. The study found that females of 89pc of rural households were involved in agriculture and livestock activities but no regular entrepreneurship extension services were available for them.

Over 86pc female respondents say they need entrepreneurship extension services for their capacity-building, value-addition and marketing of primary farm produce which can help them to start their own agri-business and earn direct income.

On the basis of survey results, a Female Entrepreneurship Centre (FEC) was established in village Hot Khan Laghari, District Mirpurkhas under the Australia-Pakistan Agriculture Sector Linkages Programme, Social Research Project executed by Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam and ACIAR-University of Canberra Australia.

In the FEC, separate product-based groups were formed for value-addition in mango, dairy, vegetable etc and fruit nursery for professional/entrepreneurship-based training after which they started sale of their products, and market linkages were also developed with the help of Social Research Project.

Along with that a Female Agriculture and Livestock Entrepreneurship Services (FALEES) Model was also developed and tested. Two females, who were actively participating in the FEC and Social Research Project, were trained and mobilised for providing extension services to other womwn. They visited their own village households and neighbouring villages and conducted entrepreneur extension service sessions. This helped village females to initiate their own entrepreneurships.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1238150>

CERVICAL CANCER: YOUNG GIRLS ARE NOW MORE AT RISK THAN BEFORE

Business Recorder, February 10, 2016

MUHAMMAD SALEEM

Expressing concern over cases of cervical cancer in the country, health professionals on Tuesday said Pakistan is moving from low risk level to moderate risk level making it a danger zone where the young girls are more at risk than before. Cervical Cancer Global Crisis Card (CCGCC) has ranked Pakistan 7th out of 50 countries with highest number of cervical cancer deaths. Lack of awareness regarding the disease is the dilemma in our society.

Despite social barriers government, policy makers and medical fraternity must come together to raise awareness among the public. It will encourage our women for screening and vaccination against this deadly but preventable disease, health experts said while briefing the media men in a bid to raise public awareness about cervical cancer among the people.

They maintained that Pakistan has an increasing trend of cervical cancer cases which are normally diagnosed at advanced stages when a woman is in the prime of her life, taking care of her children and family. It is very important to educate masses and persuade them to get their daughters vaccinated. Vaccination along with screening can reduce the incidence of cervical cancer by 94 percent and the screening should be continued even after vaccination, they said.

As per WHO study, in Pakistan, the incidence of cervical cancer less than 9 per 100,000 back in 2002 which has moved to 13.6 per 100,000 in 2008. We are standing in 2016 and any concerned person can sense the gravity of conditions. Lack of latest data and research is adding to the misery, they added.

Consultant Gynaecologist Dr Noreen Zafar said that the cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women world-wide and the third leading cause of cancer deaths in women. It kills an estimated 275,000 women every year and 500,000 new cases are reported world-wide, she added.

She said, “Cervical cancer is the only cancer which is almost entirely preventable. We know what causes it, Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and there is even a vaccination to prevent it. It is very unfortunate that everyday 20 women die of cervical cancer which can be prevented through a vaccine”.

Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) Punjab President Asif Kaleem Sheikh said that every woman is at a risk. The best time to get vaccinated is before marriage, however, all females from 9 years onwards can benefit from vaccine against this cancer. Getting the vaccine as early as possible will protect them in future, he said. Dr Haroon Hamid, General Secretary PPA Punjab said that according to a study carried out by WHO, numerous tools and technologies exist to prevent cervical cancer. These interventions remain largely inaccessible to girls and women who need them the most.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/14800/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 1ST TO FEBRUARY 7TH 2016 FROM STIGMATISATION TO INACTION: PROTECTION OF WOMEN ACT 2006 BRINGS NO RELIEF TO RAPE VICTIMS

The Express Tribune, February 1st, 2016

PESHAWAR: For decades, human rights activists attacked the Hudood Ordinance 1979 for its treatment of rape victims. This ordinance was introduced by Council of Islamic Ideology but in fact, was widely criticised by Islamic scholars as well.

In 2006, an amendment (Protection of Women Act) put zina or rape clause under the Pakistan Penal Code. This meant a rape victim who had to go to court along with four eyewitnesses previously could now go to a police station and register an FIR instead. The amendment also reduced the number of eyewitnesses to two people.

However none of the changes actually helped rape victims as people had expected – not in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa at least.

Victims and families complained the police, in most cases, do not register an FIR. Even if after delays FIRs are registered, faulty investigation results in the accused being released by courts.

In K-P in particular, the police do not cooperate with rape victims and avoid registering FIRs.

In August 2015, a polio worker was raped in her house in Nowshera and even after four months of persistent pleas, the Akbarpura police station did not register her case.

In fact, the Nowshera DPO claimed the victim was trying to be another Mukhtaran Mai – a woman who was first gang-raped and then paraded naked in front of the neighbourhood.

Local journalists went one step ahead and accused the rape victim of concocting the story in a bid to seek asylum in the United States.

While it may be possible there was no rape, the police, however, are in no position to come to that conclusion. Without a thorough forensic and medical investigation, the police cannot make such claims.

The victim said after being raped, she went to the police who indulged in delaying tactics. This forced her to hold a press conference in Peshawar on December 22.

Victim blaming is not new – not in Pakistan, not in other countries in the world. “She is lying to get attention” or “She was asking for it, walking alone at night” or “She said no, but she meant yes” are statements people make to justify the horrifying act of rape.

Talking to The Express Tribune, human rights activist Uzma Mehboob said police officials often blame victims. According to Mehboob, police officials conveniently claim the crime was reported several days after the rape – when no data or evidence can be collected.

She said several seminars on the subject have been organised where forensic experts have said the passage of days does not necessarily destroy the evidence.

Even in the case of the polio worker from Nowshera, police claimed the victim had burnt her clothes.

Mehboob also said the treatment of rape was inappropriate by not just the police but the entire society.

“Rape victims are often advised to not publicise their plight as it would stigmatise them and bring ill-repute to the family,” she said. “Even the police place the onus of responsibility on the victim and ask incorrect questions like, ‘Why were you outside in the first place?’” Mehboob added.

Talking to The Express Tribune, DSP Shahzadi, who worked as the SHO of the women police station in Hazara for 12 years, said rape cases could be handled better if policewomen deal with them.

“The number of policewomen in K-P is very limited but it will really help victims if policewomen register these cases,” she said. “In every police station, policewomen should deal with violence against women.”

Shahzadi added in Hazara, rape was the most common crime faced by women while in Peshawar, murder and violence were more common.

Woman rights activist Rukhsanda Naz also advocated for women police to deal with cases concerning violence against women as they are in a better position to understand their problems. “In this regard, desks with policewomen can be established in all police stations,” she added.

A five-year-old girl was raped and left in a semi-conscious state, bleeding, in a deserted plot in Wazir Bagh near Yakatoot police station Saturday evening. She was rushed into emergency surgery which she survived, however, few details have been released yet.

A 35-year-old man, a resident of Bajaur Agency, has been arrested on suspicion.

Talking to The Express Tribune, police said the five-year-old girl went out of her house Saturday afternoon and did not return for several hours.

She was kidnapped, raped and found by her family members in a deserted plot later, not completely aware of her surroundings and badly hurt. She was rushed to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH). According to an official at the facility, she is still admitted there after undergoing an emergency operation at the gynaecology ward.

“The girl had been raped; her family members found her sitting in a deserted plot, unable to talk or even stand,” said an official of Yakatoot police station, requesting anonymity. He added, “She was bleeding and taken to LRH and we were immediately informed.”

He said since evidence suggests she was raped, an FIR under Section 376 of the Pakistan Penal Code against the culprit has been registered.

The father of the girl, a resident of Esa Khel, Mohmand Agency who has been living in the city for the past 15 years, is a daily wage earner.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1037760/from-stigmatisation-to-inaction-protection-of-women-act-2006-brings-no-relief-to-rape-victims/>

March 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 28th TO APRIL 3rd 2016

WOMEN — INDISPENSABLE TO A SUCCESSFUL ECONOMY

The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2016.

Waqas Younus

With 3.38 billion women in the world, educated women are an important part of a prosperous society. If the women in a family have well-paid jobs, then the family’s income increases, thus lessening the burden on men. An increased income for the family means that the family contributes more to the nation’s output. Therefore, if women are more involved in the workforce, the nation will benefit.

Do we really need more working women? Reports by the McKinsey Global Institute suggest that gender-balanced teams yield better financial results. Do we really need more women in top management positions?

An article in the Harvard Business Review (HBR) shows that women are often better at parsing and evaluating information. The article also cites a study of 600 corporate boards in its conclusion that women are more likely to consider exploring all options, the rights of others, and to prefer a consensus-based decision-making process to achieve fair solutions.

Having women in executive positions is beneficial to companies as well. A 2014 study by Credit Suisse reported that companies with more women on their board or in top management positions saw stronger returns on equity, higher valuation and higher pay-out ratios.

A study by Thomson Reuters, involving 1,843 international organisations, concluded that companies with mixed-gender boards have better returns and fewer tracking errors. Despite all these advantages, women are underrepresented in decision-making and top management positions. With the exception of only a few countries, men outnumber women in management positions.

In developing countries, the number of women in management positions is deplorably low. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), only 0.07 per cent of women in Pakistan are managers and very few companies have women on their boards or in top positions.

Furthermore, the equitable treatment of women in the workforce demonstrates that society and government are both working towards solving issues that women face today. The way women are presently treated at work is unacceptable.

Women often face discrimination in a multitude of ways, during hiring, pay, education, social support and protection, in working conditions, corporate growth and through harassment.

We recently celebrated International Women's day, which was created to show respect for the many economic, social, and political successes women have achieved, but given the current working conditions for women both globally and in our country, we have a long way to go toward building a safe corporate environment in which women can play a greater role.

According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report, global female labour participation, or the number of females employed or actively looking for work, has fallen from 52.4 per cent to 49.6 per cent. According to the PBS, total female labour participation in our country is 22.17 per cent.

This is lamentable in comparison to countries like the UK or the US, where the female labour participation is over 50 per cent. In some Pakistani provinces the situation is even more dire. Women's participation rates in Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh are 5.40 per cent, 9.76 per cent, and 9.90 per cent, respectively.

The state of women's education in Pakistan is even bleaker. The nation's female illiteracy rate is 61.83 per cent and is even higher in rural Pakistan, at 70.85 per cent. In rural Sindh, it is 79.81 per cent and in rural Balochistan 80.31 per cent.

The neglect of female education has repercussions for our economy, as most employed women work in the low-income agricultural sector. In high-income countries, women are mostly employed in the health, education, and engineering sectors.

An analysis of 142 countries by the ILO shows that women are over represented in clerical, service, and sales positions. We need to focus on educating women so they can shift from the low-income agricultural sector to high-income sectors like services, industry, and engineering. This will increase the nation's overall income.

Additionally, women are usually paid less in the workforce. According to the ILO report, women only earn approximately 77 per cent of what men do. Studies have shown that this occurs because of discrimination as women's work is frequently undervalued due to perceptions that she would eventually give priority to her family and other factors. At the same time, the ILO found that women work longer hours per day, both in developed and developing economies.

When women are expected to attend to their households, they are forced to curb their working hours, which not only reduces their income but also negatively affects the economy. Even after retirement, working women suffer. Globally, women represent 65 per cent of the people above retirement age without pension. This means that roughly 200 million women are living without any income.

Though almost all countries provide some form of maternity protection for employees, nearly 60 per cent of the female workforce, which comes out to about 750 million women worldwide, do not benefit from this right. The ILO report attributes this to regulations, lack of awareness of rights, discriminatory practices, informality and social exclusion. This lack of protection results in a smaller female labour force.

Though corporations claim to promote equal opportunity for all, a study reported that in a few countries, pregnant women are regularly dismissed even when this is unlawful. The same study pointed out that managers often fire women because of their cultural belief that women should put their families first.

Working women also face social pressures and often have to sacrifice quality time with their children. The lack of social support, a flexible working environment, and quality day-care, both in the public and private sectors,

exacerbates this issue. Some managers are even hesitant to hire women because they think the company will have to bear more long-term costs due to women's family obligations.

Article 37 of our constitution requires the state to eradicate illiteracy and provide free secondary education to all; moreover, it states that the state should "make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment".

Further, it mandates that the state should "enable the people of different areas, through education, training, agricultural and industrial development and other methods, to participate fully in all forms of national activities, including employment in the service of Pakistan."

Article 26 emphasises that the state shall provide free education to all children, and Article 27 highlights that no citizen should be discriminated against for a job on the basis of race, religion, caste, sex, residence, or place of birth.

Working women in our country face more challenges than working women in developed countries. We need to provide equal health, education and work-related opportunities to all women so their participation in our labour force increases and our economy prospers with theirs.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073907/women-indispensable-to-a-successful-economy/>

THREE SHOT DEAD IN THE 'NAME OF HONOUR'

Dawn, March 31st, 2016

DERA MURAD JAMALI: Two women and a man were shot dead in what police claimed to be cases of honour killing on Wednesday. The murders were carried out in two unrelated incidents in Nasirabad and Kachhi districts of Balochistan.

In the first incident, the suspect, Abdul Rasheed, shot dead his wife, Shehnaz Bibi, near Uch area of Dera Murad Jamali in Nasirabad district. "She sustained multiple bullet injuries and died on the spot," a police officer said, adding that the suspect fled from the scene after the incident.

"It is a case of honour killing," the police officer said, adding that the body was later handed over to the heirs for burial.

In a separate incident that took place in Mashkaf area of Kachhi district, a man opened fire with an AK-47 rifle on his daughter and her alleged paramour, killing them on the spot.

The suspect, identified as Shahjahan, fled from the scene after killing his daughter, Haleema Bibi, and her alleged paramour, Mohammad Nawaz Bangulzai.

Police moved the bodies to the hospital and later handed them over to the heirs after autopsy. No arrest was reported in either case.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249050/three-shot-dead-in-the-name-of-honour>

SENATE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OPPOSES PUNJAB'S WOMEN PROTECTION LAW

Dawn, April 2nd, 2016

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: Deputy Chairman of Senate Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Hyderi on Friday opposed the Punjab's women protection law, saying that it would make women insecure and increase the ratio of divorce in the country.

He was speaking at a meet-the-press programme at the press club here.

He said Islam protected rights of women and called for a respectful status for them in society. But the Punjab's law could create problems for women, he added.

Maulana Hyderi, who belongs to Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, was of the opinion that those who were trying to make Pakistan a secular state were in fact negating what he called the ideology of Pakistan's constitution. Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and majority of its population was in favour of making it an Islamic welfare state, he added

He said the constitution had clauses which were in line with Quran and Sunnah and provided guidelines for making laws according to the teachings of Islam. But those who were in favour of secularism and wanted to introduce western values in the country highlighted only those provisions of the constitution which supported their points of views, he said, adding that such elements used different excuses to block legislations which could pave the way for Islamic system in the country.

Stressing the need for implementing the recommendations of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), the Senate deputy chairman said that the CII was a constitutional body which could play a very important role in improving laws of the country. He regretted that the CII had been rendered ineffective and its recommendations were not given due consideration.

Maulana Hyderi claimed that Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah wanted to make Pakistan an Islamic democratic welfare state, adding that those who wanted the country a secular state were misguided people.

He said attributing terrorism to Islam was quite unjustified. Islam was a religion of peace and did not allow terrorism, he added.

He condemned raids on madressahs, saying that whenever there was a bomb explosion or attack in the country religious seminaries were raided and their students were arrested. It was a wrong trend because madressahs were not involved in acts of violence, he added.

Maulana Hyderi said the Zarb-i-Azb military operation had achieved some successes. But, in the same breath he added that military operations could only suppress terrorism, and they could not eliminate it. For eliminating terrorism from the country, he said, there was a need to ensure implementation of the constitution and to reframe the country's foreign policy.

About the arrest of an alleged RAW agent in Balochistan, he said that there were reports about the presence of other foreign spy agencies' agents in the country who were involved in acts of violence.

He said conducting population census was a constitutional requirement and very necessary for making right policies for the country.

He condemned attacks on journalists and press clubs during recent protests by religious parties. He said miscreants often took advantage of such situations.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249525/senate-deputy-chairman-opposes-punjabs-women-protection-law>

RELIGIOUS PARTIES PLAN TO TABLE 'WOMEN BILL' IN NA, SENATE

Dawn, April 3rd, 2016

Zulqernain Tahir

LAHORE: Religious parties have decided to propose a new women protection bill in the National Assembly and Senate in place of the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2015.

A 24-member steering committee, headed by Jamaat-i-Islami leader Liaquat Baloch, has authored the bill.

“The new bill proposes protection and empowerment of women of Pakistan in light of Islam, doing away with the Punjab government’s women protection law which is un-Islamic,” a Jamaat-i-Islami leader told Dawn after the Nizam-i-Mustafa Conference attended by 35 religious parties at Mansoorah here on Saturday.

He said the steering committee had thoroughly examined the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2015, and reached the conclusion that no amendment was required (to this law). “The government has only one option — repeal this law and pass the one proposed by the steering committee (of the religious parties) which will completely be based on Islamic tenets,” he said.

The conference declared that there would be no compromise on the Punjab’s women protection law and vowed to continue struggle for enforcement of the Nizam-i-Mustafa in the country.

According to a joint declaration adopted in the conference, the Punjab women protection law is an “attack on the Muslim family system”.

“This moot condemns maltreatment of women, but the government cannot be permitted to disturb unity of the (Muslim) family system through the new law passed by the Punjab Assembly,” it said.

According to the declaration, the Punjab women protection law had been “totally rejected” by women across the board and Ulema of all schools of thought. “The Council of Islamic Ideology has also termed it against Shariah. Under the constitution, any law violating Shariah has no legal status.”

Last month, religious parties had warned the government to withdraw the women protection act or face 1977-like movement. The government, however, paid no attention to the warning and asked them to propose amendments.

Then the clerics decided to form a steering committee to come out with a new draft law. “If the government creates hurdles in the passage of our bill we will certainly be on the roads,” the JI leader said.

The declaration reiterated the stance of all clerics of all schools of thought on blasphemy laws. “Any amendment to the blasphemy laws is unacceptable. Execution of Mumtaz Qadri is a judicial murder.”

The conference demanded release of those arrested in Islamabad (in connection with a protest against the execution of Qadri) and withdrawal of cases against them.

The declaration denounced efforts of a section of the media to ridicule Islamic rites, causing provocation and promoting Indian culture, besides obscenity and nudity, and stressed that this tendency must be checked effectively.

It condemned the recent suicide bombing in Lahore, besides all forms of terrorism and extremism, and observed that these were aimed at weakening the country’s ideology, solidarity and economy.

It said Indian intelligence agency’s terrorist network was aimed at weakening Pakistan and demanded that RAW agents or spies taken into custody must be handed down exemplary punishment under the law.

The declaration condemned the government’s propaganda against seminaries and linking them with terrorism.

It criticised efforts aimed at pushing the Kashmir issue on back burner and the government’s silence over victimisation of the pro-Pakistan people in Bangladesh.

Jamaat-i-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq, chief of his own faction of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Jamaatud Dawa chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, JUI-S head Maulana Samiul Haq, Dr Abul Khair Zubair, Prof Sajid Meer, Hafiz Aakif Saeed, Allama Sajid Naqvi, Pir Ejaz Hashmi, Pir Abdur Rahim Naqshbandi and Pir Haroon Gilani were prominent among those who attended the conference.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249672/religious-parties-plan-to-table-women-bill-in-na-senate>

JIRGA OFFERS TO PAY DEBT OF RAPE VICTIM'S FATHER

The Express Tribune, April 3rd, 2016.

Sarfaraz Memon

SUKKUR / UMERKOT / HYDERABAD: Members of a Jirga in Sindh's Umerkot district tried to settle a rape case last week by offering to waive off the debt run up by the victim's father and doling out 30 kilograms of wheat.

While the police and the alleged organisers of the Jirga denied that the meeting ever took place, members of the affected family said they would not accept any such settlement.

"We don't accept the decision of any Jirga," said Suleman Shaikh, father of 14-year-old R* who was allegedly subjected to rape on March 20 at Saindad Mangrio village in the Ghulam Nabi Shah area of Umerkot.

"They abducted my daughter from my house, raped her and threw her close to our village in the late hours," said Shaikh, a peasant.

According to some local journalists, Hassan Rajar, an influential personality associated with the PPP, and another member of the Rajar community chaired the Jirga. During the Jirga proceedings Rs130,000 owed by the victim's father were offered to be waived in return for the withdrawal of the case.

Police and concerned members of the Rajar community have denied holding any such gathering while *R's family is also reluctant to divulge any details. However, activists of local NGOs on Saturday held a demonstration outside Umerkot Press Club, demanding action against organisers of the Jirga.

Ghulam Nabi Shah police station SHO Arif Bhatti denied having any information about the Jirga and said the suspect, Mushtaq Mangrio, was arrested soon after the incident and he was presented before the district and sessions court which sent him to jail on judicial remand.

"We have arrested the suspect and lodged an FIR on the family's complaint. The charge sheet has also been submitted in the court today," he said. The SSP Umerkot Rukhsar Khawar also said the medical test of both the victim and suspect had been done and a report was being awaited.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1077880/unusual-settlement-jirga-offers-to-pay-debt-of-rape-victims-father/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 21st TO MARCH 27th 2016

WOMEN PROTECTION LAW: SANA TRIES TO 'SOFTEN' CLERICS

Dawn, March 23rd, 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab government has begun reaching out to clerics to allay their "reservations" about the recently enacted women protection law.

Provincial Law Minister Rana Sanaullah has written a letter to those Ulema and religious leaders, particularly those venting their anger on the enactment, seeking their suggestions in black and white for improving the law as "no human effort in any field may be taken as the final word and there's always room for reform and amendment".

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif will also personally contact the clerics in this regard, Sana told reporters here on Tuesday.

The move, many observers believe, is aimed at placating the religious circles ahead of chehlum of Mumtaz Qadri, a police guard executed last month for killing Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer, as religious parties have announced a “1977-like movement” against the pro-women legislation.

The minister says that by doing so the clerics are playing with the (religious) emotions of the masses.

“It’s a dangerous thing and also objectionable for they (clerics) are presenting their personal opinion (on the law) as Islam’s and thus exploiting the religion,” Mr Sanaullah said.

The clerics had democratic right to express their opinion on the law but by terming it against the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah they’re tagging the Punjab Assembly (that passed the law) as (a house of) infidels, he added.

Referring to sensitivity of such issues, he recalled that enraged by the publication of blasphemous caricatures elsewhere in the world the people had turned violent and damaged public and private properties in the country.

Replying to a question, the minister said the clerics’ likely suggestions would be sent to a committee before being introduced in the assembly to amend the law, if needed.

“We’re ready to reform not only this but other laws as well if found against Islamic teachings but won’t do so just under any pressure,” he clarified.

The letter written by Sana on behalf of the Punjab government had been mailed to both the clerics opposing the law and those who are neutral or supporting it.

Answering another query, the minister admitted certain ambiguities in laws on relationships but said that training of children should also be focused upon and people should have less number of children so that they could be given better upbringing.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1247387>

FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: WOMEN’S COMPLETE INTEGRATION ESSENTIAL: DR GHAUS

Business Recorder, March 23, 2016

Managing Director, Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC), Dr Khalida Ghaus, on Tuesday said that women’s complete integration into the economy was an essential component for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Addressing as a keynote speakers at the International Women Day Conference organised by Employers’ Federation of Pakistan, she said that unfortunately, in many countries including Pakistan women’s economic potential had not yet been fully capitalised.

“The labour force statistics reveal that a large part of the adult female population is considered out of the ambit of the definition of the labour force,” she added.

“There is a clear recognition amongst the policy makers, academicians, researchers and practitioners that women’s marginalisation can stifle poverty reduction, productivity, competitiveness, and growth, therefore the pledge for gender parity in employment has a strong economic case,” she added.

She said that out of total women population, labour force participation rate of women stands at 22 percent. “Though this rate is growing overtime and the overall gender gap in labour force participation rate is declining, it is still

depressing as out of the total female population 78 percent are out of the labour force as compared to 17.6 percent in the case of males.

Even those who are included in the labour force, they largely work in agriculture and informal sectors. They are vulnerable to market conditions and do not have pensions and other old age benefits,” she added.

In addition, Dr Khalida said that the unemployment rate among females was higher than the male counterparts. This higher and persistent unemployment rate pushed them out of labour force as “discouraged workers.” Furthermore, there is extremely low share of female employment in the formal sector of the economy at only about 7 percent as compared to 18 percent for males, she added.

“There is a similar pattern of participation by females in the informal sector, both relatively low and is declining. Clearly, the transition of the female labour force, from traditional agricultural activities to the informal sector, and eventually to the formal sector in urban areas of Pakistan, is not happening,” she said.

“A body of recent theoretical and empirical literature demonstrates that without capitalising women’s economic potential and enhancing the quality and quantity of female labour force participation, rapid and sustainable economic growth is not possible,” she said.

MD SPDC said that the absence of women from the labour force or their participation in unpaid and low paid work was one of the main reasons for their lack of economic empowerment and poor status in society.

While, many aspects of female labour force participation have been studied in Pakistan, there are various aspects which have not been explored. She said that labour market was not capitalising the potential of Pakistani women and they were highly disadvantaged in labour force participation.

Dr Khalida said that once these unobservable factors were eliminated from society, women labour force participation as well as overall labour force participation will increase in Pakistan.

“A prime reason of less participation of women in labour force is their less chances of being employed and higher chances of unemployment if participating in labour force activities. This discourages women to actively participate in labour market. Moreover, they have fewer chances to get into jobs in formal sector,” she mentioned.

She said that there were various theoretical approaches and conceptual frameworks that can be applied to explain this perpetual trend of gender disparity in labour market. “Theoretical approaches to gender inequalities in labour market outcomes can be broadly divided into the categories of those which focus on ‘individual choice’ and those which focus on structural constraint,” she added.

Talking about the global situation, she said that the gender parity in enrolment at lower levels had been achieved and at the tertiary levels the enrolments were in favour of women. “Improvement in life expectancy across regions has increased for women from 54 percent to 71 percent. Similarly, a rapid decline in fertility from 5 percent to 2.5 percent birth per women, however, the gap continues to persist in the area of economic opportunities,” she added.

“A look at the labour force participation for women 15 plus years globally is 50 percent compared to 70 percent for men. Women globally are half as likely as men to have full time wage jobs; whereas in paid work, women earn on an average between 10 and 30 percent less than men; and the share of women in senior management roles globally is only 21 percent, she added.

In Pakistan case, Dr Khalida pointed out that more women than men were unemployed. The women unemployment rate in 2014-15 was nine percent compared to five percent for men. This rate is 14 percent for the young women aged 20-24, while for the male counterpart it is 7.6 percent.

With the age and experience, this starts declining, however, it is alarming that after 55 years unemployment increased sharply in women and crosses 17 percent after 60 years.

She informed that unemployment rate among women having graduate or above education was highest. While, unemployment rate in both male and female increases with the level of education, it is educated women who have the highest unemployment rate. For instance, unemployment rate among women having graduate or above education is an alarming 42 percent compared to 10 percent in male for the same category.

Employed women are concentrated in less skilled and elementary occupations. Almost 90 percent of employed women in 2014-15 were working in three less skilled occupations including agricultural, forestry and fishery, craft and related trades and elementary occupations, she added.

Majority of employed women are unpaid workers contributing in family works. In 2014-15, some 55 percent of employed female were contributing in family works without any remuneration, compared to only 15 percent male, Dr Khalida mentioned.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/28349/>

WHY I CALL MYSELF A FEMINIST

The Express Tribune, March 23rd, 2016.

Amman Bari

The word feminist always garners a variety of reactions, a sad majority of them negative. One of the most common responses is, "If you're lobbying for gender equality, why do you call it feminism?"

Many of these people, I think, just relish reducing a global movement to a question of semantics, but some are genuinely wondering. They often suggest that I call myself a "humanist" instead.

The reason I do not call myself a humanist is that humanism is a philosophy that attaches greater importance to human matters as opposed to divine matters. It is not a philosophy I feel very strongly about. I do identify as an egalitarian, because to be a feminist you must be egalitarian.

Feminism is simply a branch of egalitarianism that focuses on the promotion of gender equality. So when I say I'm a feminist, egalitarian is already implied.

There are multiple reasons we refer to this branch as feminism. Firstly, although as a feminist I want to dismantle the patriarchy for the benefit of both men and women, one of the impositions of the patriarchy on men is the pressure to conform to some ridiculous ideal of hyper-masculinity.

This stems from society's inherent disdain for traditionally feminine values. So I call myself a feminist because it is feminine characteristics and beliefs that are shamed — and therefore, that need supporting. Secondly, the burden of feminism as a movement has always fallen, for the most part, on women.

The term was coined in the 1890s, when women first began an organized struggle for legal and social equality — a fight that continues to this day.

Feminism is a word that is deeply rooted in history. Asking for us to change it is asking us to ignore a huge part of our past. Men can and should be feminists; they can and should be more involved in a struggle for the greater good of both sexes. But historically, they have not been.

Historically, women have shaped this movement since it began. We have been involved in the struggle against oppression for a long time, and it has frequently been a violent struggle. The word feminist honours all those who

braved that struggle before us, at a time when it was much riskier. Every time we use the word, we're acknowledging their sacrifice.

I'm a feminist because the people behind the suffragette movement were feminists; because bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins) was a feminist; because the people who drew attention to the glass ceiling effect were feminists; because what I have now, I owe to feminists.

The patriarchy is damaging to men because a system of oppression can never benefit anyone. But (white) men are not systemically targeted. This is not a matter of debate, this is a fact. So, really, it's churlish to complain that the movement is called feminism because, not to put too fine a point on it, women have needed a safe space more than men for a long time now.

Lastly, I have never understood why people object to "feminism" being used as an umbrella term when they don't balk at words like "mankind". We still often use male pronouns when the gender of the person we're discussing is unknown.

Why is feminism so difficult to accept while these are not? Language is a direct product of our beliefs and ideas, and that society is reacting so viscerally to the word "feminism", highlights its internalised misogyny. This is not something we can dismiss with an airy "what's in a name?" Shakespeare will have to forgive us, because in this case, there is something in a name.

Feminism means something in a historical, political and social context, and that we are essentially being bullied into abandoning it by people who are either ignorant of or in denial of its significance, is really a tragedy.

Every time someone says, "I support equality but I'm not a feminist", they are allowing others to invade a sphere that the predecessors of this movement sacrificed much to create. We need to claim that name — we need to say: "I'm a feminist because I'm lobbying for gender equality."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1070740/why-i-call-myself-a-feminist/>

LEGISLATION AGAINST WORKPLACE HARASSMENT TO COVER FATA TOO

Dawn, March 25th, 2016

PESHAWAR: The government has planned to extend the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas to ensure a safe and non-discriminatory working environment for the local womenfolk.

The sources told Dawn that the Directorate of Social Welfare Fata has prepared a summary for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Iqbal Zafar Jhagra to seek the approval of President Mamnoon Hussain to extend the law to all areas of Fata.

They said that would be the first pro-women law to be extended to Fata if the president signed the summary.

A relevant official said the directorate had finalised the summary and would put it up to the governor very soon to get the approval of the president.

He said extension of the act would not serve any purpose unless the government provided the required infrastructure in the tribal area to deal with the cases of harassment.

"The law will be of no use without providing the required infrastructure and facilities. The government has extended over 150 laws to Fata but majority of them are of no avail owing to non existence of infrastructure in the area," he said.

The official said the government had extended Juvenile Justice Ordinance, 2000 in 2004, but no step had been taken so far.

He said there were no separate lockups in entire Fata for juvenile offenders.

Under the anti-harassment law, he said, the government would have to develop basic facilities and infrastructure in each tribal agency before extension of the law.

“Under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, the criminal cases are referred to jirga or council of elders, but you can’t refer cases of harassment to such forums,” he said.

The governor has already approved Women Empowerment and Protection Policy in 2014, which aims at creating safe and secure environment for women in Fata in all sphere of life.

Officials said that the document which recommended several steps including Fata council for the empowerment and protection of women did not see light of the day.

Under the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, the government will appoint an ombudsman, who has been a judge of high court or is qualified to be appointed as a judge of the high court.

The ombudsman may recruit such staff as required to achieve the purposes of this law and the respective governments would provided finances.

The ombudsman will conduct enquire into complaint of any employee. The complainant has the option to prefer a complaint either to the ombudsman or the Inquiry committee. The ombudsman shall within three days of receiving a complaint issue a written show cause notice to the accused.

The law says each organisation shall constitute an inquiry committee within 30 days of the enactment of this act to enquire into complaints under this act. The committee shall consist of three members of whom at least one member shall be a woman.

The officials concerned said harassment cases might take place in Fata but there existed no mechanism to report them.

“There is no system to report cases of harassment from tribal area,” said another official.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1247846/legislation-against-workplace-harassment-to-cover-fata-too>

FINDING SOLUTIONS: HIGHLIGHTING CAUSE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Express Tribune, March 26th, 2016

KARACHI: The root cause of all violence against women is their weakness, said Dr Vasay Batley while delivering a lecture on ‘Violence on Women’ at the Pakistan American Cultural Center on Friday evening.

“If women make themselves strong, it won’t happen,” he said. “When we tell our daughters to give respect, we should also teach them to earn respect.”

Batley is a doctor, who has been associated with the medical profession for 32 years and, currently, is with the United Medical and Dental College. As part of his thesis, he has conducted a survey on incidents and causes of hospital admissions sourcing from domestic violence in residential areas of Karachi.

At the start of his lecture, Dr Batley shared two cases of domestic violence that he came across. Both cases involved pupils from the medical profession, thus disregarding the notion that such cases do not happen in well-to-do, educated families.

He said that in Pakistan, violence against women is on an extreme scale. He cited dowry deaths, honour killings, eve-teasing, forced abortions, force-feeding, forced pregnancy and human trafficking as types of violence that happen in our society.

“Violence is not just physical,” said Dr Batley. “Emotional traumas, parental alienation, withholding of finances, stalking, manipulating and control are all forms of emotional violence.”

Batley said the absence of women shelters and the apathy of law enforcement agencies made matters worse in cases of domestic violence. “Help should be sought through either social pressure or legal aid,” he said. “The biggest mistake that women make is [that they do] not tell others. If it happens again, women should tell a confidante and seek help from human rights lawyers.”

<http://omnifeed.com/article/tribune.com.pk/story/1072899/finding-solutions-highlighting-cause-of-violence-against-women/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 14th TO MARCH 20th 2016

DESPITE CALLS FOR GENDER PARITY, GLASS CEILING REMAINS INTACT FOR WOMEN

The Express Tribune, March 14th, 2016.

Tehreem Husain

NORTHAMPTON: March 8 was marked as the International Women’s Day and was celebrated by paying rich tribute to the social, economic, political and cultural achievement of women all around the world.

Although women have come a long way, achieving gender parity seems like a distant goal. The World Economic Forum estimated in 2015 that the gender gap will not close entirely until 2133. Female participation in the labour market has been termed as increasingly significant for economic growth and development at both national and enterprise levels by academics and researchers.

This has also been corroborated by a recent IMF Working Paper. The paper researched into the link between gender diversity in senior corporate positions and financial performance of 2 million companies in Europe.

The authors document a positive correlation between corporate return on assets (ROA) and the share of women in senior positions. More precisely, replacing one man by a woman in senior management or on the corporate board is associated with 8–13 basis points higher ROAs.

The authors have argued that greater representation of women would bring in a heterogeneity of beliefs, attitudes and values that would aid decision making, especially in knowledge intensive and high technology sectors.

The authors have also argued that the association between gender equality and firm performance is significantly stronger in firms that employ more women in the labour force.

According to the ‘Women in Business and Management Gaining Momentum’ global report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2015, Pakistan has the lowest percentage of women in managerial positions in the world standing at a meagre 3%.

Jamaica stands as the country with the highest percentage of females in managerial positions in the world at 59.3%. Interestingly, it is not any of the advanced economies but Colombia and St. Lucia which stand after Jamaica with the proportion of women in managerial positions standing at 53.1% and 52.3%.

Gender gaps remain stark; the ILO company survey found that 30% of respondent companies had no women on boards while 65% of the companies had less than 30% women (30% is taken as the critical mass required for women's voices and views to be taken into account).

Even in the case of advanced economies the situation seems bleak. Although many women have joined the workforce in Europe over the past few decades, there are surprisingly very few women who hold positions at top corporate firms.

Numbers evidence this fact: women only occupied 19% of corporate board seats and 14% of senior executive positions in the 600 largest companies in Europe. Even more striking is the fact that only 4% of the chief executive positions of these companies were held by women.

Common gender stereotypes rooted in cultural and religious norms where men and women are expected to perform different social and economic roles form obstacles for women to enter the labour force in Pakistan and other developing countries.

Traditionally, running businesses, management roles and decision making are considered the domains of men. Inadequate labour and non-discrimination laws also serve as barriers for women to rise to the top.

Although very few women in Pakistan have broken cultural barriers and entered male dominated fields, the country has produced examples of powerful professional women with the likes of well-known Pakistan Software Houses Association President Jehan Ara to the country's youngest CEO and most successful investment banker, Maheen Rehman.

Maheen's accolades are also recognised internationally as she is ranked number five on Forbe's 'Top 40 Under 40' list. Speaking to BBC, she hopes that the Pakistani financial sector would expand and more women would make it to the board room.

Nevertheless, the progress in reducing the gender gap remains "glacial". Several measures have been taken by companies worldwide to break the glass ceiling for women to rise. Some policy measures taken are offering flexible hours of working to manage home and work, giving access to skills training, and better recruitment, retention and promotion policies.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065080/despite-calls-for-gender-parity-glass-ceiling-remains-intact-for-women/>

NSF SEEKS TO EMPOWER WOMEN VIA 'DRAW FOR FEMINISM' CAMPAIGN

The Express Tribune, March 14th, 2016.

Haniya Javed

KARACHI: Women hold up half the sky – this is the message some students of Karachi want to give by painting walls in the metropolis.

Members of National Students' Federation (NSF), a leftist students' political organisation, have come up with the 'Draw for Feminism' campaign to mobilise freedom for women and introduce the female perspective to the public sphere.

The five-day campaign started on International Women's Day this year and culminated on Sunday. Around 20 young men and women took to street art and painted slogans and images against domestic violence, street harassment, identity crisis, stereotypes and rape. Employing stencils and paints, the group went about raising their voice through graffiti in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, North Nazimabad, Saddar, Tower, II Chundrigarh Road, Karachi Press Club and Numais.

Talking about what drove them to initiate the campaign, NSF Karachi organiser Muzammal Afzal said until women of our society are not freed, the society cannot exist as a free entity. He said even religion is interpreted in such a way

that it victimises women and limits their liberation. “We are using art on public walls of the city as a medium to spread awareness,” he said.

NSF press secretary Laila Raza pointed out that female representation in the public is from very limited to nowhere. “You get to see only male perspective in public spaces while women are only but a simple existence,” she said. In order to challenge this ‘invisible’ status of women, the organisation thought of graffiti as the medium to bring women out.

With slogans such as ‘Aurat Quaid hai’ [Woman is the leader] and ‘Kya yeh aap toh nahi’ [Is it not you?] on images suggesting violence against women, the idea is to inspire people through walls.

“From the very early days, we have seen violence-inciting slogans and graffiti on walls,” said Raza, talking about her experience at Numaish in the afternoon. “The police came to us and stopped us from painting these walls, calling them private property.

The same walls have political and religious slogans, and the police and the state [do not] challenge them.” She regretted the hypocrisy that hate slogans are permitted and those of peace are not. “While we are standing here painting the walls, the passers-by are noticing us [women] more than our male fellows,” remarked Raza.

“This itself is harassment while we are painting against it.” So, how does the male perspective fit in this campaign? “We are aware that men have the privileges that women don’t in our society,” said Afzal.

“Last year, on Women’s Day, our campaign revolved around the privileges that women have. This year’s drive was an extension of it.” Talking about the lack of implementation of bills such as those pertaining to female harassment and protection, he said when we as males wouldn’t talk about an issue like this, then how can we expect the parliament to take it seriously.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065149/nsf-seeks-to-empower-women-via-draw-for-feminism-campaign/>

MOVE TO AMEND WOMEN PROTECTION BILL: CIVIL SOCIETY REJECTS RELIGIOUS PARTIES DRIVE
Dawn, March 17th, 2016

LAHORE: The Women Action Forum (WAF) expressed shock and outrage at the way the Punjab government has allegedly succumbed to pressure from the religious lobby and put the Women Protection Bill on hold.

According to a press release issued by the WAF on Wednesday, the reaction of religious parties was not surprising.

“As a political strategy, the Jamaat-i-Islami and other parties of the religious right had always played the ‘Islam is in danger’ card to gain public visibility. What is shocking and unacceptable is the elected government’s response to this blackmail. In succumbing to this pressure not only is the elected government undermining its own legitimacy, it is also raising serious doubts about its sincerity and commitment to women’s right to life and safety,” the forum stated.

It said it wanted to remind the Punjab government that domestic violence bills had already been passed by the Sindh and Balochistan assemblies without any backlash from the religious lobby.

In its March 8 statement, the WAF had welcomed the Women Protection Bill as a step in the right direction, while stating the bill itself needed strengthening in line with similar bills passed by Sindh and Balochistan. The WAF demanded any amendments to the bill must make it more effective in providing protection to women rather than diluting its effect.

It also said as such amendments should be made in consultation with women, who across class were the most vulnerable to domestic violence and not under pressure from a lobby that had “consistently promoted its own political agendas by misusing religion to endanger women and undermine their position and status in society”.

The WAF demanded the Punjab government not only ensure the passage of the bill, but also make it more effective by criminalising violence and ensuring its commencement province-wise and not in its current piece meal form.

CIVIL SOCIETY: Rights activists have condemned voices against the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2015 demanding the government not bow down to the pressure of clerics.

The Pakistan Civil Society Forum (PCSF), a representative body of more than 50 human rights and development organisations, expressed its surprise over how the legislation for protecting women against violence was being declared “an act against Sharia despite the fact that Sharia protects the rights of the women”.

In a statement here on Wednesday, the PCSF said: “Opposing this law in fact is an act against the Constitution, which provides for equal protection to all citizens. Similarly, international commitments, which the state has made in terms of ratifying covenants require to respect all human rights. The Act is not about Sharia rather it is all about human rights. Pakistan is a democratic state and is being run under a Constitution which guarantees for the protection of everyone.”

It further stated: “The civil society organisations stand by the Punjab government and appreciate its commitment for upholding the agenda of humanity and that truly in light of every ones religion. We believe that this matter will not be taken as personal rather it should be regarded as a national matter to secure the future of the nation’s daughters and respect humanity in Pakistan.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1246183>

TIME TO TAKE A STAND

The Express Tribune, March 18th, 2016.

Now is the time for the government to show some steely resolve over the matter of the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act (PPWVA).

Now is the time to speak with absolute clarity and fortitude as to the primacy of democratically-elected institutions. And now is the time to possibly definitively confront the clerical cohort seemingly bent on usurping the role of parliamentary bodies.

The Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia (WMA) is the largest federation of Islamic seminaries and it has rejected the committee announced by the Punjab chief minister, tasked to look into the reservations of the WMA in respect of the PPWVA. In rejecting the committee, the WMA has instead called for the Punjab government to “take practical steps to immediately amend the Act”.

This flies in the face of every democratic principle in the book, and is effectively a demand that the Punjab government bows to the will of the WMA, ignore parliament and submit a revised Act for WMA scrutiny and approval.

This is an unacceptable demand. The WMA is an unelected body seeking to overturn an Act that was unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on the grounds that parts of the Act are in some yet-to-be-defined way ‘un-Islamic’.

The religious bodies have threatened to organise street protests if the Act was not withdrawn by March 27. It is not for unelected bodies to hold the gun of civil disorder to the head of government simply because they happen to have ideological and doctrinal differences with the elected legislature.

It is for the elected bodies to do the converse and assert their primacy in matters legislative. If not, why bother to have a parliament or provincial assemblies at all?

If ever there was a group overdue for legislative protection, it is the much-abused women of Pakistan. To assert that Islam already makes provision for the protection of women is undoubtedly true. Unfortunately, it is a truth revealed more in the breach than the observance.

The protection of women is a duty of the state and the PPWVA is a step in the right protective direction. Time to take a stand — and if not, open this government to the contempt of the rest of the world.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1067700/time-to-take-a-stand-2/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 7th TO MARCH 13th 2016

MILLIONS OF GIRLS BEING DENIED RIGHT TO EDUCATION, SAYS REPORT

Dawn, March 7th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Almost 16 million girls between the ages of six and 11 will never get the chance to enrol in primary school compared to about 8m boys if current trends continue, according to a new report of the Unesco Institute for Statistics (UIS).

Published in the run-up to International Women's Day on March 8, the Unesco's 'eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education' report shows that girls are still the first to be denied the right to education despite the progress made over the past 20 years.

Gender disparities remain highest in Arab states, sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. In South and West Asia 80 per cent of out-of-school girls will never enter formal education compared to 16pc of such boys. This affects about 4m girls compared to less than 1m boys.

According to recent data, the total number of children of primary school-going age who are out of school has begun to increase, reaching 59m. Out of this number 31m are girls.

While the gender gap in the out-of-school population is considerably smaller than in the early 2000s, the UIS data show little improvement in recent years despite many campaigns and initiatives designed to break barriers that keep girls out of school.

For example, in Pakistan 2.9m adolescent girls, or 53pc of those of lower secondary school-going age, are out of school, compared to 43pc of such boys (2.6m).

This year's theme for the International Women's Day is "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality".

"We will never achieve any of the Sustainable Development Goals without overcoming the discrimination and poverty that stunt the lives of girls and women from one generation to the next," said Unesco Director-General Irina Bokova.

"We must work at all levels, from grassroots to global leaders, to put equity and inclusion at the heart of every policy so that all girls, whatever their circumstances, go to school, stay in school and become empowered citizens."

With the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals-4, governments have pledged to eliminate gender disparities and ensure that every child is in school by 2030. Yet one out of eight children between the ages of 6 and 15 is denied a basic education, and girls are the first to be excluded. More than 63m girls are out of school and data suggest that the number is rising.

The greatest progress in reducing the gender gap in School Life Expectancy (SLE) has been made in South and West Asia, where a girl starting school can expect to receive 11 years of education, compared to only six years in 1990.

However, boys continue to have the advantage, with an average SLE of 12 years. The SLE reflects the average number of years of instruction that a boy or girl starting school can expect to receive based on current enrolment rates.

Only about 28pc of the world's researchers are women. Latin American and the Caribbean states have the highest share of women researchers at 44pc. In contrast, the share falls to 23pc in Asia.

In 2013, there were more female than male graduates in three-quarters of the 133 countries with available data. Despite improved access, women face considerable barriers as they move up the ladder to research positions. Globally, women outnumber men at the level of Bachelor's degree, with men accounting for about 47pc of graduates and women accounting for 53pc in countries with available data. Women are also more likely to pursue a Master's degree, representing 54pc of graduates.

Women are more likely than men to graduate in education, humanity and arts; social sciences, business and law; and health and welfare.

In every region, women researchers remain a minority in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Women researchers also tend to work in academic and government sectors, while men dominate the private sector, which offers better salaries and opportunities.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1244053>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HAS INCREASED: REPORT

The Express Tribune, March 7th, 2016

Aroosa Shaukat

LAHORE: The first ever Gender Parity Report for the province suggests that there has been a 20 per cent increase in cases of violence against women reported every year from 2012 to 2015.

The report compiled jointly by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women and the Urban Unit is set to be launched on Monday (today). The event will also feature the launch of a cyber-based Gender Management Information System that will provide data on 300 indicators affecting the status of women in society.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Fauzia Viqar, Punjab Commission on the Status of Women chairperson, said that the report would help improve government policies in view of empirical evidence.

She said data used for the report had been collected from government sources. "The government cannot ignore the findings as these are based on its own data," she said.

The report states 5,391 cases of violence against women had been reported in the province in 2012. The number of cases reported in 2015 were 6,505. It says that in 2015, 173 women were killed in honour-based crimes.

Viqar said the number of reported cases of violence against women was relatively higher in districts with 50 per cent or lower literacy rate. Rahimyar Khan, Sargodha, Multan and Vehari were among these districts. She said the report found an overall decline in the number of convictions in cases of violence against women. There were 81 convictions in 2015, compared to 378 in 2012.

In health sector, the report notes a gradual increase in budgetary allocations over the 2012-2015 from 10 percent to 15 percent.

However, it says that the condition of public health infrastructure had deteriorated in southern districts. It notes a direct correlation between literacy rate in a district and the utilisation of healthcare facilities by women.

In education, a gender parity index (developed in the compilation of the report) recorded the ratio of literate women to literate men at 0.724.

The report notes that adult literacy in the province is at 69 per cent for men and at 50 per cent for women. It says the ratio of literate men to literate women is better in northern districts than southern districts.

The ratio is lowest in Rajanpur, Jhang, Chiniot, Khushab and Dera Ghazi Khan districts.

The report highlights that 34.5 per cent of women in the province can be considered 'regularly employed with a fixed wage' and 50 per cent 'paid by piece rate'. The corresponding statistics for men are 45.7 per cent and 25.5 per cent, respectively.

It states that 46 per cent of women in the labour force receive remuneration falling in the lowest wage bracket (up to Rs5,000). For men, the corresponding statistic is just 7.7 per cent.

In governance, the number of women who contested general elections in 2013 was significantly more than those who contested in 2008. The report notes a 129 per cent and a 200 per cent increase in the number of women who contested elections (from 2008 to 2013) for the National Assembly and the provincial assembly, respectively. On the local government elections held in 2015, the report says that election of women on the reserved seats will enable a critical mass to take up leadership roles at the grassroots level.

Of the 1,830 judges in the lower judiciary, only 266 are women. The ratio is poorer in the Lahore High Court. There are only three women judges on the bench.

Lahore, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi are the three districts that have a woman police station each. There are help desks catering only to women in 660 police stations in the province.

The report says that governing bodies of statutory entities fail to reflect gender parity as representation of women on their boards of directors was only seven per cent.

It says a similar trend is visible in the membership of press clubs.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1060669/violence-against-women-has-increased-report/>

US COMMITTED TO THE ENABLEMENT OF WOMEN

The Express Tribune, March 7th, 2016.

David Hale

Pakistan's greatest resource is surely its people. Since I arrived nearly four months ago, I have had the opportunity to speak with people from various backgrounds, and from different regions of the country, economic sectors, and with varied political and social perspectives. I am constantly impressed by the level of talent and ambition I see here, especially among women. Still, women remain underrepresented in many aspects of society and we are all worse off for it.

For all of the dynamic women already using their talents to better their country and communities, many more are waiting for their opportunity. As a result, books go unwritten, scientific breakthroughs go undiscovered, and perhaps most disturbing, future leaders' voices go unheard.

For communities and countries to develop fully, the full participation of women in all aspects of society is key. That's true in the US, in Pakistan, and everywhere else in the world. When a woman or a girl is held back, her family, community, and country are held back as well from achieving their potential.

And while there is no doubt that women worldwide have made great strides toward equality over the past few decades, there is still plenty of room for growth. This year's theme for International Women's Day, "Pledge for Parity", is therefore, fitting.

Education is one of the surest paths to success and social mobility. Yet thousands of girls are still kept out of school in Pakistan. Each empty classroom seat represents untold and untapped potential.

Through scholarships, teacher trainings and other education programs, the US is dedicated to helping Pakistan increase girls' enrolment in schools and improve the quality of education they receive. Through the "Let Girls Learn" initiative, we have committed \$70 million to working with the Government of Pakistan to educate and enable more than 200,000 girls across Pakistan.

Education matters beyond the classroom as well. Women are often marginalised from political processes. We support the Gender Equity Program, which provides grants to help women register for Computerised National Identity Cards, which in turn allows them to vote. The program also addresses gender-based violence by educating women about their rights, providing support for women in shelters, and offering opportunities for access to justice. When women are allowed an education, they can reach their full potential and numerous opportunities open up for them, including economic and political opportunities.

To quote President Barak Obama, "Lifting women up, lifts up our economy and lifts up our country." Increasing women's access to economic opportunities is a way to empower not only individuals, but communities.

One such example is the US-Balochistan Agriculture Project, which helps female entrepreneurs increase their income from wool production through technical training and connecting them to broader markets. Our energy sector internship program addresses both women's participation in male-dominated fields as well as the challenge of meeting Pakistan's growing energy needs.

The initiatives I've highlighted, specifically address gender inequality. However, "Pledge for Parity" resonates with me because it also suggests small but concrete steps anyone can take their lives to chip away at a problem that often seems daunting. Today, right now, we can all challenge conscious and unconscious bias.

It requires no funding or special skill to value women's and men's contributions equally. It requires that we see these contributions as deserving of respect regardless of whether or not they are done in the home or are money-making. Certainly, this is easier said than done, but nothing worthwhile is ever easy.

Any movement that demands a close look at the status quo takes patience and perseverance. Pakistani activist Khalida Brohi started her journey toward enablement at a young age, when she became the first girl in her Balochistan village to attend school. When a close friend was murdered in a so-called honour killing, the teenaged Brohi rushed to tackle the issue with passion and conviction.

Yet she has spoken frankly about why her initial tactics fell on deaf ears and even alienated the community she sought to help. Rather than feel defeated, she asked for input and collaboration and said, "What can we do together?". Ending the gender gap is a work-in-progress everywhere and a task we must take up together. And we must persevere.

The US is committed to the greater inclusion and enablement of women at home and abroad. I am proud of the work we have done and continue to do with the Government of Pakistan and with civil society organisations, to advance the role of women.

My personal 'Pledge for Parity' is a commitment to helping women and girls achieve their ambitions and engaging with male leaders to help support these efforts. Let's work together to ensure we are achieving our full potential by allowing women to achieve their's.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1060481/us-committed-to-the-enablement-of-women/>

PROVINCES MODELLING PRO-WOMEN BILLS ON 'FAILED' FEDERAL LAW

Dawn, March 8th, 2016

Sanam Zeb

ISLAMABAD: The existing and proposed provincial domestic violence laws are based on a federal bill that could not be passed, despite two separate attempts by parliament.

Khawar Mumtaz, former chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women told Dawn that the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2012 was first passed by the National Assembly in August 2009. However, because it was not tabled in the Senate within the stipulated three-month period, the bill lapsed.

Objections were raised about the bill when it was first passed in the National Assembly by members of religious parties and it was presented again in the Senate by Nilofar Bakhtiar in 2012 as a private member's bill and unanimously approved in February. When the bill was tabled in the National Assembly again, it met with further objections.

However, Ms Mumtaz maintained that the 2012 act was one of the best and the most comprehensive bills drawn up in Pakistan.

Explaining the reasons for its failure, she said, "At the time, prominent Islamic scholars had said that if the bill became law, it would have led to the break-up of families. But if a woman wants to get out of a relationship, isn't that family already broken?"

She said that despite getting positive opinions from religious scholars regarding violence against women and how it was prohibited in Islam, members of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) – which recently rejected both Punjab and KP's draft laws – did not really want to listen. "I think for them it is not about Islam, it's about power," she concluded.

However, a CII official defended the council's actions, saying they did not support domestic violence.

"Women and children are not supposed to be beaten, that is settled. We only object to certain provisions, such as kicking a man out of his own house, which is against Sharia," he said, adding that shelters for women were also an un-Islamic practice.

The imprint of the failed federal bill is clearly visible on both the Balochistan and KP laws. Both laws can be activated by women, children as well as 'vulnerable persons' of either gender, who are defined as persons who are "vulnerable due to old age, mental or physical disability or for any other reason".

The definition of domestic violence in the federal act included physical, psychological, economic, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2014 goes one step further, also including stalking in its definition of abuse.

The 2012 bill was a landmark piece of legislation, seeking to bring domestic violence into the public domain and envisioning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It recognised domestic abuse as a criminal offence and extended its provisions, including emergency relief, to all individuals in domestic relationships.

Before this, emergency relief was not available to victims. Remedies were linked to court proceedings, during which time the victim was at the mercy of their abuser. This trend is reflected in the Balochistan law, which does not provide specific penalties for different forms of domestic violence. Penalties are only specified for the breach of a protection order, issued by a court.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's draft Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2015, however, does provide for emergency relief, as well as the creation of 'protection committees', as provided for under the failed federal law. These committees, which have also been emulated by Balochistan, were to include a medical doctor, a psychologist, a woman police officer and a protection officer, among others.

PTI KP MPA Arif Yousaf told Dawn his government had already established district resolution committees (DRC) in certain areas. These operate together with the jirga system and have powers under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

But rights activist Qamar Naseem believes that the DRCs are simply a way to get women to resolve their problems through mediation and not go to court.

Criticising the draft KP bill, Mr Naseem said that it did not take traditional values, such as joint-family households, into account. "If a woman complains about her husband and he goes to jail, who is going to support her and how is she then going to live with his family when they know their son was sent to jail because of her," he asked.

He claimed that the bill called on victims to prove "intentional abuse", saying it was unfair and would land all the women who accused men under this law, in prison for levelling false accusations.

He was not hopeful about the prospects of the legislation either. "The bill will not pass the provincial assembly, especially until the JUI-F is there," he said, adding that after opposing the domestic violence bill recently passed by Punjab, there was no hope of the PTI passing a similar bill in KP.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1244308>

RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS RELENT ON WOMEN PROTECTION LAW

Dawn, March 13th, 2016

LAHORE: Religious scholars belonging to all schools of thought on Saturday declared that the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016 was not un-Islamic but suggested steps to improve its strength as per Islamic injunctions.

They were attending a briefing on the law arranged to remove misconceptions about it. Khwaja Hassaan was in the chair and the briefing was given by Mr Salman Sufi, Senior Member SMU (Law and Order) Chief Minister's Office.

Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, Mufti Qavi and Dr Raghieb Naeemi, who were among the participants, suggested that a unit comprising religious scholars in Punjab should assist the government in improving the act. Mr Sufi assured them that the needful would be done.

Sahibzada Zahid Mahmood Qasmi, a member of the Islamic Ideology Council, said the statement of the council chairman about the act should not be considered as its (the council's) viewpoint.

The ulema agreed that Islam does not allow violence against women and some elements were opposing the law in political context. They said they supported any measure that prevented violence against women, and would give concrete suggestions to make the law more comprehensive.

Mr Sufi clarified that the condition to make husbands wear a GPS tracked ankle bracelet to monitor their movement was not applicable in cases of domestic violence. It was applicable only in cases of grave violence like attempt to rape, murder or throw acid and intimidating a victim to withdraw a case (where the court believes that the life of the victim is at risk).

Regarding the misconception that the husband will be asked to leave the house for 48 hours and this will cause further rift, Mr Sufi clarified that 48 hours was only the maximum limit and this time apart was only to serve as a "cool off"

period. This period could also be of a couple of hours, depending on the recommendation of the District Women Protection Committee.

Thirdly regarding the misconception that husbands, brothers and others male family members will not be allowed to question female family members, Mr Sufi clarified that the act had no such provision. A father, husband questioning his daughter, wife didn't constitute as psychological violence.

Mr Sufi clarified that the act was not anti-men, rather the word man, father, husband or son were not even used once. Instead the bill used "aggressor" or "defendant" which included both male and female. He also clarified that the claim that the bill will destroy marriages and make private matters public was unfounded as the mediation was the first priority in cases where grave violence had not been committed. Furthermore, the Distinct Women Protection Committee will maintain strict confidentiality.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1245357/religious-scholars-relent-on-women-protection-law>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 29th TO MARCH 6th 2016

GOVERNOR SIGNS WOMEN PROTECTION BILL INTO LAW

Business Recorder, March 01, 2016

M RAFIQUE GORAYA

On the day when Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy won her second Oscar award for her documentary "A girl in the river" (about honour killings in Pakistan) Punjab Governor Malik Rafique Rajwana Monday signed the Protection of Women Against Violence Bill, as approved by the provincial assembly to put it on statute books as a law much against the opposition of religious and orthodox political parties/circles.

The stated aim of the new law is to ensure justice to women victims and to empower them, placing them on an equal footing with the male population. The law stands out, as compared to previously passed bills, on domestic violence as it also provides civil remedies-protection, residence and or monetary order-for all the offences it covers. This is in addition to, and not contradictory to or abrogating, the existing laws on violence against women crimes.

Under the new law violence has been redefined to mean any offence committed against the human body of the aggrieved person, including abetment of an offence, domestic violence, sexual violence, psychological and emotional abuse, economic abuse, and stalking and cyber crime. The Act introduces for the first time an in-built implementation mechanism through the district Violence Against Women Centres (VAWCs), court orders (residence, protection and monetary), introduction of GPS tracked electronic bracelets-anklets to enforce protection orders and power to enter any place to rescue the women victims.

Under the new arrangements, a toll-free number (UAN) will also be introduced to receive complaints while a district protection committee will be set up to investigate women's complaints in this regard. Special Centres will also be set up for reconciliation and resolution of disputes concerning women. The Protection officers will be liable to inform the defendant whenever a complaint is received. Offering resistance to the protection officers will be punishable by up to six months imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 500,000.

Through a residence order, the victim has a right to stay in the house if she doesn't want to vacate it or the defendant has to provide an alternative accommodation to the victim if she wants so. Further, if she is being harassed or stalked, she can claim a protection order which ordains the defendant not to communicate with her or stay at a certain distance from her. In addition, the victim can also seek monetary relief from the defendant to meet expenses occurred and losses suffered through monetary orders under this piece of legislation.

It may be added that political parties and religious seminaries have opposed the new legislation saying it was against teachings of Quran and Sunnah and would destroy family fabric of our society. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam F (JUI-F) leader

Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman criticised the members of the Punjab Assembly and said the rulers have sworn not to make any laws in accordance with the Quran and the Sunnah.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/21131/>

PLACE HONOUR KILLING BILL IN JOINT SITTING, RABBANI ASKS GOVT

Dawn, March 2nd, 2016

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani stalled on Tuesday a resolution seeking to pay tribute to two-time Oscar winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and directed the movers to include in it the names of those women activists who had faced police brutalities for raising their voice against honour killings.

“Besides the name of a woman who has received an award from the US, the resolution should also have a mention of those women who had faced police baton-charge on roads during their struggle which led to the introduction of a bill against honour killings in this house,” Mr Rabbani said amid desk-thumping when Leader of the House Raja Zafarul Haq and Leader of Opposition Aitzaz Ahsan sought permission from the chair to allow Nasreen Jalil of the MQM to table the resolution to pay tribute to Ms Chinoy.

Ms Chinoy won her Oscar Award in the short documentary category for her film, ‘A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness’, highlighting the issue of honour killings.

Mr Rabbani, however, did not provide the members an opportunity to table an amended resolution and abruptly adjourned the session.

Ms Jalil is now expected to table the resolution on Wednesday.

Earlier, the chairman directed Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Shaikh to ensure that the eight bills, including the one against honour killings, which had been passed by the Senate but lapsed because of the government’s failure to get them through the National Assembly within the stipulated 90-day period, were part of the agenda of a joint sitting of parliament which the government had been planning to get the laws passed.

Mr Rabbani issued the directive when PPP Senator Farhatullah Babar, while speaking on a “matter of public importance”, paid tribute to Ms Chinoy and reminded the chair that the Senate had already passed a bill against honour killings and it had now lapsed.

Quoting Ms Chinoy as saying that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, during a meeting with her, had promised to bring in legislation on honour killings, Mr Babar expressed the hope that Mr Sharif would fulfil this commitment when the government would convene a joint sitting of parliament in a few days.

Mr Rabbani regretted that he had written letters to the government asking it to take up the eight bills in the joint sitting, but so far there had been no progress in this regard.

“Please make a request that when the president summons the joint session (of parliament), the eight bills will be part of the agenda,” he said while addressing to the minister.

The Senate had last year passed the Anti-Honour Killings Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment Bill) 2014, which was moved by PPP’s Sughra Imam just days before her retirement as senator.

The Senate chairman expressed his annoyance over a letter received by the Senate Secretariat from the Cabinet Division in response to a report of the special committee on devolution and said that instead of sending a reply he had decided to put the matter before the house for a debate.

“The Cabinet Division has stated that the Senate has done unconstitutional work,” Mr Rabbani said, referring to the Cabinet Division’s correspondence in response to the committee’s recommendation regarding reconstitution of policy and administrative boards and councils.

Senate Secretary Amjad Pervaiz shared with the house details of the Cabinet Division’s response.

“It is for the information of the house that in response to recommendations of the Senate Special Committee on Devolution Process adopted by the house on Aug 7, 2015, that all policy and administrative boards, councils, bodies, etc, constituted under various acts of parliament or established by an executive order, shall be reconstituted to in order to ensure that equal representation is given to all the provinces, the Cabinet Division has furnished a reply to the Senate Secretariat to the effect that the directions given by the committee in certain areas may not consistent with the administrative legislation, constitutional framework and laws of Pakistan,” stated the letter read out by the secretary.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, Talha Mehmood, presented a report on the controversial bill seeking to convert the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation into a limited company.

The committee had rejected the bill at its meeting on Monday.

The government, which is in minority in the Senate, now plans to convene a joint sitting of parliament to get the bill passed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243042/place-honour-killing-bill-in-joint-sitting-rabbani-asks-govt>

UOG VC ‘MISTREATS’ FEMALE LECTURER

Dawn, March 5th, 2016

Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: A female faculty member of the Nawaz Sharif Medical College (NSMC), a constituent of the University of Gujrat (UoG), has accused the UoG vice-chancellor of insulting and shouting at her in front of other staff and visitors when she tried to talk to him regarding permission for applying for PhD scholarship. The VC, however, denies the charge.

In her detailed statement to Dawn, lecturer/demonstrator Dr Saima Salman, also an elected member of the academic council, said she had applied for HEC scholarship through proper channel by fulfilling all requirements but the VC office delayed the NoC.

She visited the VC office at 11am on Friday to request him in person to issue the NoC since March 4 was the last day for application submission and that from next year she could not apply for the same because of the age factor.

Dr Saima said before visiting the VC office, she talked to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) chairman and conveyed him the entire matter. She said the HEC head advised her to visit the VC office in person and explain him issuing the NoC was in accordance with UoG and HEC rules.

The lecturer stayed in the VC office waiting area for two hours but she was not called in by the VC. She said when the VC came out of the office perhaps to leave the campus, she tried to speak to him but without listening her, he started shouting at her in the presence of several other staff and visitors. “How dare you trespass my office without my permission. It’s me who is law and I will run the university on my own will and desire and I’m not supposed to listen to people of mean understanding like you,” Dr Saima quoted the VC as saying.

She said the VC insulted her and shouted with inappropriate language in front of junior staff and executive. “Does a female doctor has no respect in front of VC or he has the right to humiliate and harass female faculty in public,” she

asked. She questioned where was the law to protect the rights of females in Punjab or if it was not applicable to UoG where the style of governance was like dictators and not an academician?

She requested the Punjab Chief Minister to look into the matter and save her from such a bullying attitude in future and also probe why the VC is so rude with female staff. She also filed a complaint with the ombudsman's office

VC Dr Ziaul Qayyum said he neither misbehaved nor insulted the female lecturer since her case file had not yet reached his office and that, too, would be treated as per process. He said the lecturer should have honored the decorum of the VC office while pursuing her application as the VC could not personally listen to each and every member of some 700 faculty members.

He said that he could not accept such a conduct of a staff member to bypass the rules for getting her application processed in a hurry for which he warned the concerned lecturer to beware in future. The VC said he would direct his staff to initiate an inquiry into the misconduct of the lecturer.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243718>

RELIGIOUS PARTIES REJECT WOMEN PROTECTION BILL

Dawn, March 6th, 2016

Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: Mainstream religious parties belonging to all schools of thought on Saturday rejected the women protection bill recently passed by the Punjab assembly and termed the hanging of former Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer's assassin a judicial murder.

The announcement was made at the official residence of Maulana Fazlur Rehman in the Ministers Colony here. The meeting was attended by Jamaat-i-Islami emir Sirajul Haq, Awais Noorani, son of late Shah Ahmed Noorani and the leader of Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (JUP-N), Dr Sahibzada Abul Khair Mohammad Zubair (JUP-N), Allama Arif Wahidi of Islami Tehreek of Allama Sajid Naqvi and Allama Abdul Aziz Hanif of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadis led by Senator Prof Sajid Mir.

Announcing the decisions of the meeting, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the participants rejected the 'judicial murder' of Mumtaz Qadri and called him a martyr.

"The mainstream religious parties will meet in Mansoor, Lahore, on March 15 to discuss the next course of action against the conspiracies being hatched by the government," the JUI-F chief said. He added that there were chances of a nationwide agitation against the ill-intended moves of the government – similar to the one organised by religious groups in 1977.

"We understand that the hanging of Mumtaz Qadri was based on a bad intent and it could be part of a conspiracy to abolish the blasphemy laws in Pakistan. But we will never tolerate this," he said, adding: "All such attempts by previous governments had failed and this will also happen now."

The JUI chief said the meeting also noted with concerns that the women protection bill had been promulgated by Punjab only to destroy and distort the family system in the country.

"We all have agreed that domestic violence and ill-treatment of women should end and we will welcome laws in this regard. But the clauses in this bill will eventually lead to the break-up of society," he added. "This is not right in an Islamic country and many clauses in the Bill are contrary to Quran and Sunnah."

He said the representatives of all the religious groups had decided to resist these moves as they termed it “conspiracies to make Pakistan a secular country.” Allama Arif Wahidi said they considered Qadri’s execution and passing of the women protection bill as devious moves by the ruling party as both the actions were planned and carried out secretly.

The religious leaders also criticised Pemra and the government over the blackout of all the news related to Mumtaz Qadri by the media.

When asked why he was speaking against the government when his party, the JUI-F, was a coalition partner, Maulana Fazal said he believed in a true democracy.

“This is the true spirit of democracy. We are with the government but we have our principles and will not be part of any illegal or un-Islamic act,” he said.

About the allegations of former Karachi nazim Mustafa Kamal against the MQM chief, Maulana Fazal said, “As far as anybody’s connections with RAW etc., are concerned, it is not our responsibility to check or correct it. Such allegations are not new regarding MQM but the agencies should be asked why they have failed to cap the alleged RAW links.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243896/religious-parties-reject-women-protection-bill>

s analyse the third question that Ms Shahid poses: “Did you know that a bulky chunk of Third World boys live their lives enveloped in slave labour and under appallingly inhuman conditions?” The writer probably doesn’t know what feminists mean by “labour”. She generalises “slave labour”. I am appalled by how the writer, a woman herself, thinks that boys and girls are made to do an equal amount of “slave labour”.

Look at the gender inequality in the socio-historical context. A majority of women, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan, are doing slave labour 24 hours a day. The decision of whether they will go to school or not is taken by their father, husband, or brother. They cannot decide on their own whether they will earn their livelihoods. They cannot make even a single decision on their own. Feminists resist against that “institutional male dominance and suppression of women”.

Ms Shahid, addressing feminists, then claims that “This may surprise you, but many women who confine themselves to societal norms don’t believe they’re oppressed at all”. This opinion won’t surprise feminists. Privileged and dominant institutions in society — in this case male — always maintain their hegemony through a combination of force and consent. The dominant classes make you believe that you are making your decision by choice when in actual fact, you aren’t. Foucault noted that “naturalisation is the royal road to common sense”.

Interestingly, common sense is determined by those who have power and resources: in this case, males. Hundreds of women believe that male dominance is natural. It isn’t. Male dominance is socially created. Feminists want to create awareness among women about their historical exploitation. They want women to make their decisions themselves. They would argue: do whatever you want based on your own informed opinion.

I would recommend that Ms Shahid read feminist literature before writing about feminism. Her arguments against feminism have no relevance to the feminist movement. It is just like blaming Shahid Afridi for not scoring goals in the English Premier League.

Disclaimer: I am not part of any feminist movement. However, I am against institutional hegemony.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1105132/blaming-feminism/>

PROTECTING WOMEN

Dawn, May 19th, 2016

PUNJAB appears to be leading the way in putting concepts of women’s protection into actual practice. In February, its provincial assembly had passed the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2015. In many ways, this is perhaps the most comprehensive legislation on the subject because it also takes into account cultural realities that make women doubly vulnerable in this society and stipulates measures to address them.

Then, on Tuesday, the Punjab chief minister directed the province's top police official to create the post of DIG women protection — to which a woman will be appointed and which will be under the IGP's direct command — and depute women superintendents at the Violence Against Women Centres in order to implement the aforementioned legislation.

It is encouraging that not only has the Punjab government resisted the pressure from religious parties to roll back or modify the Women's Protection Act, but has seen fit to take follow-up steps fairly quickly. Many a good law on our statute books has been unable to make any impact because of lack of implementation. The domestic violence legislation in Sindh and Balochistan, passed in 2013 and 2014 respectively, is a case in point.

In fact, where setting up implementing mechanisms is concerned, laws pertaining to violence against women or to cultural practices that violate women's rights are particularly prone to foot-dragging. There is simply not enough enthusiasm within the relevant political circles or the bureaucracy — both of them overwhelmingly male — to change a status quo so skewed in their favour.

The VAWCs are the linchpin of the Women's Protection Act, containing under one roof all the facilities required to deal with cases of gender-based violence from initial reporting all the way up to post-trauma rehabilitation. Appointing a senior woman police officer specifically to head them, and giving her the requisite powers to do so effectively, makes eminent sense. Care must be taken, however, that these centres retain their specialised purpose and do not become an extension of women's police stations.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259165>

HONOUR KILLING: WOMAN SHOT DEAD BY BROTHER

The Express Tribune, May 22nd, 2016.

Amjad Hussain Raja

KALLAR SYEDAN: A woman was shot dead on Saturday by her brother in an apparent honour killing, the Kallar Syedan police said. The victim, identified as Saiqa Qayyum, 30, was shot twice in head at her house in Dhoke Sabri and died on the spot.

The victim's husband, Abdul Qayyum, is working abroad and she was living at her in-laws' house along with their four children.

The preliminary investigation suggests that the woman was allegedly planning on eloping with a local man, Tufail. On Saturday, the victim's brother, Zubair, visited her house to talk her out of her out of eloping. He shot her when she refused to do as he said, the police added.

Kallar Syedan SHO Khizer Hayat said one of the victim's female in-laws told them that "Qayyum was packing her bags to leave when her brother arrived and he shot her after a heated exchange."

The victim's brother-in-law told the police that he was at work when he was informed of the incident. He said that at the time, he did not know who the shooter was, but was later given details of the incident by other relatives.

The police shifted the body to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital for medico-legal formalities. Hayat said that a case has been registered and an investigation has begun, adding that the suspect will be arrested as soon as they track him down.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1107772/honour-killing-woman-shot-dead-brother/>

ACID ATTACK SURVIVOR GANG-RAPED IN LAYYAH

The Express Tribune, May 22nd, 2016.

LAHORE / LAYYAH: A married woman, who had lost her eyesight in a 2002 acid attack, was allegedly gang-raped in the southern Punjab district of Layyah, police said on Saturday.

Muhammad Younus, a neighbour of the 35-year-old victim, allegedly sexually assaulted her at his residence along with two friends, Saleem and Khalid, according to DSP Saddar Akram Niazi.

Younus had met the victim at the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) Kot Sultan, where she had gone for the medical checkup of her 12-year-old daughter. Younus lured her to his house, saying that he had Rs3,000 in Zakat donation for her.

Since it was the Friday prayer break at the hospital, the woman went to Younus's place along with her daughter to collect the money. However, when she reached there, she was allegedly subjected to sexual abuse.

Police said the woman – a mother of four and wife of a day labourer – belongs to a poor family, which has been receiving financial assistance and charity from the alleged rapist.

The family told The Express Tribune that the alleged rapist and his accomplices first tied up the victim and her daughter before sexually assaulting her in a separate room. The victim said Younus also threatened her that he would also rape her daughter if she disclosed what had happened to her.

Police registered an FIR under Section 376 (rape) and 496-A (enticement to have illicit intercourse) of the Pakistan Penal Code against Younus and his accomplices.

SHO Kot Sultan police station Shahid Rizwan told The Express Tribune that they have detained two of the alleged rapists, Younus and Khalid, in raids. He added that the victim was medically examined at the THQ to establish rape.

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif took notice of the incident and ordered the provincial police chief to arrest the culprits and submit a progress report within 24 hours.

The victim had lost eyesight in 2002 when her cousin threw acid on her after she rejected his marriage proposal. The accused was convicted for the attack and was released after six years in jail when both parties reached reconciliation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1107842/acid-attack-survivor-gang-raped-layyah/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 9TH TO MAY 15TH 2016

WOMEN SEEK LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTANI STARTUP CULTURE

The Express Tribune, May 9th, 2016.

Ligia Aguilhar / Aroosa Shaukat

LAHORE: When Jehan Ara opened her startup incubator Nest I/O last year in Karachi, only one woman applied in the first batch. In the latest one, however, 35% of the applicants were women.

For Ara, the ongoing effort to bring more women in the technology sector makes it even more challenging in an environment lacking due support.

President of Pakistan Software Houses Association for IT (P@sha), Ara started her own technology company during the mid 1990s. She comes from a generation of female technologists who helped shape the Pakistani IT industry and brought more women to the job market. Since then many women have made it to the corporate world. But, according to Ara, they still need to forge a system that provides a support structure to allow women to break barriers and get to the top.

“We have women in leadership [roles] but it is [still] not enough,” she says.

As one of the first female leaders in the local IT sector, she felt it was time to act. Ara went to universities around Pakistan to promote the Karachi-based incubator and push women to apply. “Technology companies still don’t provide women with flexible working hours,” she says. According to Ara, facilities like day care and transportation are still lacking in the sector. “This is why I have been telling women they have to start their own businesses in technology,” she says.

With the rise of the Pakistani startup scene over the past few years, many women in technology are finding their way to the top.

“The workplaces in Pakistan are not very child-friendly which is what makes it difficult for the mothers to become productive at work,” says Dr Umar Saif, founder of Plan9, Pakistan’s largest startup incubator, and chairman of the Punjab Information Technology Board. “I believe internet and ecommerce have leveraged the field for female entrepreneurs. While in a traditional business you have to interact with your clientele, over the internet you can do your business from your house, which makes it easier for females.”

Wajiha Kashan is one of the examples of Pakistan’s new generation of female entrepreneurs. After working in the software industry for years, she decided to make her dream of being an administrator come true. The opportunity to become an entrepreneur chanced upon her after her marriage. In partnership with her husband, also one of her former subordinates, she went on to create three startups: a peer-to-peer sharing consignment store Affordable.pk, the digital design agency Concept Beans and the consultancy agency Simple Media.

“My husband and I started working on our first business third day into our marriage. We bought a computer from the gift money we got at our wedding and started working from our bedroom,” she said. Today she manages a 16-hour work schedule with the help of her family that takes care of their two children.

More incentive to female leadership also helps Pakistan avoid some of its brain drain. An example is Sahr Said, who after completion of a two-year MBA in Cornell University, turned down opportunities in the US to become an entrepreneur in her own country. Last year she co-founded Beauty Hooked, a startup that helps Pakistani women book beauty services.

“The tech environment in Pakistan is very conducive for women, more than any other employment circle,” she said.

Because she is a woman, Sahr says investors and mentors are more open towards helping her. She finds this important as she needs the expertise and networking to attract investors to her business. “There is a certain type of individual in the startup industry that is very educated and driven and they don’t care about stereotypes, because stereotypes come with the passing of generations.” With the rise of more female entrepreneurs like her, Sahr expects to help the industry stay away of stereotypes.

The gender equality issue has been a major problem for most developed countries. In the US women make it for 59% of workforce, but only 15.6% work in IT, according to the latest Census data. In Pakistan, females correspond to 25% of the workforce, according to the World Bank, and around 14% work in the IT sector, according to P@sha.

But the Pakistani gender issue is more complex. The 2014 Gender Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index, a report on women entrepreneurship sponsored by Dell, ranked Pakistan 30 out of 31 countries from all the continents for favorable conditions to promote female entrepreneurship.

“Pakistan needs to focus on improving fundamental issues such as women’s rights, women’s access to resources such as education and bank accounts, women’s access to broader labor force sectors as well as improving the business regulatory environment,” says the report. According to it, only 3% of Pakistan’s management positions are held by women, versus 59% in Jamaica and 43% in the US.

Some Pakistani companies are trying to make a difference. At We R Play studios, a videogame company in Islamabad, 42% of the workforce is female. The company offers three-months paid maternity leave and allows female staff to work from home.

“After launching in 2010, the first five hires were men,” says Mohammed Usman Khan, head of marketing at We R Play. Mohsin Afzal, the CEO, then recognised the need to recruit women early in the company’s life in what he describes as an effort to develop a female-friendly work culture as the company grew. “Females definitely bring in a lot of diversity. They seem to take their jobs as leads with more responsibility and pay more attention to hiccups. All our Quality Assurance projects are currently led by females,” says Afzal.

Statistically, women form a strong qualified workforce in the IT sector. In Karachi’s NED University of Engineering and Technology, there are 53% of female students earning their Bachelor of Science in Computer Science & Information Technology programme and 63% in the Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering programme.

“The challenge for Pakistani women is that there is a strong family culture that worries about girl’s safety and security. It is difficult for many girls to pursue high education because they will marry early. We need a cultural shift,” says Sheba Najmi, founder of Code for Pakistan – a group that teaches digital skills to encourage more people, including women, to develop digital solutions to many of the country’s problems.

A Stanford University grad, Najmi currently works in the technology industry in the Bay Area, in the US.

“Being a woman from Pakistan I feel there are enormous opportunities because it is kind of not-great for women everywhere. In Silicon Valley the system is not designed with motherhood in mind, the barriers are similar”, she says. “In Pakistan there is not a bro culture like in Silicon Valley. Coworkers treat you well and in schools, girls generally outshine boys.”

A recent survey conducted with support of Stanford University reveals that 60% of women working in Silicon Valley have experienced some kind of harassment in the workplace. In Pakistan, though, a 2012 survey made by P@sha shows that 55% of women in the Pakistani IT sector consider it a good industry to work because of the opposite: there is no harassment and they feel highly appreciated.

Arusha Imtiaz, a 25-year-old who recently graduated from Pakistani accelerator Plan 9, says that although the IT and startup industries are female-friendly, founders from both sexes will struggle with limitations from the country’s young startup scene. She recently set up an office for her startup, SMAC Factory, a system that connects parents with teachers to provide more information about their children’s education.

“If you are not part of an environment as in an accelerator, hiring is very difficult, because Pakistan does not have a culture where people work in their rooms. There are challenges raising investment, finding mentors and a good team, especially if you are young or a female,” she said. Her company recently received an investment that valued it at \$2 million.

The 25-year old entrepreneur who looks at Mark Zuckerberg for inspiration says all Pakistani women need to thrive is equal opportunities. “But I don’t think women need a movement. I am totally against treating men and women differently because that is how you start creating the differences yourself. What we need is to create the same opportunities for women and men.”

The article is a joint project of the Medill School of Journalism and The Express Tribune

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1099558/women-seek-leadership-in-pakistani-startup-culture/>

WORLD BANK URGES PAKISTAN TO SPEED UP REFORM, EMPLOY MORE WOMEN FOR GROWTH
Dawn, May 10th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must speed up reform of the energy sector and bring more women into the labour force if it wants to quicken economic growth that lags far behind regional peers, the World Bank's country representative said on Monday.

The World Bank expects Pakistan's economy to expand by 4.5 per cent in 2016, missing the government's 5.5pc target and trailing behind other South Asian nations where growth is expected to average about 7pc this year.

The bank sees 2017 growth edging up to 4.8pc in Pakistan, a nation of 190 million people. Experts say the economy needs to expand by at least 6pc a year to absorb new entrants to the workforce.

Illango Patchamuthu, the World Bank country director, said Pakistan had benefited from a collapse in global oil prices and tough fiscal measures by the government over the past few years to stabilise the economy.

But he urged faster reform in the energy sector, which has suffered decades of under-investment. Businesses say frequent power outages hurt growth and investment.

"To me, the whole story around power reforms is still only half done," Patchamuthu told Reuters in an interview.

He said Pakistan must tackle its so-called circular debt problem, which stems from unpaid government subsidies that build up until power plant owners cannot afford fuel. It stands at about \$3 billion.

The government expects its electricity rationing system of "load-shedding" to end by 2018 after it signed more than \$30bn in energy generation projects as part of the \$46bn China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). But efforts to privatise a host of electricity distribution companies have stalled, as have other reforms.

Mr Patchamuthu said the government has been focused on power generation, but it must also seek to improve distribution and upgrade ancient transmission systems.

"A lot more needs to be done in the next several years to build up the whole power infrastructure," he said.

Mr Patchamuthu said another way for Pakistan to significantly boost growth is reforming its male-dominated labour market, where women account for only 22pc of the workforce.

"If Pakistan wants to get to 7-8pc (growth) with structural reforms, they also have to do much more in drawing women into the labour force," he said.

In 2014, Pakistan was ranked as the second worst nation in the world for gender equality after Yemen, according to the Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum.

"There are social and cultural challenges," Mr Patchamuthu said. "But if the women are skilled and they are given the right opportunities the economy is only going to bloom and blossom."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1257337>

A WOMEN'S JIRGA

Dawn, May 11th, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

When interviewed by Reuters, Zardad Khan, from the village of Makol to which 16-year-old Ambreen belonged, said, "This barbarity has never happened before." The teenager was killed, her body put in a van and burned.

His words may be true for the village of Makol but not for Pakistan in general. Over recent decades, village after village and, in particular, jirga after jirga, has been implicated in ordering murders and even rapes of women under the pretext of preserving 'honour'. Over a decade ago was the famous case of Mukhtaran Mai, ordered raped and

humiliated in Meerwala. More recently, a tribal jirga in Kohistan condemned four women because they were seen clapping and singing apparently in the company of men in a grainy mobile phone video. They had been attending a relative's wedding.

The numbers are probably greater than most imagine and, as is the case with crimes against women in Pakistan, difficult to tabulate with real accuracy. Pakistani society, at all levels, is adept at cover-ups for the crimes of men, at subterfuge supporting the easy erasure of women. The status of the jirga- or panchayat-ordered killing, an ironic form of 'justice', is a sub-category within the larger compartment of 'honour killings', both populated with the lost lives of women who died to sate the anger and bloodlust of men.

Functioning as instruments of communal justice, jirgas often dole out sentences unfettered by the constraints of the laws of the country. As Ambreen's tragic end reveals, they can carry out their sentences. Outcry, if it follows at all, takes place after the object of their wrath is already dead. In many cases, once outcry and attention have faded, all those indicted for the crime (if they are indicted at all) are often freed to live their lives.

In a country where a woman's life has meagre worth, why should men be punished for taking it? Given the regularity with which women are ordered killed, there seems to be implicit agreement on this point.

In their current form, jirgas are composed almost entirely of men and unbound by the limits of the law of the country. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the form of justice doled out by them is misogynistic and brutal. In simple terms, a community's need for expedient dispute resolution is manipulated by its powerful men and then used to order and enforce punishments that serve their own interests.

The weakness of the state's own legal system, the cost involved in availing oneself of it and the deadly delays that ail it further bolster the reach and mandate of local jirgas. Even for the villagers of Makol, which isn't far from larger towns and cities, the court system, it seems, was too far away, too distant from the lives of Makol's inhabitants. It does not have to be this way. The work of one woman in the valley of Swat reveals how the actual need for justice and the provision of it at a communal level can be harnessed to protect and empower women, rather than leaving them at the mercy of ruthless and self-interested men. Three years ago, Tabassum Adnan inaugurated a Sister's Council or 'Khwendu Jirga' in the village of Mingora.

According to Adnan, who was herself married at the age of 13 and endured domestic abuse, the existing tribal councils in her community did not permit women to join them. Fed up of this decision, she got together a group of women and began discussing the issues and concerns of the community with them.

The women then pressed the men on the jirga council to take their decisions and consensus into account. According to Adnan, nearly 1,000 women in the area are now involved in the Sister's Council by bringing their problems to it and participating in its processes.

Tabassum Adnan's work has received international acclaim. She has received the International Women of Courage Award and just last month was also awarded the Nelson Mandela-Graça Machele Innovation Award.

Her pioneering strategy deserves attention and implementation beyond Swat. A council where women of a community are empowered to intervene and participate in communal decision-making can be a crucial and pressing form of intervention in a situation that has become increasingly untenable.

Tabassum Adnan's jirga does not currently receive any kind of monetary support from the government or from any other source, but its work and powers of enforcement could be enhanced even further if the state invested resources and empowered its leaders. The Sister's Council, with its grass-roots and women-centred agenda, its rootedness in the community, represents a promising answer to a difficult problem.

Not only have honour killings continued in Pakistan, many women's organisations report that their numbers have increased. One reason for this is that while there have been various legislative measures to try and combat the

persecution of women and their relegation to the status of objects that can be exchanged or extinguished, there has been no effort towards actually bringing about change at the community level.

Honour killings continue despite laws and campaigns against them, because those committing these crimes continue to believe that they are doing the right thing. They will not stop, unless others in their community speak up, and these others have to be women.

Ambreen was killed at the behest of a jirga; she is just one among so many Pakistani women who have lost their lives in similar ways with community collusion and consensus. A change can only occur if women from communities are empowered to create their own alternate jirgas whose decisions are binding on the community as well.

To help these women's jirgas gain credibility within communities, the state should invest in them, recognise their leaders and incentivise participation. Male jirgas have made Pakistan a home for grotesque and brutal crimes, women's jirgas may actually make it a more just and equitable place.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1257618>

‘LACK OF EVIDENCE HURDLE TO JUSTICE IN VIOLENCE CASES’

Dawn, May 14th, 2016

PESHAWAR: A research on medico-legal services in Peshawar and Swabi districts has revealed gaps in the procedures and approaches adopted by the relevant departments to support the survivors of violence, especially rape victims.

The research was conducted by the Noor Education Trust with the support of Provincial Commission on the Status of Women and Trocaire.

It was launched here during a special ceremony, where forensic and health experts, lawyers and police officers were present.

NET head Zubaida Noor said there should be a one-window service to provide support immediately needed in violence-related cases, especially to rape victims.

Sabahat Mushtaq of the NET said the study was conducted after a violence victim died while resisting the attempt of kidnapping.

She said in many such cases, families failed to produce medico-legal evidence to get justice.

The study researched on the implementation of the medico-legal procedures with the gender-based violence victims and survivors at different government hospitals including LRH, KTH and HMC, forensic medicine and toxicology department, forensic sciences laboratories and police stations and even lower courts.

The study said service accessibility of medico-legal clinics in Peshawar and Swabi districts had many flaws and that the facility lacked equipment and some cases were referred to other provinces.

It added that many respondents from the police and even health department were not aware of the forms of VAW and had no knowledge of laws related to such kind of violence.

The study said many such facilities lacked staff, especially at the forensic department.

“Often health and medico-legal service providers don't know if the consent of violence survivors or victims should be taken before medico-legal procedure,” it said.

The study also said there was no code of conduct or guidelines for the officials while writing a medico-legal report while dealing with violence survivors.

It said the record-keeping and follow-up mechanism was not available at the police department in medico-legal cases, while the violence survivors or victims needing medico-legal services did not have any security.

Sabahat Mushtaq said a team of experts from different relevant departments had visited Bangladesh and studied the medico-legal practices model used in Bangladesh.

The study conducted to know the gaps and then look for solutions in light of Bangladesh model also gave some recommendations and way forward to improve existing policies and practices in the province.

It suggested the recruitment of relevant staff members and capacity building of the existing staff to deal with the medico-legal cases.

According to the study, although the medico-legal services are being provided in emergency or casualty units of the public sector hospitals in the province, there is a need for hiring sufficient staff to provide all related services on one-window basis. It called for the awareness of the relevant forensic and medical staff at hospitals about laws on women's protection.

The participants discussed different problems, lack of coordination among the relevant departments as well as lack of staff and suggested that SOPs or standard operating procedures be developed so that medico-legal cases could be dealt with properly.

They said the medico-legal services needed to be provided at districts.

Chairperson of the PCSW Neelam Turo said the commission could form a task force to take up on developing SOPs and force the government to start one-window medico-legal facility at each district hospital.

She said the policy on the women's empowerment should include support for women victims or survivors of the violence and medico-legal facilities for them.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258302>

ASSAULT CONFIRMED: HYD WOMAN ALLEGEDLY GANG RAPED AT KARACHI HOSPITAL
The Express Tribune, May 14th, 2016

Faraz Khan

KARACHI: A 24-year-old woman from Hyderabad was allegedly raped by at least six men working at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) early on Friday.

SIUT, a reputable medical institution in the country that provides free-of-charge specialised medical care to people suffering from kidney- and liver-related diseases, denied the family's claims. A press release issued by the hospital on Friday evening claimed that they had security footage proving the girl was not raped.

H*, a dialysis patient, was a regular visitor at SIUT. She was discharged from the hospital on May 9 after nearly two weeks of treatment and was called for a follow-up check-up on Thursday night.

"I was with her," said the victim's nephew, Saddam Hussain, while speaking to The Express Tribune. "The dialysis was scheduled for 12am but the doctors delayed it till 3am," he said. The doctors took her to the second floor for the dialysis and asked Hussain to wait outside the dialysis centre. "They took advantage of my absence," he claimed.

According to Hussain, the doctors and paramedics allegedly raped her and then took her for the dialysis. She was asked to go home after 6am. "I had no idea what had happened to her at the hospital. She seemed shocked which caused suspicions," shared Hussain. "We started questioning her and, around 9am, she narrated all that happened."

H told the family that a group of six doctors and paramedics gang raped her before the dialysis. The family rushed her to Eidgah police station where the police asked for a medical examination before registering the case.

They took H to Services Hospital situated near Civil Hospital, Karachi, where Dr Sumayya conducted her medical examination. According to her initial medical examination report, H was subjected to gang rape. "The police registered a case in the afternoon after we returned with the medical report," said Hussain. "We want justice and we appeal to the higher authorities and the media to help us."

Eidgah police confirmed that an FIR No 79/16 has been registered against six unidentified men. "We have just started recording the statements of the [hospital] employees but so far we could not find any suspects," said Eidgah SHO Naeemuddin. "As the medical report has also confirmed the rape, we will have to obtain the CCTV footage as well," he added. "The woman told us that she can identify their faces and we will have to arrange an identification parade soon."

Meanwhile, SIUT issued a press release completely denying the incident took place. There is no iota of truth in the incident of alleged case of criminal assault, said a hospital spokesperson, adding that senior officials at SIUT reviewed the in-house security camera footage along with the police officers for the time duration that the woman was inside hospital premises.

"The subject woman remains visible throughout the period while she was at SIUT," stated the press release, adding that this was merely an attempt to tarnish the institute's image..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1102895/assault-confirmed-hyd-woman-allegedly-gang-raped-at-karachi-hospital/>

‘ONLY 2PC CRIMES IN NAME OF HONOUR GET REPORTED’

Dawn, May 15th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Only two per cent crimes in the name of honour get reported in the media, while most of such complaints being reported to the police are lodged by men as women approach the law enforcement agency only in seven per cent cases.

These views were expressed by Dr Salman Asif, an expert on gender, on Saturday while speaking at a consultative workshop on Safety Challenges for Female Media Professional in Pakistan. The event was organised by the Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) with the support of Open Society Institute.

The workshop, which discussed safety challenges faced by women in general and those working in the media in particular, was divided into two sessions. One focused on the aspects related to gender-based violence and the second session focused on the challenges faced by women in the media where women journalists from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh shared their experiences.

Senior journalist Afia Salam and PPF Secretary General Owais Aslam Ali also spoke about the legislation on sexual harassment and committees formed by media houses and their effectiveness.

Starting off with crime in the name of honour, Dr Asif spoke about the recent killing of a 16-year-old girl in Abbottabad on the orders of a Jirga.

He said such cases were usually reported with a lot of surprise element, where the language used by reporters entailed that it was an unexpected incident. "It is not an unexpected incident when killing for honour is considered acceptable in many areas of our society," he added.

Dr Asif explained that violence against women usually began with the language used against them. He said it seemed as if the language used in the reports and related discussions on social media was intended to titillate the imagination of the public. “These posts discuss the age, gender and the crime committed against a woman but one finds almost no details of the perpetrator,” he added.

Many a time, he said, the women seeking justice with regard to sexual harassment or abuse of power were sent back to the same localities and referred to an alternative system, also known as a reconciliation committee. “The role of these committees needs to be looked into deeply. Local stakeholders usually involved in those committees at times show their partiality in the judgement of honour related cases,” he added.

Ninety-eight per cent of crime in the name of honour whether happening in Rajanpur in Punjab or Mirpurkhas in Sindh or any part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were never reported, Dr Asif said.

In the remaining two per cent cases, men were usually found lodging complaints whereas only seven per cent of women reported the cases to police, he said.

In the second session, Ms Salam joined Dr Asif in discussing issues related to sexual harassment and its reportage.

“Out of more than a hundred news channels and a dozen or more newspapers, only three news outlets have a committee to listen to cases of sexual harassment,” said the senior journalist while opening the session.

Throughout the session, journalists from various news organisations shared their experiences and how they were isolated in the course of reporting harassment.

Ms Salam said that reporting harassment within the media outlets was a “long winding process”. She elaborated that it had a lot to do with the way a committee was formed and the way it executed the cases it received. Of the 12 committee members, three were supposed to be women, she added.

However, women journalists questioned the authority and decision-making power of these women. One journalist, while sharing her experience of filing a harassment case in a reputed news organisation, said: “Half of my time was spent in providing the details of what a colleague had said to me. After almost a year of explanations I was told that I need to wait as the committee is not in the position to decide.” She was eventually informed that there was “no ideal environment anywhere and she needs to adjust her ideals instead”.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258332>

HEINOUS CRIME: MAN ATTACKS WIFE WITH ACID

The Express Tribune, May 15th, 2016

BAHAWALPUR: A woman was attacked with acid by her husband on Friday.

Mairaj Bibi told police in her complaint she had married Malik Wasim, a resident of Duniyapur, a few years ago. She said they had a daughter. She said soon after their daughter’s birth, Wasim declared that their nikah was not authentic. She said she had taken him to court over this issue.

She said Wasim had also abducted and raped her daughter from her first husband. She said she had moved a complaint in this regard at Saddar police station.

She said he had threatened her many times, saying she would suffer dire consequences if she did not withdraw her complaints against him.

She said she was returning home on Friday night on a rickshaw when Wasim and some unidentified accomplices stopped them near Commerce College in Cheema Town and threw acid on her. She was taken to Bahawal Victoria Hospital where doctors said she had 25 per cent burns.

A Saddar police team arrested Wasim from his house. He told newsmen that he had divorced Mairaj Bibi two months ago.

“She was blackmailing me. I paid her Rs400,000,” he said.

He said he had not attacked her with acid. “She staged this attack with the help of someone else.”

Saddar police have registered an FIR against him under Section 336/B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1103531/heinous-crime-man-attacks-wife-with-acid/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 2nd TO MAY 8th 2016

PROMISING START: MEN, WOMEN COME TOGETHER TO FIGHT GENDER INEQUALITY

The Express Tribune, May 3rd, 2016.

Yusra Salim

KARACHI: The first Women of the World (WOW) Festival in Karachi saw women and men come together to join the struggle against gender injustice.

WOW founder Jude Kelly appreciated the role of men in attending the event and showing interest in topics such as sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. She was moderating the closing session of the festival, titled ‘Hear Reflections of the Day and Make Your Voice Heard,’ at Beach Luxury Hotel on Sunday.

Reiterating Kelly’s observation on the participation of men, Women Action Forum founder Nighat Said remarked that every person who attended the festival has learned something new, especially men.

These men are likely to better understand the problems of their wives and daughters, and treat them with respect.

Speaking about the significance of such events, Said remarked that the problems of women cannot be resolved in one day.

The people and their problems are diverse, events like these are needed to change mindsets, she added.

I remember when I was four-years-old, my mother would take me along to buy groceries. “I was kind of an escort for my mother, but didn’t know that at that age who was escorting whom,” said actor and director Sarmad Khoosat sharing an anecdote.

We have picked up the right feel for the festival and need to polish it further, he said and appreciated Kelly for organising such an event and bringing it to Karachi.

British-Pakistani standup comedian and journalist Shaista Aziz remembered Karachi and its women as creative, energetic, committed and diverse. “It is good to observe that people do not shy away from speaking on topics such as body shaming, rape and reproductive rights,” she said, adding that Pakistan is full of talented people.

Aside from discussing depressing realities of people, inspirational sessions should also be held to motivate young girls, said Said.

British Council representative Robin Davies said that the festival succeeded in changing his perception to a considerable degree within a span of six hours.

“When I entered the festival this morning I thought I knew about all the problems of women. But coming here and meeting women from rural areas, I realised, how far away from reality we men really are,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1095950/promising-start-men-women-come-together-to-fight-gender-inequality/>

UNEQUAL SPACES

Dawn, May 4th, 2016

Bina Shah

PAKISTANI women have always been active participants in Pakistan’s political scene, in roles of support and leadership since the country’s creation. Yet the terrible incident at the PTI rally in Lahore at Charing Cross on Sunday, when over 50 men sexually assaulted women attending the rally, has people asking the age-old question once more: should Pakistani women stay away from political rallies because it’s too dangerous for them to be there?

According to news reports, men broke into the women’s enclave during the rally and began to molest them. PTI chairman Imran Khan had to actually stop his speech and order the men to stop harassing the women and “be more respectful” of them.

The women’s wing of the PTI later wrote an open letter documenting the harassment and demanding better protection during rallies and other public appearances: “It was a nightmare for women... Some women were witnessed crying hysterically and had to be evacuated by ambulance ... it is shameful that we are incapable of protecting our women and children whom we claim to be our front face and strength of PTI.”

The men have been identified with the help of media footage of the assaults, criminal cases have been registered, and Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah says an investigation will take place that will include the PTI management, who failed in their duty to provide security for the women attendees.

In an attempt to deflect blame, PTI supporters claimed the harassers were PML-N thugs sent in to deliberately disrupt the rally. They say that they have nothing but respect for women, and that the PTI chairman stresses this again and again in communications to his followers.

Yet it’s hard not to forget the behaviour of PTI supporters online, who harass and abuse women and men regularly on social media. What happened at the rally, for many who have been targeted by them in the virtual world, is the same behaviour played out in the physical world.

Meanwhile, PML-N politicians are using the event as an excuse to bash the PTI, co-opting the role of women’s protectors in the light of PTI’s failure. It brings to mind the events of the Islamabad dharna last year, when PML-N leaders denigrated the women attending the rally, casting slurs on their morality because they were dancing and enjoying themselves in public.

From this blame game, it seems that neither party is sincere in its claims of respecting and protecting women: Pakistani women are political pawns to be used or abused at will, whenever convenient.

In all the rhetoric, we’re in danger of losing sight of the fact that what happened to the women at the PTI rally was sexual assault, regardless of which party the attackers belonged to. If unchecked, sexual harassment and assault at political rallies has the potential to harm much more than just the individual women targeted at rallies.

The PTI must make a serious effort to catch and prosecute the sexual offenders at the Charing Cross rally. If they are found to be PTI members, they must be ejected from the party with no exceptions. This would be the strongest

message possible that the PTI does not tolerate the harassment of women. On the other hand, if PML-N members are to blame, it falls upon PML-N to similarly arrest, prosecute, and expel those men from the party.

If we don't take action now, our political rallies will gain the reputation of Egypt's Tahrir Square where women were and still are sexually assaulted with impunity. In February 2011, when Hosni Mubarak's government fell and 10,000 people filled Tahrir Square to celebrate, women were stripped, groped and beaten by men in the crowds.

These horrific assaults continued, many perpetrated by the Egyptian military against female protesters over the following months. A gang rape occurred in 2014 during the inauguration of President Sisi. Nine men were sentenced to prison, some for life, seen as a good precedent, but the issue continues to haunt Egypt's women who want to make their voices heard politically.

PTI spokeswoman Shireen Mazari laid the blame for the Charing Cross rally assaults on PTI workers, and said that women should not bring their children to PTI jalsas because it is "not safe". Yet we must not tell women to stay at home in order to avoid being assaulted in public spaces and during political rallies. For women to remain part of the democratic political process, they must be ceded public space, safety and security.

All parties must transcend party lines and work together to honour Pakistan's women, who have fought hard to be included in the party-based political system. Doing so will only strengthen our nascent democratic process, which gets its credibility from adequate representation and support from both men and women.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256110/unequal-spaces>

CAN WOMEN BE PROTECTED BY A BILL?

The Express Tribune, May 4th, 2016.

Umair Arif

The passage of the Protection of Women Against Violence Bill was hailed as a big achievement by many in the secular liberal circles while the religious circles are in serious opposition. The argument of the liberals is that the Bill presents a step towards the empowerment of women and the elimination of domestic violence.

It will keep those husbands in control who treat their wife/wives as their subjects and exercise different forms of violence against them. On the other hand, the APC that included 35 religious parties condemned the law and said: "This Act ... is redundant and would add to the miseries of women." Domestic violence is a reality in Pakistan and it needs to be reckoned with.

According to Aurat Foundation, "In 2013, more than 5,800 cases of violence against women were reported in Punjab." A 2011 Thomson Reuters Foundation expert poll showed that domestic abuse, economic discrimination and acid attacks made Pakistan the world's third-most dangerous country for women. These are some serious statistics about which the religious group's stance is quite frankly, ignorant.

But then, let us dig into the secular liberal stance — make a law to criminalise domestic violence and let us hope everything will turn out to be fine — which is absolutely immature. What they fail to see is that such a law does not take into consideration our unique societal dynamics. One can also question the effectiveness of such laws implemented in the Western world.

According to data obtained from Health & Social Care Information Centre, Britain, the number of acid attacks against women in the last 10 years has doubled to 925. Two women are killed every week in England and Wales by a partner. A recent article in The New York Times states that "every year, in France, 223,000 women are physically or psychologically abused by their partners". In 2014 alone, 134 women died as a result of violence at the hands of their husbands or partners.

Even though the Western world has strict and intelligent laws on women protection-related matters, these laws are not necessarily solving this social problem.

So what is going wrong? An article, “The Limits of Law”, published in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, discusses the effectiveness and limits of a law, in an intellectual sense. Laws might fail and the failure could be dramatic if there is little understanding of society and human behaviour.

Knowing what works and what does not and what will be counterproductive is important knowledge. An article titled “Law vs morality as regulators of conduct” by Steven Shavell of Harvard Law School presents an excellent perspective. He argues that a better sense of developing morality in many cases is the best manner of controlling a specific behaviour pattern.

For instance, morality and not law is a means of control of much of our daily interactions and social discourse like fulfilling commitments or talking sensibly or treating guests or respecting the elderly, and so on. He rightly argues that establishing laws is not a very expensive process and does not take much time in being implemented. But the establishment of moral rules is extremely expensive and time-consuming.

Making a law to punish littering is easy but inculcating the moral rule that one should not litter requires constant effort over the years of childhood and social projects in elevating the values of a society.

Therefore, without understanding the social dynamics of a Pakistani household, the state will only make laws that fail miserably and are not practised by society at large. Pakistan’s family structure is strictly non-individual.

Therefore, in our society, when a problem in the home arises, the first priority is to resolve the issue within the realm of the husband and wife, but if it extends, the parents intervene and try to settle the disputes with utmost secrecy.

They consider it a disgrace to discuss their family matters even with uncles and aunts, but where necessary, the elders intervene and try to resolve it. In such a climate of social bonding, interference and family dignity, a matter taken to the police will be considered devastating for the family prestige. The consequences it can lead to need to be investigated before enacting laws.

Secondly, the issue of domestic violence is directly linked to the cultural upbringing of males in society, which creates a male-dominated society with supersized egos. The Women’s Protection Bill provides for a 24-hour helpline for women, women’s shelter homes, women being distanced from men using GPS, etc., giving it a feminist colour and which could collide directly with the supersized egos of our male population.

Problems are not solved by triggering the ego of another individual but by gradually changing mindsets. Moral awareness schemes through the media, sermons in mosques and through education curriculum, on the basis of correct social values are fundamental in changing mindsets.

Additionally, the style of discourse needs to change i.e., there is a need to emphasise that women are not a rare species, who are being hunted down and need protection. Let us consider women as companions living in a household setting with men, as respectable homemakers or professionals, having an equal day-to-day contribution in any family’s life.

Our male-dominated society needs to be educated that women are as human as men and laws are same for them as they are for men. The current police structure should be formalised and educated in this regard.

We need to think deeply about our social dynamics to solve our problems and find ways that would work for us. Ignorance towards problems or lack of objective analysis are dangerous trends.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1096492/can-women-be-protected-by-a-bill/>

US INSTITUTES LAUD PUNJAB WOMEN PROTECTION INITIATIVE

Dawn, May 5th, 2016

LAHORE: Top American institutions and universities have appreciated the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act Centres and say that it provides a wonderful opportunity for Pakistan's neighbouring countries to follow the same lead.

"The historic legislation, that takes a firm stand against violence against women through a comprehensive and effective implementation mechanism, has pleasantly surprised not only Pakistanis but western countries as well," said Chief Minister's Special Monitoring Unit (Law and Order) Senior Member Salman Sufi upon his return from the USA here on Wednesday.

He had gone there on the invitation of the US State Department which had shown interest in the legislation. "This legislation has been warmly received by the US where the power corridors usually take a skeptical view of Pakistani policies particularly about women," he said.

He held a series of meetings with high ranking officials on Capitol Hill, Council on Foreign Relations, US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's issues at US Department of State, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour and Mr Jaleel Abbas Jilani (Pakistani Ambassador to the US). They discussed and lauded the comprehensive impact of this historic legislation on violence against women crimes.

Mr Sufi said these officials were keen to explore the genesis behind the comprehensive justice delivery system and the in-built implementation mechanism being developed in Pakistan through the Women Protection Act, making it stand out in the entire South Asian region.

While they believed that this legislation and the Violence Against Women Centres provide a wonderful opportunity for Pakistan's neighbouring countries to follow the same lead. Some also admitted that such comprehensive and integrated models still did not exist in North America or Europe.

Many top-tiered US universities arranged seminars and talks regarding Pakistan's ground-breaking legislation, which provides comprehensive protection against all forms of violence, to study its impact not only on Pakistan but also the wider Muslim world and the breaking of false notions that Islam allows for the subjugation of women.

They included Harvard Law School, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Pakistan Forum- Women, Gender and Health at Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, University of Chicago Institute of Politics and Harris School of Public Policy and the Pakistan Student Association at George Washington University.

Students as well as faculty asked a series of questions about the opposition of the Women Protection Act along with the Punjab government's support to the law. University of Chicago's Law School showed keen interest in sending its students to Pakistan to study in depth the impact of the Violence Against Women Centres (VAWCs), that are to be established under the law, Mr Sufi said.

Meanwhile, State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement has reportedly shown interest in collaborating with the provincial government in establishing the centres.

It is already providing training to public prosecutors in Punjab in how to effectively pursue cases of violence against women for the past two years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256388>

FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Dawn, May 5th, 2016

I.A. Rehman

AS a welcome change, this year's May Day celebrations, demonstrations and debates gave considerable space not only to the challenges faced by women workers but also to the bitter struggle the women of this country have been forced to wage for realising their elementary rights.

The list of these challenges is quite long and formidable: denial of right to work, non-recognition of women's work, non-payment for work done by women, denial of a fair wage, gaps in the legislation needed to protect women's rights, non-implementation of laws that have already been enacted, non-recognition of informal-sector workers, and, above all, prevalence of an environment that perpetuates and reinforces gender inequality by the day.

Some of these issues are already on the official agenda. For instance, the demands of home-based workers for their entitlements. The organisations working for them estimate their number at 8.5 million but they could be more.

Most of them are women. They are among the worst exploited category of workers. Unexceptionable are their demands for the ratification of ILO Convention 189, for domestic legislation required for their recognition as workers, and for creation of a monitoring system to ensure that what the law provides for is actually available to them.

The Punjab government has at least promised acceptance of their demands and now it is being pressed to honour its word. There is no reason why home-based workers should be obliged to keep marching under a blazing sun for the most basic of their rights.

The fact that organised labour has been in a state of retreat for quite some time means that the grievances of women in the civil labour force have been multiplying. They will continue to suffer more than all-male trade unions as the ruling elite is unlikely to be cured of its obsession with free-market mantras, including the shady deals under the cover of privatisation.

Even a cursory look at the problems faced by women will reveal that they are interrelated and interdependent. Each problem has been aggravated by lack of state will to resolve it.

The time has perhaps come to remove this main obstacle to women's freedom by demonstrating the state's will to go the whole length for achieving gender equality by adopting a long-term plan for women's empowerment. What this goal means should largely be decided by women themselves. During the interregnum the state and civil society should concentrate on building up women's capacity to cover the final lap to their rightful place in society.

The long-term strategy will obviously include a mechanism for filling gaps in legislation as well as for evaluating implementation of pro-women laws made over the past two decades, and especially since 2004, in order to make their enforceability certain. In order to ensure women's ability to grab their share of jobs it will be necessary to extend to them educational facilities and an adequate health cover. The failure to realise the Millennium Development Goals must spur the administration to improve its performance while addressing the Strategic Development Goals.

An important factor of women's emancipation can be an increase in their role in local government institutions. The Sindh government's decision to increase women's representation in local bodies to 33pc is worthy of emulation by other provinces. But symbolic representation will not be enough; the women local leaders must be helped to address all of citizens' problems, including their vulnerability to preachers of hate and promoters of conflict.

Instead of creating new vehicles for promoting women's empowerment, the task can be assigned to the national and provincial commissions on the status of women after enlarging their scope of work and guaranteeing them the physical and material resources required. Besides developing and executing their three- or five-year programmes they should also function as tribunals to receive and address women's grievances about the denial of their due.

Our none-too-prosperous world of letters has been rendered poorer by the passing away of Fazlur Rahman Khan of the Pakistan Administrative Service who served the country for long years in various capacities, most notably as principal secretary to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

Fazlur Rahman Khan found his urge to express himself on a variety of socioeconomic issues blunted by his service code of conduct. Learning of this, Mr Mahmoud Abdullah Haroon, the then federal interior minister and with whom Fazlur Rahman Khan was working, urged him to write under an assumed name and if nothing else he could use his initials as his byline.

Thus it was that Dawn started publishing regular columns by MAH. These covered a wide area of issues in politics, history, sociology and culture that were remarkable not only for the writer's breadth of scholarship and incisive reasoning but also for the fluency of the columns' prose and style. It was only after Mahmoud Haroon's death in 2008 that he revealed in his final column the person behind the byline MAH, by way of acknowledging his debt to the departed benefactor.

Fazlur Rahman Khan belonged to a long line of public servants who did not allow their duties in areas of civil administration or dispensation of justice or even in police/military service to suppress their creative talent and found time to enrich contemporary literature.

The line may not have entirely dried up but it is perhaps necessary to remind the managers of academies and schools for training civil servants that they must encourage the budding civil servants to take an interest in the literature, languages and arts of their people.

This will help them develop into wholesome personalities and augment the country's literary and cultural capital. This should also enable them to better discharge their duties and thus promote good governance. Sensitive and cultured public servants are perhaps more essential to a just dispensation than Plato's philosopher kings.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256315>

14 ARRESTED FOR STRANGLING, BURNING GIRL

Dawn, May 6th, 2016

Rashid Javed

ABBOTTABAD: Thirteen members of a jirga who strangled a 16-year-old girl and set her body on fire in Galyat's Makol village last month were arrested and remanded in police custody for 14 days by an antiterrorism court on Thursday.

The mother of the dead girl was also arrested.

Police said the 15-member jirga had ruled on April 28 that Ambreen, daughter of Riasat, a labourer who works in Balochistan's Gadani area, should be killed for helping her friend Saima elope with her boyfriend. It also ordered torching of the vehicle in which the two girls tried to escape. The elopement took place on April 23.

The Abbottabad District Police Officer, Khurram Rasheed, said at a press conference that two members of the jirga were still at large.

He said that with the help of police officials of other areas, "we managed to find a clue from a phone call made by Mohammad Naseer, driver and owner of the vehicle".

Mohammad Naseer had lodged an FIR under Sections 302/436 and 427 with Donga Gali police station on April 29 against torching of his vehicle. After the jirga ended its six-hour meeting on April 28, the poor girl was taken from her home to an abandoned house where she was drugged, strangled to death and tied to the back seat of the vehicle. Then

the van, parked at a bus stop in the village, was doused with petrol and set on fire. Another vehicle parked nearby was damaged in the fire.

The charred body of the girl was found in the van in Donga Gali on April 29. Police moved the body to Ayub Medical Complex for autopsy.

Police found drugs and a can of petrol from the abandoned house.

The arrested accused were identified as Siraj Ali, Shabbir Ahmed, Javed Akhter, Gul Zareen, Afzal Muneer, Mohammad Naseer (driver), Pervez (head of the jirga), Umer Zaib, Saeed, Gul Zaman, son of Abdul Sattar, Gul Zaman, son of Lal Akbar, Safdar, Pervez and Shamim, mother of Ambreen.

They were first produced before media and later before the ATC judge who remanded them in police custody for 14 days for interrogation.

The DPO said as the girl's family was poor, her mother could not resist the jirga's decision because most of its members were criminals, and not elders of the area.

The President of the High Court Bar Association, Abbottabad, Qazi Mohammad Arshad, Advocate, has offered free legal help to the victim family.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256565/14-arrested-for-strangling-burning-girl>

‘WOMEN ARE NOT OBJECTS OF VIOLENCE’

The Express Tribune, May 8th, 2016

LAHORE: Three plays covering issues faced by women and minorities were showcased at the 15th Interactive Theatre Festival which opened on Saturday.

“We picked the themes for the plays in group discussions in an eight-day workshop before the festival,” said Ishtiaq Hussain, coordination manager of the festival told The Express Tribune.

He said participants of the workshop had discussed various issues which they felt were important. “The plays were developed through extensive research on the chosen themes.”

He said the cast had been chosen from the Interactive Resource Centre. “They have worked in various communities across the Punjab,” he said.

He said the actors were not professionals. “The idea is to highlight issues which they feel are important,” he said. The first play had an all-male cast.

Performers from the Mandwa Theatre Group made a comment on violence against women.

The only female presence on the stage was through a stool. Actors depicting fathers, brothers and husbands inflicted violence on the object. “It is a comment on masculinity,” Hussain said.

The performers asked questions in the interactive element of the play, discussing legislation for protection of women's rights and its implementation. They also talked about forced marriages.

The audience disagreed with the violence carried out by the men in the play. They said the best way to counter misogyny was to change social attitudes and mindsets. The second play, Kalpana, was performed by Jaag Theatre group from Bahawalnagar.

It focused on minority rights. All characters in the play had two names. There was a name which they used in public and another at home. One character introduced herself as Shakuntla in private and Shumaila in public. The play posed questions about the status of minorities in the country and stereotypes about them in textbooks.

The third play, also by Mandwa Theatre Company, told the story of Mirza Sahibah. The festival will continue on Sunday (today). It will showcase two new plays and Mirza Sahiba will be performed again.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1099157/thematic-conversation-women-are-not-objects-of-violence/>

February 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 22ⁿ TO FEBRUARY 28th 2016

NO HONOUR IN HONOUR KILLING: PM

Dawn, February 23rd, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that killing in the name of honour is a despicable act, adding that his government's priorities included eliminating violence against women by empowering them.

Speaking at the launch of a documentary by Oscar award-winning filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy on Monday, he expressed the resolve to 'build a progressive Pakistan by giving an equal and respectable status to women'.

Ms Chinoy's latest documentary, 'A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness', which has been nominated for the 88th Academy Awards, was screened at the PM office to highlight the issue of so-called 'honour killing'.

Mr Sharif said the launching ceremony was a manifestation of the government's resolve to address the issue of honour killing, 'which has nothing to do with religion'.

He recited a saying of Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) that 'the most honourable man is the one who shows respect towards women'.

"There is no honour in honour killing," he said, adding that he was proud that a 'daughter of Pakistan' through the art of filmmaking was contributing to the betterment of society by working on challenging themes. He praised Ms Chinoy for her remarkable work and wished her success in the Academy Awards to be distributed later this month.

Talking to journalists after watching the film, the prime minister said the society's mindset about honour killings must be changed. The issue needs to be highlighted at different platforms to create awareness among the masses.

Mr Sharif said he was keen to provide women a level-playing field in accordance with the vision of the Quaid-i-Azam for the development and prosperity of country.

Ms Chinoy said women were the greatest asset of the country with their diverse potential ranging from scaling highest peaks of the world to proving their mettle in sports, or working strong as parliamentarians, lawyers and scientists.

Despite all these strides, she deplored, women were being subjected to honour killing and acid attacks. She called for collective efforts to pave the way for strong legislation against honour killing, which she termed as "premeditated murder".

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1241354>

HOW SOCIETY PAYS WHEN WOMEN'S WORK IS UNPAID

International New York Times, Feb. 22, 2016

Claire Cain Miller

In countries around the world, the ways in which men and women spend their time are unbalanced. Men spend more time working for money. Women do the bulk of the unpaid work — cooking, cleaning and child care.

This unpaid work is essential for households and societies to function. But it is also valued less than paid work, and when it is women's responsibility, it prevents them from doing other things.

“This is one of those root inequalities that exist all over in society and we just don't talk about it very much,” Melinda Gates, co-founder of the Gates Foundation, said in an interview. She said she was inspired by her own observations when traveling to other countries as well as by time-use data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. “If we don't bring it forward, we basically won't unlock the potential of women.”

Ms. Gates and her husband, Bill Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft, released their annual letter Monday night in which they outlined priorities for the year, and hers was “time poverty” because of unpaid work. Over all, richer countries like the United States tend to have a smaller time gap for unpaid work than poorer countries like Mexico. Japan, which has one of the largest gaps, has recently started a host of initiatives to try to increase the number of women who work for pay instead of doing full-time child care, because leaders said it was essential to economic growth.

Worldwide, women spend an average of 4.5 hours a day on unpaid work, including grocery shopping, child care and laundry. That is more than double the amount of time men spend, according to O.E.C.D. data. Men spend significantly more time on paid work and also on leisure activities, which include playing sports, watching TV and hanging out with friends.

Relative to women, men spend the most time doing chores in the Scandinavian countries, and the least time in India, Mexico, Turkey and Japan. In Norway, for instance, women spend just over 3.5 hours a day on unpaid work and men spend three hours. In India, women spend six hours and men spend less than an hour. When not making a comparison with women, South Korean men come out last at 0.7 hours.

In the United States, women spend about four hours a day on unpaid work, compared with about 2.5 hours for men. The difference starts early: American girls ages 10 to 17 spend two more hours than boys on chores each week, and boys are 15 percent more likely to be paid for doing chores, according to a University of Michigan study.

When the time women spend on unpaid work shrinks to three hours a day from five hours, their labor force participation increases 10 percent, according to the O.E.C.D. When women are not able to go to school, their children are less healthy and more likely to stay in poverty. Women could do more paid work and get more education if men did more unpaid work, or if both did fewer chores.

“We need to call work what it is — work — whether you do it at home or whether you do it out in the labor force, and then give men and women options to choose what they want to do,” Ms. Gates said.

There are several ways to close the time gap. Diane Elson, a sociologist and economist at the University of Essex in Britain and an adviser on women's issues and development to the United Nations, has written that unpaid work must be recognized, reduced and redistributed.

Technology plays a key role in reducing the time chores take: Think about the time American women spent washing clothes and cooking before the invention of modern appliances.

Redistributing more unpaid work to men can happen through policies, like paid family leave. Women are more likely to return to work after having a baby when they have paid leave, and men who take paternity leave spend more time on child care later.

Ms. Gates said the foundation planned to increase its support for ways to reduce the gap in unpaid work, such as providing contraceptives and cellphones for women, which could help women in developing countries. Cellphones allow women to more quickly access information like a clinic's vaccine supply or the price of a crop at the market.

Cultural change is also important, Ms. Gates said.

She recalled being unhappy about the long commute to her oldest daughter's preschool. Mr. Gates, then chief executive of Microsoft, said he would drive their daughter two days a week.

"Moms started going home and saying to their husbands, 'If Bill Gates can drive his daughter, you better darn well drive our daughter or son,' " Ms. Gates said. "If you're going to get behavior change, you have to role-model it publicly."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/upshot/how-society-pays-when-womens-work-is-unpaid.html>

WOMEN PROTECTION LAW WINS ACCLAIM

Dawn, February 26th, 2016

XARI JALIL

LAHORE: People from all walks of life have welcomed the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Bill passage in the Punjab Assembly, with some of them criticising the MPAs "who objected to certain clauses".

The Bill was passed on Wednesday after remaining pending since May 2015.

One PPP MPA who sat through the assembly session was Faiza Malik, who herself had moved a Domestic Violence Bill in 2012, which differed in the sense that it aimed to protect all vulnerable persons living under the same roof. These included domestic help, children and elderly persons. However, these are not included in the current bill.

Ms Malik fully supported the bill that came through the Social Welfare Department.

"The Bill is originally drafted by Salman Sufi who launched a 'Violence against Women Centre' (VAWC) in Multan, where the idea is to have protection and rehabilitation of the women survivors or victims under one roof, including medical counseling and checkups, police procedures and also basic legal documentation," she said.

She said "the men in the assembly, especially from the PTI, were the most to cause an issue." "They were of the view that the bill would cause domestic and family problems, and would interfere with personal issues. They also said divorce rates would go up. It is unbelievable the kind of attitude we have among lawmakers. One male MPA even said to me that religion allows women to be beaten up and that she has no right to let the news out of the house."

When asked why other PPP MPAs did not appear, she said most lived out of Lahore and were usually absent, and said many other party members were also not present. From the PPP she and Mian Khurram Jahangir Wattoo were the only ones present. She specified that the members were not told beforehand about the bill, and that was one reason why they were not present.

"The PTI members did not even want to discuss the bill and state their reservations," she said referring to her own discussions with some of them.

Human rights lawyer Ali Imran, who was present in the assembly's Speaker Box on Wednesday, said that in particular one of the reservations that caused an issue was the clause that said a court could order a GPS tracker to be installed to monitor movement of the defendant, in case he was accused of an act of grave violence or was deemed likely to be committed.

“Some of the male MPAs found this very derogatory,” he said. “In fact, even the ruling

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monitor movement of the defendant, in case he was accused of an act of grave violence or was deemed likely to be committed.

“Some of the male MPAs found this very derogatory,” he said. “In fact, even the ruling party had trouble finding support. There was an issue of quorum in the assembly as members were very few.”

He said there was dissent over another clause according to which in order to protect “life, dignity and reputation of the aggrieved, a woman protection officer (WPO) may direct the defendant to move out of the house for 48 hours.

Aurat Foundation Resident Director Mumtaz Mughal said the bill had originally come into the assembly in April and was approved by the cabinet in May and in the same month returned to the assembly, but since then it had taken a very long time to be passed. She said the bill had originally been an executive order but now was a legal order and this protected its status.

“We had worked on a bill in 2008 at the National Assembly level, but after the devolution took place a new bill for Punjab had to be introduced,” she said.

“Sindh and Balochistan assemblies had passed similar bills but did not have a good implementation mechanism, so we learnt from that and though the definition of domestic violence was not included, there are various forms of violence that the bill aims to protect against.”

PTI MPA Shunila Ruth says that while they did not embrace the bill, they did not oppose it either. “I do admit the running thought of most men in the assembly is that they feel they are being plotted against,” she admitted.

SP Nabila Ghanzanfar endorsed not just the bill but also the VAWCs that it supports. “We have launched women-friendly front desks in about 10 police stations, but the complaint will still be handled later by investigation wings that have the same chauvinistic attitude,” she says.

“But this makes life very easy for a woman complainant and eventually more women will become aware of their rights.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1242010>

‘WOMEN PRISONERS IN HARIPUR VULNERABLE TO ASSAULT’

Dawn, February 27th, 2016

IFTIKHAR A. KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Women prisoners housed in Haripur Central Jail are residing near the male prison, making them vulnerable to sexual violence in case of jail riots.

The male prison also houses hardcore criminals and even Taliban militants; there are over 1,700 male prisoners, and 31 female prisoners.

Compiled by members of the federal ombudsman advisory committee, which visited the prison in July 2015, the detailed report on prisoners – with special focus on women and children – claims that prisons in close vicinity of hardcore criminals should be separated.

The report cites complaints by women prisoners, who say they are not allowed to use cots. This could potentially risk their lives, due to the presence of snakes and scorpions. The report calls for the provision of humane bedding for all inmates.

It also calls for limited use of restraints on pregnant prisoners, and the provision of routine reproductive healthcare. The report also recommends that women prisoners be allowed to retain custody of their newborns while incarcerated.

The report states that most women prisoners had been awarded long-term sentences, which was why it was imperative that plans for normal education and skill development be introduced. The report said this would allow for constructive use of their time, and said that demoralised prisoners can undergo psychological pressures.

A vocational school for women prisoners was established at the jail in 2001, but was closed down around three years ago. Presently there are no arrangements in place to provide the prisoners with vocational training.

The report also said that some juvenile prisoners had no contact with their families and were in prison due to non-prosecution. Most of the prisoners said they had been implicated in false cases. The report stated that most young prisoners were keen to continue their education.

During their interaction with senior jail officials, members of the committee found most of them dissatisfied with their service structure because they had been at the same prison for the last two decades. Most did not expect to be promoted before their retirement.

The report recommended that the government take note of the conditions facing jail officials, and offer promotions and a higher rate of pay. It also suggested bonuses and incentives for extra duty hours. The committee also found jail officials' and employees' accommodation in bad shape and lacking in steady maintenance.

The report added that inmates are not dressed in the prison uniform, which makes it difficult to distinguish them from visitors and makes the premises vulnerable to a security breach.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1242243/women-prisoners-in-haripur-vulnerable-to-assault>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 15th TO FEBRUARY 21st 2016

LABOUR, LOVE AND WOMEN

Dawn, February 17th, 2016

RAFIA ZAKARIA

SEVERAL times a day, in almost all Pakistan's larger cities, planes fill up with passengers, doors close and the flight is ready to take off. Flight attendants, many of them women, begin their circuit up and down the aisle, serving drinks or snacks to the passengers, ensuring that they are comfortable.

As in most other parts of the world, the job of the flight attendant is one usually occupied by women, and there is a reason for that: the experience (at least theoretically and possibly not at all on some Pakistani airlines) is that the flight attendant is there to take care of you on your journey. In this sense, her job is not simply physical but also emotional. Most jobs that hire women, from teaching to nursing, tend to possess this particular component.

The problems it produced were recently pointed out by author Adia Wingfield in an article entitled How 'Service with a Smile' Takes a Toll on Working Women. While dealing mostly with Western contexts, Wingfield pointed out that the emotional expectation of how women must conduct themselves within the context of service industry workplaces is not tabulated when considering the effort involved in doing these jobs. The concept of 'emotional labour', the project of making customers or passengers or students feel cared for, something that goes beyond the job as it appears, is not usually considered at all when pay scales for this sort of work are considered.

The thorniness of the issue is further revealed when one considers the fact that men doing the same jobs are not held to the same standards of expressing care or emotional connection. A male secretary in this sense is not expected to manage the personal aspects of his boss's life, ensure not simply that the administrative tasks that are part of his job are done, but that the boss feels like things are taken care of.

The kicker for women lies in the fact that these expectations do not cease when they start making inroads into male-dominated professions. A female boss is again expected and evaluated by her staff not simply on the way she manages and executes but also based on whether and how much caring she expresses for her employees.

Female bosses who fail to do so are routinely judged harshly by male and female employees, labelled harsh, abrasive and patently unlikeable. Male bosses, of course, face no such burden of establishing likeability, of tempering the fact

of their authority with apologetic niceties that say to everyone: 'I am so sorry for being your boss and a female; let me go out of my way to prove that I am caring and nice.'

Detachment, then, is something unavailable to women. If not fitting into these general scenarios, others amass in which women in the workplace must function as confidantes, agony aunts, and emotional anchors for a wide variety of people within the professional environment. Their refusal to fit into these roles, the ones that most societies are insistent on saddling them with, has the consequence of making them even less welcome in the workplace.

To make it even more of a loser's game, these tasks of emotional management (and the fact that they routinely bleed into texts and phone calls and other infringements on personal time beyond the workplace) are to be handed out for free.

Never recognising that emotional labour is labour, and that women are required to do it, works well for men. What cannot be described must not exist, even if it is a real and often weighty task for those undertaking it.

Women must care, and care for free, and it's not simply the workplace that makes such demands. Whether or not women work outside the home, they are also supposed to manage and attend to the emotional needs of everyone at home.

The unmarried son who returns home from work can shut himself up in his room and chill; the daughter or daughter-in-law has accrued no such licence. There are people to be interacted with, niceties to be exchanged, a plethora of emotional complexities navigated.

More often than not, the relationships that are managed are not their own, providing any real support or enrichment to the women themselves, but rather the accrued demands of others.

To neglect them is to say that the working world has claimed the essential feminine tenderness that is required to be loved at home; that the demand of this intimate realm are now judged as secondary by the cold and careerist woman who does not make herself available to attend to the emotional needs of others.

The emotional landscape of a society is crucial to its wellbeing. As women enter workplaces, the extra responsibilities and expectations placed on them need to be considered seriously.

The terms of an equitable workplace cannot simply be tabulated based on standards and markers based on the old male model. There is unfairness in these extra intangible expectations, whose reality is felt by all women, but never discussed or attended to.

Similarly, the burdens of maintaining emotional harmony within the private sphere also requires a consideration of the labour and effort that goes into fulfilling expectations of time and caring that are the burden of women and rarely, if ever, of men.

Women, it seems, are easily and unthinkingly being saddled with providing the emotional lubrication for a changing society, where they must do it all, but conveniently be paid or lauded for only half. Gender equality requires not simply women being treated fairly in the workplace, but men taking responsibility for their equivalent shares of emotional work, all the management of tempers and feelings and frustrations that they conveniently expect women to do.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1240027>

RURAL women work 16 hours a day and are heavily burdened by their double roles as paid or unpaid workers and family care providers. About 70pc rural female labour force is engaged in farm production and related jobs.

Women are also responsible for performing household activities, looking after their family members, preparing food for them three times a day and fetching drinking water and fuel for cooking.

They are the least empowered segment of society and do not have professional/entrepreneurial ability to do agribusiness and avail themselves of earning opportunities. Gender norms dictate the role of women and their nature of work restricting their time and mobility for schooling, training and for economic activities that could empower them.

Rural females, with limited access to productive assets, are socially, physically, economically, politically and educationally deprived and need to be empowered in their own environment and within the ambit of local customs.

For sound and sustainable economic activities, “Agriculture and Livestock Rural Female Entrepreneurship” is, for now, the best option. As rural females are deeply involved in agriculture and livestock activities, they just need to shift from their paid and unpaid labour to entrepreneurship. For achieving this objective their professional/entrepreneurial capacity building becomes essential.

The writers of this article conducted a research study in eight districts of Sindh to assess the status and potential of rural females and tested best options for their empowerment. The study found that females of 89pc of rural households were involved in agriculture and livestock activities but no regular entrepreneurship extension services were available for them.

Over 86pc female respondents say they need entrepreneurship extension services for their capacity-building, value-addition and marketing of primary farm produce which can help them to start their own agri-business and earn direct income.

On the basis of survey results, a Female Entrepreneurship Centre (FEC) was established in village Hot Khan Laghari, District Mirpurkhas under the Australia-Pakistan Agriculture Sector Linkages Programme, Social Research Project executed by Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam and ACIAR-University of Canberra Australia.

In the FEC, separate product-based groups were formed for value-addition in mango, dairy, vegetable etc and fruit nursery for professional/entrepreneurship-based training after which they started sale of their products, and market linkages were also developed with the help of Social Research Project.

Along with that a Female Agriculture and Livestock Entrepreneurship Services (FALEES) Model was also developed and tested. Two females, who were actively participating in the FEC and Social Research Project, were trained and mobilised for providing extension services to other womwn. They visited their own village households and neighbouring villages and conducted entrepreneur extension service sessions. This helped village females to initiate their own entrepreneurships.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1238150>

CERVICAL CANCER: YOUNG GIRLS ARE NOW MORE AT RISK THAN BEFORE

Business Recorder, February 10, 2016

MUHAMMAD SALEEM

Expressing concern over cases of cervical cancer in the country, health professionals on Tuesday said Pakistan is moving from low risk level to moderate risk level making it a danger zone where the young girls are more at risk than before. Cervical Cancer Global Crisis Card (CCGCC) has ranked Pakistan 7th out of 50 countries with highest number of cervical cancer deaths. Lack of awareness regarding the disease is the dilemma in our society.

Despite social barriers government, policy makers and medical fraternity must come together to raise awareness among the public. It will encourage our women for screening and vaccination against this deadly but preventable disease, health experts said while briefing the media men in a bid to raise public awareness about cervical cancer among the people.

They maintained that Pakistan has an increasing trend of cervical cancer cases which are normally diagnosed at advanced stages when a woman is in the prime of her life, taking care of her children and family. It is very important to educate masses and persuade them to get their daughters vaccinated. Vaccination along with screening can reduce the incidence of cervical cancer by 94 percent and the screening should be continued even after vaccination, they said.

As per WHO study, in Pakistan, the incidence of cervical cancer less than 9 per 100,000 back in 2002 which has moved to 13.6 per 100,000 in 2008. We are standing in 2016 and any concerned person can sense the gravity of conditions. Lack of latest data and research is adding to the misery, they added.

Consultant Gynaecologist Dr Noreen Zafar said that the cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in women world-wide and the third leading cause of cancer deaths in women. It kills an estimated 275,000 women every year and 500,000 new cases are reported world-wide, she added.

She said, "Cervical cancer is the only cancer which is almost entirely preventable. We know what causes it, Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) and there is even a vaccination to prevent it. It is very unfortunate that everyday 20 women die of cervical cancer which can be prevented through a vaccine".

Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) Punjab President Asif Kaleem Sheikh said that every woman is at a risk. The best time to get vaccinated is before marriage, however, all females from 9 years onwards can benefit from vaccine against this cancer. Getting the vaccine as early as possible will protect them in future, he said. Dr Haroon Hamid, General Secretary PPA Punjab said that according to a study carried out by WHO, numerous tools and technologies exist to prevent cervical cancer. These interventions remain largely inaccessible to girls and women who need them the most.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/14800/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 1ST TO FEBRUARY 7TH 2016 FROM STIGMATISATION TO INACTION: PROTECTION OF WOMEN ACT 2006 BRINGS NO RELIEF TO RAPE VICTIMS

The Express Tribune, February 1st, 2016

PESHAWAR: For decades, human rights activists attacked the Hudood Ordinance 1979 for its treatment of rape victims. This ordinance was introduced by Council of Islamic Ideology but in fact, was widely criticised by Islamic scholars as well.

In 2006, an amendment (Protection of Women Act) put zina or rape clause under the Pakistan Penal Code. This meant a rape victim who had to go to court along with four eyewitnesses previously could now go to a police station and register an FIR instead. The amendment also reduced the number of eyewitnesses to two people.

However none of the changes actually helped rape victims as people had expected – not in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa at least.

Victims and families complained the police, in most cases, do not register an FIR. Even if after delays FIRs are registered, faulty investigation results in the accused being released by courts.

In K-P in particular, the police do not cooperate with rape victims and avoid registering FIRs.

In August 2015, a polio worker was raped in her house in Nowshera and even after four months of persistent pleas, the Akbarpura police station did not register her case.

In fact, the Nowshera DPO claimed the victim was trying to be another Mukhtaran Mai – a woman who was first gang-raped and then paraded naked in front of the neighbourhood.

Local journalists went one step ahead and accused the rape victim of concocting the story in a bid to seek asylum in the United States.

While it may be possible there was no rape, the police, however, are in no position to come to that conclusion. Without a thorough forensic and medical investigation, the police cannot make such claims.

The victim said after being raped, she went to the police who indulged in delaying tactics. This forced her to hold a press conference in Peshawar on December 22.

Victim blaming is not new – not in Pakistan, not in other countries in the world. “She is lying to get attention” or “She was asking for it, walking alone at night” or “She said no, but she meant yes” are statements people make to justify the horrifying act of rape.

Talking to The Express Tribune, human rights activist Uzma Mehboob said police officials often blame victims. According to Mehboob, police officials conveniently claim the crime was reported several days after the rape – when no data or evidence can be collected.

She said several seminars on the subject have been organised where forensic experts have said the passage of days does not necessarily destroy the evidence.

Even in the case of the polio worker from Nowshera, police claimed the victim had burnt her clothes.

Mehboob also said the treatment of rape was inappropriate by not just the police but the entire society.

“Rape victims are often advised to not publicise their plight as it would stigmatise them and bring ill-repute to the family,” she said. “Even the police place the onus of responsibility on the victim and ask incorrect questions like, ‘Why were you outside in the first place?’” Mehboob added.

Talking to The Express Tribune, DSP Shahzadi, who worked as the SHO of the women police station in Hazara for 12 years, said rape cases could be handled better if policewomen deal with them.

“The number of policewomen in K-P is very limited but it will really help victims if policewomen register these cases,” she said. “In every police station, policewomen should deal with violence against women.”

Shahzadi added in Hazara, rape was the most common crime faced by women while in Peshawar, murder and violence were more common.

Woman rights activist Rukhsanda Naz also advocated for women police to deal with cases concerning violence against women as they are in a better position to understand their problems. “In this regard, desks with policewomen can be established in all police stations,” she added.

A five-year-old girl was raped and left in a semi-conscious state, bleeding, in a deserted plot in Wazir Bagh near Yakatoot police station Saturday evening. She was rushed into emergency surgery which she survived, however, few details have been released yet.

A 35-year-old man, a resident of Bajaur Agency, has been arrested on suspicion.

Talking to The Express Tribune, police said the five-year-old girl went out of her house Saturday afternoon and did not return for several hours.

She was kidnapped, raped and found by her family members in a deserted plot later, not completely aware of her surroundings and badly hurt. She was rushed to Lady Reading Hospital (LRH). According to an official at the facility, she is still admitted there after undergoing an emergency operation at the gynaecology ward.

“The girl had been raped; her family members found her sitting in a deserted plot, unable to talk or even stand,” said an official of Yakatoot police station, requesting anonymity. He added, “She was bleeding and taken to LRH and we were immediately informed.”

He said since evidence suggests she was raped, an FIR under Section 376 of the Pakistan Penal Code against the culprit has been registered.

The father of the girl, a resident of Esa Khel, Mohmand Agency who has been living in the city for the past 15 years, is a daily wage earner.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1037760/from-stigmatisation-to-inaction-protection-of-women-act-2006-brings-no-relief-to-rape-victims/>

March 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 28th TO APRIL 3rd 2016

WOMEN — INDISPENSABLE TO A SUCCESSFUL ECONOMY

The Express Tribune, March 28th, 2016.

Waqas Younus

With 3.38 billion women in the world, educated women are an important part of a prosperous society. If the women in a family have well-paid jobs, then the family’s income increases, thus lessening the burden on men. An increased income for the family means that the family contributes more to the nation’s output. Therefore, if women are more involved in the workforce, the nation will benefit.

Do we really need more working women? Reports by the McKinsey Global Institute suggest that gender-balanced teams yield better financial results. Do we really need more women in top management positions?

An article in the Harvard Business Review (HBR) shows that women are often better at parsing and evaluating information. The article also cites a study of 600 corporate boards in its conclusion that women are more likely to consider exploring all options, the rights of others, and to prefer a consensus-based decision-making process to achieve fair solutions.

Having women in executive positions is beneficial to companies as well. A 2014 study by Credit Suisse reported that companies with more women on their board or in top management positions saw stronger returns on equity, higher valuation and higher pay-out ratios.

A study by Thomson Reuters, involving 1,843 international organisations, concluded that companies with mixed-gender boards have better returns and fewer tracking errors. Despite all these advantages, women are underrepresented in decision-making and top management positions. With the exception of only a few countries, men outnumber women in management positions.

In developing countries, the number of women in management positions is deplorably low. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), only 0.07 per cent of women in Pakistan are managers and very few companies have women on their boards or in top positions.

Furthermore, the equitable treatment of women in the workforce demonstrates that society and government are both working towards solving issues that women face today. The way women are presently treated at work is unacceptable.

Women often face discrimination in a multitude of ways, during hiring, pay, education, social support and protection, in working conditions, corporate growth and through harassment.

We recently celebrated International Women's day, which was created to show respect for the many economic, social, and political successes women have achieved, but given the current working conditions for women both globally and in our country, we have a long way to go toward building a safe corporate environment in which women can play a greater role.

According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report, global female labour participation, or the number of females employed or actively looking for work, has fallen from 52.4 per cent to 49.6 per cent. According to the PBS, total female labour participation in our country is 22.17 per cent.

This is lamentable in comparison to countries like the UK or the US, where the female labour participation is over 50 per cent. In some Pakistani provinces the situation is even more dire. Women's participation rates in Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh are 5.40 per cent, 9.76 per cent, and 9.90 per cent, respectively.

The state of women's education in Pakistan is even bleaker. The nation's female illiteracy rate is 61.83 per cent and is even higher in rural Pakistan, at 70.85 per cent. In rural Sindh, it is 79.81 per cent and in rural Balochistan 80.31 per cent.

The neglect of female education has repercussions for our economy, as most employed women work in the low-income agricultural sector. In high-income countries, women are mostly employed in the health, education, and engineering sectors.

An analysis of 142 countries by the ILO shows that women are over represented in clerical, service, and sales positions. We need to focus on educating women so they can shift from the low-income agricultural sector to high-income sectors like services, industry, and engineering. This will increase the nation's overall income.

Additionally, women are usually paid less in the workforce. According to the ILO report, women only earn approximately 77 per cent of what men do. Studies have shown that this occurs because of discrimination as women's work is frequently undervalued due to perceptions that she would eventually give priority to her family and other factors. At the same time, the ILO found that women work longer hours per day, both in developed and developing economies.

When women are expected to attend to their households, they are forced to curb their working hours, which not only reduces their income but also negatively affects the economy. Even after retirement, working women suffer. Globally, women represent 65 per cent of the people above retirement age without pension. This means that roughly 200 million women are living without any income.

Though almost all countries provide some form of maternity protection for employees, nearly 60 per cent of the female workforce, which comes out to about 750 million women worldwide, do not benefit from this right. The ILO

report attributes this to regulations, lack of awareness of rights, discriminatory practices, informality and social exclusion. This lack of protection results in a smaller female labour force.

Though corporations claim to promote equal opportunity for all, a study reported that in a few countries, pregnant women are regularly dismissed even when this is unlawful. The same study pointed out that managers often fire women because of their cultural belief that women should put their families first.

Working women also face social pressures and often have to sacrifice quality time with their children. The lack of social support, a flexible working environment, and quality day-care, both in the public and private sectors, exacerbates this issue. Some managers are even hesitant to hire women because they think the company will have to bear more long-term costs due to women's family obligations.

Article 37 of our constitution requires the state to eradicate illiteracy and provide free secondary education to all; moreover, it states that the state should "make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment".

Further, it mandates that the state should "enable the people of different areas, through education, training, agricultural and industrial development and other methods, to participate fully in all forms of national activities, including employment in the service of Pakistan."

Article 26 emphasises that the state shall provide free education to all children, and Article 27 highlights that no citizen should be discriminated against for a job on the basis of race, religion, caste, sex, residence, or place of birth.

Working women in our country face more challenges than working women in developed countries. We need to provide equal health, education and work-related opportunities to all women so their participation in our labour force increases and our economy prospers with theirs.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1073907/women-indispensable-to-a-successful-economy/>

THREE SHOT DEAD IN THE 'NAME OF HONOUR'

Dawn, March 31st, 2016

DERA MURAD JAMALI: Two women and a man were shot dead in what police claimed to be cases of honour killing on Wednesday. The murders were carried out in two unrelated incidents in Nasirabad and Kachhi districts of Balochistan.

In the first incident, the suspect, Abdul Rasheed, shot dead his wife, Shehnaz Bibi, near Uch area of Dera Murad Jamali in Nasirabad district. "She sustained multiple bullet injuries and died on the spot," a police officer said, adding that the suspect fled from the scene after the incident.

"It is a case of honour killing," the police officer said, adding that the body was later handed over to the heirs for burial.

In a separate incident that took place in Mashkaf area of Kachhi district, a man opened fire with an AK-47 rifle on his daughter and her alleged paramour, killing them on the spot.

The suspect, identified as Shahjahan, fled from the scene after killing his daughter, Haleema Bibi, and her alleged paramour, Mohammad Nawaz Bangulzai.

Police moved the bodies to the hospital and later handed them over to the heirs after autopsy. No arrest was reported in either case.

SENATE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OPPOSES PUNJAB'S WOMEN PROTECTION LAW

Dawn, April 2nd, 2016

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: Deputy Chairman of Senate Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Hyderi on Friday opposed the Punjab's women protection law, saying that it would make women insecure and increase the ratio of divorce in the country.

He was speaking at a meet-the-press programme at the press club here.

He said Islam protected rights of women and called for a respectful status for them in society. But the Punjab's law could create problems for women, he added.

Maulana Hyderi, who belongs to Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, was of the opinion that those who were trying to make Pakistan a secular state were in fact negating what he called the ideology of Pakistan's constitution. Pakistan was created in the name of Islam and majority of its population was in favour of making it an Islamic welfare state, he added

He said the constitution had clauses which were in line with Quran and Sunnah and provided guidelines for making laws according to the teachings of Islam. But those who were in favour of secularism and wanted to introduce western values in the country highlighted only those provisions of the constitution which supported their points of views, he said, adding that such elements used different excuses to block legislations which could pave the way for Islamic system in the country.

Stressing the need for implementing the recommendations of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), the Senate deputy chairman said that the CII was a constitutional body which could play a very important role in improving laws of the country. He regretted that the CII had been rendered ineffective and its recommendations were not given due consideration.

Maulana Hyderi claimed that Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah wanted to make Pakistan an Islamic democratic welfare state, adding that those who wanted the country a secular state were misguided people.

He said attributing terrorism to Islam was quite unjustified. Islam was a religion of peace and did not allow terrorism, he added.

He condemned raids on madressahs, saying that whenever there was a bomb explosion or attack in the country religious seminaries were raided and their students were arrested. It was a wrong trend because madressahs were not involved in acts of violence, he added.

Maulana Hyderi said the Zarb-i-Azb military operation had achieved some successes. But, in the same breath he added that military operations could only suppress terrorism, and they could not eliminate it. For eliminating terrorism from the country, he said, there was a need to ensure implementation of the constitution and to reframe the country's foreign policy.

About the arrest of an alleged RAW agent in Balochistan, he said that there were reports about the presence of other foreign spy agencies' agents in the country who were involved in acts of violence.

He said conducting population census was a constitutional requirement and very necessary for making right policies for the country.

He condemned attacks on journalists and press clubs during recent protests by religious parties. He said miscreants often took advantage of such situations.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249525/senate-deputy-chairman-opposes-punjabs-women-protection-law>

RELIGIOUS PARTIES PLAN TO TABLE 'WOMEN BILL' IN NA, SENATE

Dawn, April 3rd, 2016

Zulqernain Tahir

LAHORE: Religious parties have decided to propose a new women protection bill in the National Assembly and Senate in place of the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2015.

A 24-member steering committee, headed by Jamaat-i-Islami leader Liaquat Baloch, has authored the bill.

“The new bill proposes protection and empowerment of women of Pakistan in light of Islam, doing away with the Punjab government’s women protection law which is un-Islamic,” a Jamaat-i-Islami leader told Dawn after the Nizam-i-Mustafa Conference attended by 35 religious parties at Mansoorah here on Saturday.

He said the steering committee had thoroughly examined the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2015, and reached the conclusion that no amendment was required (to this law). “The government has only one option — repeal this law and pass the one proposed by the steering committee (of the religious parties) which will completely be based on Islamic tenets,” he said.

The conference declared that there would be no compromise on the Punjab’s women protection law and vowed to continue struggle for enforcement of the Nizam-i-Mustafa in the country.

According to a joint declaration adopted in the conference, the Punjab women protection law is an “attack on the Muslim family system”.

“This moot condemns maltreatment of women, but the government cannot be permitted to disturb unity of the (Muslim) family system through the new law passed by the Punjab Assembly,” it said.

According to the declaration, the Punjab women protection law had been “totally rejected” by women across the board and Ulema of all schools of thought. “The Council of Islamic Ideology has also termed it against Shariah. Under the constitution, any law violating Shariah has no legal status.”

Last month, religious parties had warned the government to withdraw the women protection act or face 1977-like movement. The government, however, paid no attention to the warning and asked them to propose amendments.

Then the clerics decided to form a steering committee to come out with a new draft law. “If the government creates hurdles in the passage of our bill we will certainly be on the roads,” the JI leader said.

The declaration reiterated the stance of all clerics of all schools of thought on blasphemy laws. “Any amendment to the blasphemy laws is unacceptable. Execution of Mumtaz Qadri is a judicial murder.”

The conference demanded release of those arrested in Islamabad (in connection with a protest against the execution of Qadri) and withdrawal of cases against them.

The declaration denounced efforts of a section of the media to ridicule Islamic rites, causing provocation and promoting Indian culture, besides obscenity and nudity, and stressed that this tendency must be checked effectively.

It condemned the recent suicide bombing in Lahore, besides all forms of terrorism and extremism, and observed that these were aimed at weakening the country's ideology, solidarity and economy.

It said Indian intelligence agency's terrorist network was aimed at weakening Pakistan and demanded that RAW agents or spies taken into custody must be handed down exemplary punishment under the law.

The declaration condemned the government's propaganda against seminaries and linking them with terrorism.

It criticised efforts aimed at pushing the Kashmir issue on back burner and the government's silence over victimisation of the pro-Pakistan people in Bangladesh.

Jamaat-i-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq, chief of his own faction of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Jamaatud Dawa chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, JUI-S head Maulana Samiul Haq, Dr Abul Khair Zubair, Prof Sajid Meer, Hafiz Aakif Saeed, Allama Sajid Naqvi, Pir Ejaz Hashmi, Pir Abdur Rahim Naqshbandi and Pir Haroon Gilani were prominent among those who attended the conference.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249672/religious-parties-plan-to-table-women-bill-in-na-senate>

JIRGA OFFERS TO PAY DEBT OF RAPE VICTIM'S FATHER

The Express Tribune, April 3rd, 2016.

Sarfaraz Memon

SUKKUR / UMERKOT / HYDERABAD: Members of a Jirga in Sindh's Umerkot district tried to settle a rape case last week by offering to waive off the debt run up by the victim's father and doling out 30 kilograms of wheat.

While the police and the alleged organisers of the Jirga denied that the meeting ever took place, members of the affected family said they would not accept any such settlement.

"We don't accept the decision of any Jirga," said Suleman Shaikh, father of 14-year-old R* who was allegedly subjected to rape on March 20 at Saindad Mangrio village in the Ghulam Nabi Shah area of Umerkot.

"They abducted my daughter from my house, raped her and threw her close to our village in the late hours," said Shaikh, a peasant.

According to some local journalists, Hassan Rajar, an influential personality associated with the PPP, and another member of the Rajar community chaired the Jirga. During the Jirga proceedings Rs130,000 owed by the victim's father were offered to be waived in return for the withdrawal of the case.

Police and concerned members of the Rajar community have denied holding any such gathering while R*'s family is also reluctant to divulge any details. However, activists of local NGOs on Saturday held a demonstration outside Umerkot Press Club, demanding action against organisers of the Jirga.

Ghulam Nabi Shah police station SHO Arif Bhatti denied having any information about the Jirga and said the suspect, Mushtaq Mangrio, was arrested soon after the incident and he was presented before the district and sessions court which sent him to jail on judicial remand.

"We have arrested the suspect and lodged an FIR on the family's complaint. The charge sheet has also been submitted in the court today," he said. The SSP Umerkot Rukhsar Khawar also said the medical test of both the victim and suspect had been done and a report was being awaited.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1077880/unusual-settlement-jirga-offers-to-pay-debt-of-rape-victims-father/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 21st TO MARCH 27th 2016

WOMEN PROTECTION LAW: SANA TRIES TO 'SOFTEN' CLERICS

Dawn, March 23rd, 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab government has begun reaching out to clerics to allay their "reservations" about the recently enacted women protection law.

Provincial Law Minister Rana Sanaullah has written a letter to those Ulema and religious leaders, particularly those venting their anger on the enactment, seeking their suggestions in black and white for improving the law as "no human effort in any field may be taken as the final word and there's always room for reform and amendment".

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif will also personally contact the clerics in this regard, Sana told reporters here on Tuesday.

The move, many observers believe, is aimed at placating the religious circles ahead of chehlum of Mumtaz Qadri, a police guard executed last month for killing Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer, as religious parties have announced a "1977-like movement" against the pro-women legislation.

The minister says that by doing so the clerics are playing with the (religious) emotions of the masses.

"It's a dangerous thing and also objectionable for they (clerics) are presenting their personal opinion (on the law) as Islam's and thus exploiting the religion," Mr Sanaullah said.

The clerics had democratic right to express their opinion on the law but by terming it against the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah they're tagging the Punjab Assembly (that passed the law) as (a house of) infidels, he added. Referring to sensitivity of such issues, he recalled that enraged by the publication of blasphemous caricatures elsewhere in the world the people had turned violent and damaged public and private properties in the country.

Replying to a question, the minister said the clerics' likely suggestions would be sent to a committee before being introduced in the assembly to amend the law, if needed.

"We're ready to reform not only this but other laws as well if found against Islamic teachings but won't do so just under any pressure," he clarified.

The letter written by Sana on behalf of the Punjab government had been mailed to both the clerics opposing the law and those who are neutral or supporting it.

Answering another query, the minister admitted certain ambiguities in laws on relationships but said that training of children should also be focused upon and people should have less number of children so that they could be given better upbringing.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1247387>

FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: WOMEN'S COMPLETE INTEGRATION ESSENTIAL: DR GHAUS

Business Recorder, March 23, 2016

Managing Director, Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC), Dr Khalida Ghaus, on Tuesday said that women's complete integration into the economy was an essential component for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Addressing as a keynote speakers at the International Women Day Conference organised by Employers' Federation of Pakistan, she said that unfortunately, in many countries including Pakistan women's economic potential had not yet been fully capitalised.

“The labour force statistics reveal that a large part of the adult female population is considered out of the ambit of the definition of the labour force,” she added.

“There is a clear recognition amongst the policy makers, academicians, researchers and practitioners that women’s marginalisation can stifle poverty reduction, productivity, competitiveness, and growth, therefore the pledge for gender parity in employment has a strong economic case,” she added.

She said that out of total women population, labour force participation rate of women stands at 22 percent. “Though this rate is growing overtime and the overall gender gap in labour force participation rate is declining, it is still depressing as out of the total female population 78 percent are out of the labour force as compared to 17.6 percent in the case of males.

Even those who are included in the labour force, they largely work in agriculture and informal sectors. They are vulnerable to market conditions and do not have pensions and other old age benefits,” she added.

In addition, Dr Khalida said that the unemployment rate among females was higher than the male counterparts. This higher and persistent unemployment rate pushed them out of labour force as “discouraged workers.” Furthermore, there is extremely low share of female employment in the formal sector of the economy at only about 7 percent as compared to 18 percent for males, she added.

“There is a similar pattern of participation by females in the informal sector, both relatively low and is declining. Clearly, the transition of the female labour force, from traditional agricultural activities to the informal sector, and eventually to the formal sector in urban areas of Pakistan, is not happening,” she said.

“A body of recent theoretical and empirical literature demonstrates that without capitalising women’s economic potential and enhancing the quality and quantity of female labour force participation, rapid and sustainable economic growth is not possible,” she said.

MD SPDC said that the absence of women from the labour force or their participation in unpaid and low paid work was one of the main reasons for their lack of economic empowerment and poor status in society. While, many aspects of female labour force participation have been studied in Pakistan, there are various aspects which have not been explored. She said that labour market was not capitalising the potential of Pakistani women and they were highly disadvantaged in labour force participation.

Dr Khalida said that once these unobservable factors were eliminated from society, women labour force participation as well as overall labour force participation will increase in Pakistan.

“A prime reason of less participation of women in labour force is their less chances of being employed and higher chances of unemployment if participating in labour force activities. This discourages women to actively participate in labour market. Moreover, they have fewer chances to get into jobs in formal sector,” she mentioned.

She said that there were various theoretical approaches and conceptual frameworks that can be applied to explain this perpetual trend of gender disparity in labour market. “Theoretical approaches to gender inequalities in labour market outcomes can be broadly divided into the categories of those which focus on ‘individual choice’ and those which focus on structural constraint,” she added.

Talking about the global situation, she said that the gender parity in enrolment at lower levels had been achieved and at the tertiary levels the enrolments were in favour of women. “Improvement in life expectancy across regions has increased for women from 54 percent to 71 percent. Similarly, a rapid decline in fertility from 5 percent to 2.5 percent birth per women, however, the gap continues to persist in the area of economic opportunities,” she added.

“A look at the labour force participation for women 15 plus years globally is 50 percent compared to 70 percent for men. Women globally are half as likely as men to have full time wage jobs; whereas in paid work, women earn on an

average between 10 and 30 percent less than men; and the share of women in senior management roles globally is only 21 percent, she added.

In Pakistan case, Dr Khalida pointed out that more women than men were unemployed. The women unemployment rate in 2014-15 was nine percent compared to five percent for men. This rate is 14 percent for the young women aged 20-24, while for the male counterpart it is 7.6 percent.

With the age and experience, this start declining, however, It is alarming that after 55 years unemployment increased sharply in women and crosses 17 percent after 60 years.

She informed that unemployment rate among women having graduate or above education was highest. While, unemployment rate in both male and female increases with the level of education, it is educated women who have the highest unemployment rate. For instance, unemployment rate among women having graduate or above education is an alarming 42 percent compare to 10 percent in male for the same category.

Employed women are concentrated in less skilled and elementary occupations. Almost 90 percent of employed women in 2014-15 were working in three less skilled occupations including agricultural, forestry and fishery, craft and related trades and elementary occupations, she added.

Majority of employed women are unpaid workers contributing in family works. In 2014-15, some 55 percent of employed female were contributing in family works without any remuneration, compare to only 15 percent male, Dr Khalida mentioned.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/28349/>

WHY I CALL MYSELF A FEMINIST

The Express Tribune, March 23rd, 2016.

Amman Bari

The word feminist always garners a variety of reactions, a sad majority of them negative. One of the most common responses is, “If you’re lobbying for gender equality, why do you call it feminism?”

Many of these people, I think, just relish reducing a global movement to a question of semantics, but some are genuinely wondering. They often suggest that I call myself a “humanist” instead.

The reason I do not call myself a humanist is that humanism is a philosophy that attaches greater importance to human matters as opposed to divine matters. It is not a philosophy I feel very strongly about. I do identify as an egalitarian, because to be a feminist you must be egalitarian.

Feminism is simply a branch of egalitarianism that focuses on the promotion of gender equality. So when I say I’m a feminist, egalitarian is already implied.

There are multiple reasons we refer to this branch as feminism. Firstly, although as a feminist I want to dismantle the patriarchy for the benefit of both men and women, one of the impositions of the patriarchy on men is the pressure to conform to some ridiculous ideal of hyper-masculinity.

This stems from society’s inherent disdain for traditionally feminine values. So I call myself a feminist because it is feminine characteristics and beliefs that are shamed — and therefore, that need supporting. Secondly, the burden of feminism as a movement has always fallen, for the most part, on women.

The term was coined in the 1890s, when women first began an organised struggle for legal and social equality — a fight that continues to this day.

Feminism is a word that is deeply rooted in history. Asking for us to change it is asking us to ignore a huge part of our past. Men can and should be feminists; they can and should be more involved in a struggle for the greater good of both sexes. But historically, they have not been.

Historically, women have shaped this movement since it began. We have been involved in the struggle against oppression for a long time, and it has frequently been a violent struggle. The word feminist honours all those who braved that struggle before us, at a time when it was much riskier. Every time we use the word, we're acknowledging their sacrifice.

I'm a feminist because the people behind the suffragette movement were feminists; because bell hooks (Gloria Jean Watkins) was a feminist; because the people who drew attention to the glass ceiling effect were feminists; because what I have now, I owe to feminists.

The patriarchy is damaging to men because a system of oppression can never benefit anyone. But (white) men are not systemically targeted. This is not a matter of debate, this is a fact. So, really, it's churlish to complain that the movement is called feminism because, not to put too fine a point on it, women have needed a safe space more than men for a long time now.

Lastly, I have never understood why people object to "feminism" being used as an umbrella term when they don't balk at words like "mankind". We still often use male pronouns when the gender of the person we're discussing is unknown.

Why is feminism so difficult to accept while these are not? Language is a direct product of our beliefs and ideas, and that society is reacting so viscerally to the word "feminism", highlights its internalised misogyny. This is not something we can dismiss with an airy "what's in a name?" Shakespeare will have to forgive us, because in this case, there is something in a name.

Feminism means something in a historical, political and social context, and that we are essentially being bullied into abandoning it by people who are either ignorant of or in denial of its significance, is really a tragedy.

Every time someone says, "I support equality but I'm not a feminist", they are allowing others to invade a sphere that the predecessors of this movement sacrificed much to create. We need to claim that name — we need to say: "I'm a feminist because I'm lobbying for gender equality."

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1070740/why-i-call-myself-a-feminist/>

LEGISLATION AGAINST WORKPLACE HARASSMENT TO COVER FATA TOO

Dawn, March 25th, 2016

PESHAWAR: The government has planned to extend the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas to ensure a safe and non-discriminatory working environment for the local womenfolk.

The sources told Dawn that the Directorate of Social Welfare Fata has prepared a summary for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Iqbal Zafar Jhagra to seek the approval of President Mamnoon Hussain to extend the law to all areas of Fata. They said that would be the first pro-women law to be extended to Fata if the president signed the summary.

A relevant official said the directorate had finalised the summary and would put it up to the governor very soon to get the approval of the president.

He said extension of the act would not serve any purpose unless the government provided the required infrastructure in the tribal area to deal with the cases of harassment.

“The law will be of no use without providing the required infrastructure and facilities. The government has extended over 150 laws to Fata but majority of them are of no avail owing to non existence of infrastructure in the area,” he said.

The official said the government had extended Juvenile Justice Ordinance, 2000 in 2004, but no step had been taken so far.

He said there were no separate lockups in entire Fata for juvenile offenders.

Under the anti-harassment law, he said, the government would have to develop basic facilities and infrastructure in each tribal agency before extension of the law.

“Under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, the criminal cases are referred to jirga or council of elders, but you can’t refer cases of harassment to such forums,” he said.

The governor has already approved Women Empowerment and Protection Policy in 2014, which aims at creating safe and secure environment for women in Fata in all sphere of life.

Officials said that the document which recommended several steps including Fata council for the empowerment and protection of women did not see light of the day.

Under the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, the government will appoint an ombudsman, who has been a judge of high court or is qualified to be appointed as a judge of the high court. The ombudsman may recruit such staff as required to achieve the purposes of this law and the respective governments would provided finances.

The ombudsman will conduct enquire into complaint of any employee. The complainant has the option to prefer a complaint either to the ombudsman or the Inquiry committee. The ombudsman shall within three days of receiving a complaint issue a written show cause notice to the accused.

The law says each organisation shall constitute an inquiry committee within 30 days of the enactment of this act to enquire into complaints under this act. The committee shall consist of three members of whom at least one member shall be a woman.

The officials concerned said harassment cases might take place in Fata but there existed no mechanism to report them.

“There is no system to report cases of harassment from tribal area,” said another official.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1247846/legislation-against-workplace-harassment-to-cover-fata-too>

FINDING SOLUTIONS: HIGHLIGHTING CAUSE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Express Tribune, March 26th, 2016

KARACHI: The root cause of all violence against women is their weakness, said Dr Vasay Batley while delivering a lecture on ‘Violence on Women’ at the Pakistan American Cultural Center on Friday evening.

“If women make themselves strong, it won’t happen,” he said. “When we tell our daughters to give respect, we should also teach them to earn respect.”

Batley is a doctor, who has been associated with the medical profession for 32 years and, currently, is with the United Medical and Dental College. As part of his thesis, he has conducted a survey on incidents and causes of hospital admissions sourcing from domestic violence in residential areas of Karachi.

At the start of his lecture, Dr Batley shared two cases of domestic violence that he came across. Both cases involved pupils from the medical profession, thus disregarding the notion that such cases do not happen in well-to-do, educated families.

He said that in Pakistan, violence against women is on an extreme scale. He cited dowry deaths, honour killings, eve-teasing, forced abortions, force-feeding, forced pregnancy and human trafficking as types of violence that happen in our society.

“Violence is not just physical,” said Dr Batley. “Emotional traumas, parental alienation, withholding of finances, stalking, manipulating and control are all forms of emotional violence.”

Batley said the absence of women shelters and the apathy of law enforcement agencies made matters worse in cases of domestic violence. “Help should be sought through either social pressure or legal aid,” he said. “The biggest mistake that women make is [that they do] not tell others. If it happens again, women should tell a confidante and seek help from human rights lawyers.”

<http://omnifeed.com/article/tribune.com.pk/story/1072899/finding-solutions-highlighting-cause-of-violence-against-women/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 14th TO MARCH 20th 2016

DESPITE CALLS FOR GENDER PARITY, GLASS CEILING REMAINS INTACT FOR WOMEN

The Express Tribune, March 14th, 2016.

Tehreem Husain

NORTHAMPTON: March 8 was marked as the International Women’s Day and was celebrated by paying rich tribute to the social, economic, political and cultural achievement of women all around the world.

Although women have come a long way, achieving gender parity seems like a distant goal. The World Economic Forum estimated in 2015 that the gender gap will not close entirely until 2133. Female participation in the labour market has been termed as increasingly significant for economic growth and development at both national and enterprise levels by academics and researchers.

This has also been corroborated by a recent IMF Working Paper. The paper researched into the link between gender diversity in senior corporate positions and financial performance of 2 million companies in Europe.

The authors document a positive correlation between corporate return on assets (ROA) and the share of women in senior positions. More precisely, replacing one man by a woman in senior management or on the corporate board is associated with 8–13 basis points higher ROAs.

The authors have argued that greater representation of women would bring in a heterogeneity of beliefs, attitudes and values that would aid decision making, especially in knowledge intensive and high technology sectors.

The authors have also argued that the association between gender equality and firm performance is significantly stronger in firms that employ more women in the labour force.

According to the ‘Women in Business and Management Gaining Momentum’ global report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2015, Pakistan has the lowest percentage of women in managerial positions in the world standing at a meagre 3%.

Jamaica stands as the country with the highest percentage of females in managerial positions in the world at 59.3%. Interestingly, it is not any of the advanced economies but Colombia and St. Lucia which stand after Jamaica with the proportion of women in managerial positions standing at 53.1% and 52.3%.

Gender gaps remain stark; the ILO company survey found that 30% of respondent companies had no women on boards while 65% of the companies had less than 30% women (30% is taken as the critical mass required for women's voices and views to be taken into account).

Even in the case of advanced economies the situation seems bleak. Although many women have joined the workforce in Europe over the past few decades, there are surprisingly very few women who hold positions at top corporate firms. Numbers evidence this fact: women only occupied 19% of corporate board seats and 14% of senior executive positions in the 600 largest companies in Europe. Even more striking is the fact that only 4% of the chief executive positions of these companies were held by women.

Common gender stereotypes rooted in cultural and religious norms where men and women are expected to perform different social and economic roles form obstacles for women to enter the labour force in Pakistan and other developing countries.

Traditionally, running businesses, management roles and decision making are considered the domains of men. Inadequate labour and non-discrimination laws also serve as barriers for women to rise to the top.

Although very few women in Pakistan have broken cultural barriers and entered male dominated fields, the country has produced examples of powerful professional women with the likes of well-known Pakistan Software Houses Association President Jehan Ara to the country's youngest CEO and most successful investment banker, Maheen Rehman.

Maheen's accolades are also recognised internationally as she is ranked number five on Forbe's 'Top 40 Under 40' list. Speaking to BBC, she hopes that the Pakistani financial sector would expand and more women would make it to the board room.

Nevertheless, the progress in reducing the gender gap remains "glacial". Several measures have been taken by companies worldwide to break the glass ceiling for women to rise. Some policy measures taken are offering flexible hours of working to manage home and work, giving access to skills training, and better recruitment, retention and promotion policies.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065080/despite-calls-for-gender-parity-glass-ceiling-remains-intact-for-women/>

NSF SEEKS TO EMPOWER WOMEN VIA 'DRAW FOR FEMINISM' CAMPAIGN

The Express Tribune, March 14th, 2016.

Haniya Javed

KARACHI: Women hold up half the sky – this is the message some students of Karachi want to give by painting walls in the metropolis.

Members of National Students' Federation (NSF), a leftist students' political organisation, have come up with the 'Draw for Feminism' campaign to mobilise freedom for women and introduce the female perspective to the public sphere.

The five-day campaign started on International Women's Day this year and culminated on Sunday. Around 20 young men and women took to street art and painted slogans and images against domestic violence, street harassment, identity crisis, stereotypes and rape. Employing stencils and paints, the group went about raising their voice through graffiti in Gulshan-e-Iqbal, North Nazimabad, Saddar, Tower, II Chundrigarh Road, Karachi Press Club and Numaish.

Talking about what drove them to initiate the campaign, NSF Karachi organiser Muzammal Afzal said until women of our society are not freed, the society cannot exist as a free entity. He said even religion is interpreted in such a way

that it victimises women and limits their liberation. “We are using art on public walls of the city as a medium to spread awareness,” he said.

NSF press secretary Laila Raza pointed out that female representation in the public is from very limited to nowhere. “You get to see only male perspective in public spaces while women are only but a simple existence,” she said. In order to challenge this ‘invisible’ status of women, the organisation thought of graffiti as the medium to bring women out.

With slogans such as ‘Aurat Quaid hai’ [Woman is the leader] and ‘Kya yeh aap toh nahi’ [Is it not you?] on images suggesting violence against women, the idea is to inspire people through walls.

“From the very early days, we have seen violence-inciting slogans and graffiti on walls,” said Raza, talking about her experience at Numaish in the afternoon. “The police came to us and stopped us from painting these walls, calling them private property.

The same walls have political and religious slogans, and the police and the state [do not] challenge them.” She regretted the hypocrisy that hate slogans are permitted and those of peace are not. “While we are standing here painting the walls, the passers-by are noticing us [women] more than our male fellows,” remarked Raza.

“This itself is harassment while we are painting against it.” So, how does the male perspective fit in this campaign? “We are aware that men have the privileges that women don’t in our society,” said Afzal.

“Last year, on Women’s Day, our campaign revolved around the privileges that women have. This year’s drive was an extension of it.” Talking about the lack of implementation of bills such as those pertaining to female harassment and protection, he said when we as males wouldn’t talk about an issue like this, then how can we expect the parliament to take it seriously.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1065149/nsf-seeks-to-empower-women-via-draw-for-feminism-campaign/>

MOVE TO AMEND WOMEN PROTECTION BILL: CIVIL SOCIETY REJECTS RELIGIOUS PARTIES DRIVE
Dawn, March 17th, 2016

LAHORE: The Women Action Forum (WAF) expressed shock and outrage at the way the Punjab government has allegedly succumbed to pressure from the religious lobby and put the Women Protection Bill on hold.

According to a press release issued by the WAF on Wednesday, the reaction of religious parties was not surprising.

“As a political strategy, the Jamaat-i-Islami and other parties of the religious right had always played the ‘Islam is in danger’ card to gain public visibility. What is shocking and unacceptable is the elected government’s response to this blackmail. In succumbing to this pressure not only is the elected government undermining its own legitimacy, it is also raising serious doubts about its sincerity and commitment to women’s right to life and safety,” the forum stated.

It said it wanted to remind the Punjab government that domestic violence bills had already been passed by the Sindh and Balochistan assemblies without any backlash from the religious lobby.

In its March 8 statement, the WAF had welcomed the Women Protection Bill as a step in the right direction, while stating the bill itself needed strengthening in line with similar bills passed by Sindh and Balochistan. The WAF demanded any amendments to the bill must make it more effective in providing protection to women rather than diluting its effect.

It also said as such amendments should be made in consultation with women, who across class were the most vulnerable to domestic violence and not under pressure from a lobby that had “consistently promoted its own political agendas by misusing religion to endanger women and undermine their position and status in society”.

The WAF demanded the Punjab government not only ensure the passage of the bill, but also make it more effective by criminalising violence and ensuring its commencement province-wise and not in its current piece meal form.

CIVIL SOCIETY: Rights activists have condemned voices against the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2015 demanding the government not bow down to the pressure of clerics.

The Pakistan Civil Society Forum (PCSF), a representative body of more than 50 human rights and development organisations, expressed its surprise over how the legislation for protecting women against violence was being declared “an act against Sharia despite the fact that Sharia protects the rights of the women”.

In a statement here on Wednesday, the PCSF said: “Opposing this law in fact is an act against the Constitution, which provides for equal protection to all citizens. Similarly, international commitments, which the state has made in terms of ratifying covenants require to respect all human rights. The Act is not about Sharia rather it is all about human rights. Pakistan is a democratic state and is being run under a Constitution which guarantees for the protection of everyone.”

It further stated: “The civil society organisations stand by the Punjab government and appreciate its commitment for upholding the agenda of humanity and that truly in light of every ones religion. We believe that this matter will not be taken as personal rather it should be regarded as a national matter to secure the future of the nation’s daughters and respect humanity in Pakistan.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1246183>

TIME TO TAKE A STAND

The Express Tribune, March 18th, 2016.

Now is the time for the government to show some steely resolve over the matter of the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act (PPWVA).

Now is the time to speak with absolute clarity and fortitude as to the primacy of democratically-elected institutions. And now is the time to possibly definitively confront the clerical cohort seemingly bent on usurping the role of parliamentary bodies.

The Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia (WMA) is the largest federation of Islamic seminaries and it has rejected the committee announced by the Punjab chief minister, tasked to look into the reservations of the WMA in respect of the PPWVA. In rejecting the committee, the WMA has instead called for the Punjab government to “take practical steps to immediately amend the Act”.

This flies in the face of every democratic principle in the book, and is effectively a demand that the Punjab government bows to the will of the WMA, ignore parliament and submit a revised Act for WMA scrutiny and approval.

This is an unacceptable demand. The WMA is an unelected body seeking to overturn an Act that was unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on the grounds that parts of the Act are in some yet-to-be-defined way ‘un-Islamic’.

The religious bodies have threatened to organise street protests if the Act was not withdrawn by March 27. It is not for unelected bodies to hold the gun of civil disorder to the head of government simply because they happen to have ideological and doctrinal differences with the elected legislature.

It is for the elected bodies to do the converse and assert their primacy in matters legislative. If not, why bother to have a parliament or provincial assemblies at all?

If ever there was a group overdue for legislative protection, it is the much-abused women of Pakistan. To assert that Islam already makes provision for the protection of women is undoubtedly true. Unfortunately, it is a truth revealed more in the breach than the observance.

The protection of women is a duty of the state and the PPWVA is a step in the right protective direction. Time to take a stand — and if not, open this government to the contempt of the rest of the world.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1067700/time-to-take-a-stand-2/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 7th TO MARCH 13th 2016

MILLIONS OF GIRLS BEING DENIED RIGHT TO EDUCATION, SAYS REPORT

Dawn, March 7th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Almost 16 million girls between the ages of six and 11 will never get the chance to enrol in primary school compared to about 8m boys if current trends continue, according to a new report of the Unesco Institute for Statistics (UIS).

Published in the run-up to International Women's Day on March 8, the Unesco's 'eAtlas of Gender Inequality in Education' report shows that girls are still the first to be denied the right to education despite the progress made over the past 20 years.

Gender disparities remain highest in Arab states, sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. In South and West Asia 80 per cent of out-of-school girls will never enter formal education compared to 16pc of such boys. This affects about 4m girls compared to less than 1m boys.

According to recent data, the total number of children of primary school-going age who are out of school has begun to increase, reaching 59m. Out of this number 31m are girls.

While the gender gap in the out-of-school population is considerably smaller than in the early 2000s, the UIS data show little improvement in recent years despite many campaigns and initiatives designed to break barriers that keep girls out of school.

For example, in Pakistan 2.9m adolescent girls, or 53pc of those of lower secondary school-going age, are out of school, compared to 43pc of such boys (2.6m).

This year's theme for the International Women's Day is "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality".

"We will never achieve any of the Sustainable Development Goals without overcoming the discrimination and poverty that stunt the lives of girls and women from one generation to the next," said Unesco Director-General Irina Bokova.

"We must work at all levels, from grassroots to global leaders, to put equity and inclusion at the heart of every policy so that all girls, whatever their circumstances, go to school, stay in school and become empowered citizens."

With the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals-4, governments have pledged to eliminate gender disparities and ensure that every child is in school by 2030. Yet one out of eight children between the ages of 6 and 15 is denied a basic education, and girls are the first to be excluded. More than 63m girls are out of school and data suggest that the number is rising.

The greatest progress in reducing the gender gap in School Life Expectancy (SLE) has been made in South and West Asia, where a girl starting school can expect to receive 11 years of education, compared to only six years in 1990.

However, boys continue to have the advantage, with an average SLE of 12 years. The SLE reflects the average number of years of instruction that a boy or girl starting school can expect to receive based on current enrolment rates.

Only about 28pc of the world's researchers are women. Latin American and the Caribbean states have the highest share of women researchers at 44pc. In contrast, the share falls to 23pc in Asia.

In 2013, there were more female than male graduates in three-quarters of the 133 countries with available data. Despite improved access, women face considerable barriers as they move up the ladder to research positions. Globally, women outnumber men at the level of Bachelor's degree, with men accounting for about 47pc of graduates and women accounting for 53pc in countries with available data. Women are also more likely to pursue a Master's degree, representing 54pc of graduates.

Women are more likely than men to graduate in education, humanity and arts; social sciences, business and law; and health and welfare.

In every region, women researchers remain a minority in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Women researchers also tend to work in academic and government sectors, while men dominate the private sector, which offers better salaries and opportunities.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1244053>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HAS INCREASED: REPORT

The Express Tribune, March 7th, 2016

Aroosa Shaukat

LAHORE: The first ever Gender Parity Report for the province suggests that there has been a 20 per cent increase in cases of violence against women reported every year from 2012 to 2015.

The report compiled jointly by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women and the Urban Unit is set to be launched on Monday (today). The event will also feature the launch of a cyber-based Gender Management Information System that will provide data on 300 indicators affecting the status of women in society.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Fauzia Viqar, Punjab Commission on the Status of Women chairperson, said that the report would help improve government policies in view of empirical evidence.

She said data used for the report had been collected from government sources. "The government cannot ignore the findings as these are based on its own data," she said.

The report states 5,391 cases of violence against women had been reported in the province in 2012. The number of cases reported in 2015 were 6,505. It says that in 2015, 173 women were killed in honour-based crimes.

Viqar said the number of reported cases of violence against women was relatively higher in districts with 50 per cent or lower literacy rate. Rahimyar Khan, Sargodha, Multan and Vehari were among these districts. She said the report found an overall decline in the number of convictions in cases of violence against women. There were 81 convictions in 2015, compared to 378 in 2012.

In health sector, the report notes a gradual increase in budgetary allocations over the 2012-2015 from 10 percent to 15 percent.

However, it says that the condition of public health infrastructure had deteriorated in southern districts. It notes a direct correlation between literacy rate in a district and the utilisation of healthcare facilities by women.

In education, a gender parity index (developed in the compilation of the report) recorded the ratio of literate women to literate men at 0.724.

The report notes that adult literacy in the province is at 69 per cent for men and at 50 per cent for women. It says the ratio of literate men to literate women is better in northern districts than southern districts.

The ratio is lowest in Rajanpur, Jhang, Chiniot, Khushab and Dera Ghazi Khan districts.

The report highlights that 34.5 per cent of women in the province can be considered 'regularly employed with a fixed wage' and 50 per cent 'paid by piece rate'. The corresponding statistics for men are 45.7 per cent and 25.5 per cent, respectively.

It states that 46 per cent of women in the labour force receive remuneration falling in the lowest wage bracket (up to Rs5,000). For men, the corresponding statistic is just 7.7 per cent

In governance, the number of women who contested general elections in 2013 was significantly more than those who contested in 2008. The report notes a 129 per cent and a 200 per cent increase in the number of women who contested elections (from 2008 to 2013) for the National Assembly and the provincial assembly, respectively. On the local government elections held in 2015, the report says that election of women on the reserved seats will enable a critical mass to take up leadership roles at the grassroots level.

Of the 1,830 judges in the lower judiciary, only 266 are women. The ratio is poorer in the Lahore High Court. There are only three women judges on the bench.

Lahore, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi are the three districts that have a woman police station each. There are help desks catering only to women in 660 police stations in the province.

The report says that governing bodies of statutory entities fail to reflect gender parity as representation of women on their boards of directors was only seven per cent.

It says a similar trend is visible in the membership of press clubs.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1060669/violence-against-women-has-increased-report/>

US COMMITTED TO THE ENABLEMENT OF WOMEN

The Express Tribune, March 7th, 2016.

David Hale

Pakistan's greatest resource is surely its people. Since I arrived nearly four months ago, I have had the opportunity to speak with people from various backgrounds, and from different regions of the country, economic sectors, and with varied political and social perspectives. I am constantly impressed by the level of talent and ambition I see here, especially among women. Still, women remain underrepresented in many aspects of society and we are all worse off for it.

For all of the dynamic women already using their talents to better their country and communities, many more are waiting for their opportunity. As a result, books go unwritten, scientific breakthroughs go undiscovered, and perhaps most disturbing, future leaders' voices go unheard.

For communities and countries to develop fully, the full participation of women in all aspects of society is key. That's true in the US, in Pakistan, and everywhere else in the world. When a woman or a girl is held back, her family, community, and country are held back as well from achieving their potential.

And while there is no doubt that women worldwide have made great strides toward equality over the past few decades, there is still plenty of room for growth. This year's theme for International Women's Day, "Pledge for Parity", is therefore, fitting.

Education is one of the surest paths to success and social mobility. Yet thousands of girls are still kept out of school in Pakistan. Each empty classroom seat represents untold and untapped potential.

Through scholarships, teacher trainings and other education programs, the US is dedicated to helping Pakistan increase girls' enrolment in schools and improve the quality of education they receive. Through the "Let Girls Learn" initiative, we have committed \$70 million to working with the Government of Pakistan to educate and enable more than 200,000 girls across Pakistan.

Education matters beyond the classroom as well. Women are often marginalised from political processes. We support the Gender Equity Program, which provides grants to help women register for Computerised National Identity Cards, which in turn allows them to vote. The program also addresses gender-based violence by educating women about their rights, providing support for women in shelters, and offering opportunities for access to justice. When women are allowed an education, they can reach their full potential and numerous opportunities open up for them, including economic and political opportunities.

To quote President Barak Obama, "Lifting women up, lifts up our economy and lifts up our country." Increasing women's access to economic opportunities is a way to empower not only individuals, but communities. One such example is the US-Balochistan Agriculture Project, which helps female entrepreneurs increase their income from wool production through technical training and connecting them to broader markets. Our energy sector internship program addresses both women's participation in male-dominated fields as well as the challenge of meeting Pakistan's growing energy needs.

The initiatives I've highlighted, specifically address gender inequality. However, "Pledge for Parity" resonates with me because it also suggests small but concrete steps anyone can take their lives to chip away at a problem that often seems daunting. Today, right now, we can all challenge conscious and unconscious bias.

It requires no funding or special skill to value women's and men's contributions equally. It requires that we see these contributions as deserving of respect regardless of whether or not they are done in the home or are money-making. Certainly, this is easier said than done, but nothing worthwhile is ever easy.

Any movement that demands a close look at the status quo takes patience and perseverance. Pakistani activist Khalida Brohi started her journey toward enablement at a young age, when she became the first girl in her Balochistan village to attend school. When a close friend was murdered in a so-called honour killing, the teenaged Brohi rushed to tackle the issue with passion and conviction.

Yet she has spoken frankly about why her initial tactics fell on deaf ears and even alienated the community she sought to help. Rather than feel defeated, she asked for input and collaboration and said, "What can we do together?". Ending the gender gap is a work-in-progress everywhere and a task we must take up together. And we must persevere.

The US is committed to the greater inclusion and enablement of women at home and abroad. I am proud of the work we have done and continue to do with the Government of Pakistan and with civil society organisations, to advance the role of women.

My personal 'Pledge for Parity' is a commitment to helping women and girls achieve their ambitions and engaging with male leaders to help support these efforts. Let's work together to ensure we are achieving our full potential by allowing women to achieve their's.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1060481/us-committed-to-the-enablement-of-women/>

PROVINCES MODELLING PRO-WOMEN BILLS ON 'FAILED' FEDERAL LAW

Dawn, March 8th, 2016

Sanam Zeb

ISLAMABAD: The existing and proposed provincial domestic violence laws are based on a federal bill that could not be passed, despite two separate attempts by parliament.

Khawar Mumtaz, former chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women told Dawn that the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2012 was first passed by the National Assembly in August 2009. However, because it was not tabled in the Senate within the stipulated three-month period, the bill lapsed.

Objections were raised about the bill when it was first passed in the National Assembly by members of religious parties and it was presented again in the Senate by Nilofar Bakhtiar in 2012 as a private member's bill and unanimously approved in February. When the bill was tabled in the National Assembly again, it met with further objections.

However, Ms Mumtaz maintained that the 2012 act was one of the best and the most comprehensive bills drawn up in Pakistan.

Explaining the reasons for its failure, she said, "At the time, prominent Islamic scholars had said that if the bill became law, it would have led to the break-up of families. But if a woman wants to get out of a relationship, isn't that family already broken?"

She said that despite getting positive opinions from religious scholars regarding violence against women and how it was prohibited in Islam, members of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) – which recently rejected both Punjab and KP's draft laws – did not really want to listen. "I think for them it is not about Islam, it's about power," she concluded.

However, a CII official defended the council's actions, saying they did not support domestic violence.

"Women and children are not supposed to be beaten, that is settled. We only object to certain provisions, such as kicking a man out of his own house, which is against Sharia," he said, adding that shelters for women were also an un-Islamic practice.

The imprint of the failed federal bill is clearly visible on both the Balochistan and KP laws. Both laws can be activated by women, children as well as 'vulnerable persons' of either gender, who are defined as persons who are "vulnerable due to old age, mental or physical disability or for any other reason".

The definition of domestic violence in the federal act included physical, psychological, economic, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2014 goes one step further, also including stalking in its definition of abuse.

The 2012 bill was a landmark piece of legislation, seeking to bring domestic violence into the public domain and envisioning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It recognised domestic abuse as a criminal offence and extended its provisions, including emergency relief, to all individuals in domestic relationships.

Before this, emergency relief was not available to victims. Remedies were linked to court proceedings, during which time the victim was at the mercy of their abuser. This trend is reflected in the Balochistan law, which does not provide specific penalties for different forms of domestic violence. Penalties are only specified for the breach of a protection order, issued by a court.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's draft Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2015, however, does provide for emergency relief, as well as the creation of 'protection committees', as provided for under the failed federal law.

These committees, which have also been emulated by Balochistan, were to include a medical doctor, a psychologist, a woman police officer and a protection officer, among others.

PTI KP MPA Arif Yousaf told Dawn his government had already established district resolution committees (DRC) in certain areas. These operate together with the jirga system and have powers under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

But rights activist Qamar Naseem believes that the DRCs are simply a way to get women to resolve their problems through mediation and not go to court.

Criticising the draft KP bill, Mr Naseem said that it did not take traditional values, such as joint-family households, into account. "If a woman complains about her husband and he goes to jail, who is going to support her and how is she then going to live with his family when they know their son was sent to jail because of her," he asked.

He claimed that the bill called on victims to prove "intentional abuse", saying it was unfair and would land all the women who accused men under this law, in prison for levelling false accusations.

He was not hopeful about the prospects of the legislation either. "The bill will not pass the provincial assembly, especially until the JUI-F is there," he said, adding that after opposing the domestic violence bill recently passed by Punjab, there was no hope of the PTI passing a similar bill in KP.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1244308>

RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS RELENT ON WOMEN PROTECTION LAW

Dawn, March 13th, 2016

LAHORE: Religious scholars belonging to all schools of thought on Saturday declared that the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016 was not un-Islamic but suggested steps to improve its strength as per Islamic injunctions.

They were attending a briefing on the law arranged to remove misconceptions about it. Khwaja Hassaan was in the chair and the briefing was given by Mr Salman Sufi, Senior Member SMU (Law and Order) Chief Minister's Office.

Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, Mufti Qavi and Dr Raghieb Naeemi, who were among the participants, suggested that a unit comprising religious scholars in Punjab should assist the government in improving the act. Mr Sufi assured them that the needful would be done.

Sahibzada Zahid Mahmood Qasmi, a member of the Islamic Ideology Council, said the statement of the council chairman about the act should not be considered as its (the council's) viewpoint.

The ulema agreed that Islam does not allow violence against women and some elements were opposing the law in political context. They said they supported any measure that prevented violence against women, and would give concrete suggestions to make the law more comprehensive.

Mr Sufi clarified that the condition to make husbands wear a GPS tracked ankle bracelet to monitor their movement was not applicable in cases of domestic violence. It was applicable only in cases of grave violence like attempt to rape, murder or throw acid and intimidating a victim to withdraw a case (where the court believes that the life of the victim is at risk).

Regarding the misconception that the husband will be asked to leave the house for 48 hours and this will cause further rift, Mr Sufi clarified that 48 hours was only the maximum limit and this time apart was only to serve as a "cool off" period. This period could also be of a couple of hours, depending on the recommendation of the District Women Protection Committee.

Thirdly regarding the misconception that husbands, brothers and others male family members will not be allowed to question female family members, Mr Sufi clarified that the act had no such provision. A father, husband questioning his daughter, wife didn't constitute as psychological violence.

Mr Sufi clarified that the act was not anti-men, rather the word man, father, husband or son were not even used once. Instead the bill used "aggressor" or "defendant" which included both male and female.

He also clarified that the claim that the bill will destroy marriages and make private matters public was unfounded as the mediation was the first priority in cases where grave violence had not been committed. Furthermore, the Distinct Women Protection Committee will maintain strict confidentiality.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1245357/religious-scholars-relent-on-women-protection-law>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 29th TO MARCH 6th 2016

GOVERNOR SIGNS WOMEN PROTECTION BILL INTO LAW

Business Recorder, March 01, 2016

M RAFIQUE GORAYA

On the day when Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy won her second Oscar award for her documentary "A girl in the river" (about honour killings in Pakistan) Punjab Governor Malik Rafique Rajwana Monday signed the Protection of Women Against Violence Bill, as approved by the provincial assembly to put it on statute books as a law much against the opposition of religious and orthodox political parties/circles.

The stated aim of the new law is to ensure justice to women victims and to empower them, placing them on an equal footing with the male population. The law stands out, as compared to previously passed bills, on domestic violence as it also provides civil remedies-protection, residence and or monetary order-for all the offences it covers. This is in addition to, and not contradictory to or abrogating, the existing laws on violence against women crimes.

Under the new law violence has been redefined to mean any offence committed against the human body of the aggrieved person, including abetment of an offence, domestic violence, sexual violence, psychological and emotional abuse, economic abuse, and stalking and cyber crime. The Act introduces for the first time an in-built implementation mechanism through the district Violence Against Women Centres (VAWCs), court orders (residence, protection and monetary), introduction of GPS tracked electronic bracelets-anklets to enforce protection orders and power to enter any place to rescue the women victims.

Under the new arrangements, a toll-free number (UAN) will also be introduced to receive complaints while a district protection committee will be set up to investigate women's complaints in this regard. Special Centres will also be set up for reconciliation and resolution of disputes concerning women. The Protection officers will be liable to inform the defendant whenever a complaint is received. Offering resistance to the protection officers will be punishable by up to six months imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs 500,000.

Through a residence order, the victim has a right to stay in the house if she doesn't want to vacate it or the defendant has to provide an alternative accommodation to the victim if she wants so. Further, if she is being harassed or stalked, she can claim a protection order which ordains the defendant not to communicate with her or stay at a certain distance from her. In addition, the victim can also seek monetary relief from the defendant to meet expenses occurred and losses suffered through monetary orders under this piece of legislation.

It may be added that political parties and religious seminaries have opposed the new legislation saying it was against teachings of Quran and Sunnah and would destroy family fabric of our society. Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam F (JUI-F) leader Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman criticised the members of the Punjab Assembly and said the rulers have sworn not to make any laws in accordance with the Quran and the Sunnah.

PLACE HONOUR KILLING BILL IN JOINT SITTING, RABBANI ASKS GOVT

Dawn, March 2nd, 2016

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani stalled on Tuesday a resolution seeking to pay tribute to two-time Oscar winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and directed the movers to include in it the names of those women activists who had faced police brutalities for raising their voice against honour killings.

“Besides the name of a woman who has received an award from the US, the resolution should also have a mention of those women who had faced police baton-charge on roads during their struggle which led to the introduction of a bill against honour killings in this house,” Mr Rabbani said amid desk-thumping when Leader of the House Raja Zafarul Haq and Leader of Opposition Aitzaz Ahsan sought permission from the chair to allow Nasreen Jalil of the MQM to table the resolution to pay tribute to Ms Chinoy.

Ms Chinoy won her Oscar Award in the short documentary category for her film, ‘A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness’, highlighting the issue of honour killings.

Mr Rabbani, however, did not provide the members an opportunity to table an amended resolution and abruptly adjourned the session.

Ms Jalil is now expected to table the resolution on Wednesday.

Earlier, the chairman directed Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Aftab Shaikh to ensure that the eight bills, including the one against honour killings, which had been passed by the Senate but lapsed because of the government’s failure to get them through the National Assembly within the stipulated 90-day period, were part of the agenda of a joint sitting of parliament which the government had been planning to get the laws passed.

Mr Rabbani issued the directive when PPP Senator Farhatullah Babar, while speaking on a “matter of public importance”, paid tribute to Ms Chinoy and reminded the chair that the Senate had already passed a bill against honour killings and it had now lapsed.

Quoting Ms Chinoy as saying that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, during a meeting with her, had promised to bring in legislation on honour killings, Mr Babar expressed the hope that Mr Sharif would fulfil this commitment when the government would convene a joint sitting of parliament in a few days.

Mr Rabbani regretted that he had written letters to the government asking it to take up the eight bills in the joint sitting, but so far there had been no progress in this regard.

“Please make a request that when the president summons the joint session (of parliament), the eight bills will be part of the agenda,” he said while addressing to the minister.

The Senate had last year passed the Anti-Honour Killings Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment Bill) 2014, which was moved by PPP’s Sughra Imam just days before her retirement as senator.

The Senate chairman expressed his annoyance over a letter received by the Senate Secretariat from the Cabinet Division in response to a report of the special committee on devolution and said that instead of sending a reply he had decided to put the matter before the house for a debate.

“The Cabinet Division has stated that the Senate has done unconstitutional work,” Mr Rabbani said, referring to the Cabinet Division’s correspondence in response to the committee’s recommendation regarding reconstitution of policy and administrative boards and councils.

Senate Secretary Amjad Pervaiz shared with the house details of the Cabinet Division’s response.

“It is for the information of the house that in response to recommendations of the Senate Special Committee on Devolution Process adopted by the house on Aug 7, 2015, that all policy and administrative boards, councils, bodies, etc, constituted under various acts of parliament or established by an executive order, shall be reconstituted to in order to ensure that equal representation is given to all the provinces, the Cabinet Division has furnished a reply to the Senate Secretariat to the effect that the directions given by the committee in certain areas may not consistent with the administrative legislation, constitutional framework and laws of Pakistan,” stated the letter read out by the secretary.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, Talha Mehmood, presented a report on the controversial bill seeking to convert the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation into a limited company.

The committee had rejected the bill at its meeting on Monday.

The government, which is in minority in the Senate, now plans to convene a joint sitting of parliament to get the bill passed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243042/place-honour-killing-bill-in-joint-sitting-rabbani-asks-govt>

UOG VC ‘MISTREATS’ FEMALE LECTURER

Dawn, March 5th, 2016

Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: A female faculty member of the Nawaz Sharif Medical College (NSMC), a constituent of the University of Gujrat (UoG), has accused the UoG vice-chancellor of insulting and shouting at her in front of other staff and visitors when she tried to talk to him regarding permission for applying for PhD scholarship. The VC, however, denies the charge.

In her detailed statement to Dawn, lecturer/demonstrator Dr Saima Salman, also an elected member of the academic council, said she had applied for HEC scholarship through proper channel by fulfilling all requirements but the VC office delayed the NoC.

She visited the VC office at 11am on Friday to request him in person to issue the NoC since March 4 was the last day for application submission and that from next year she could not apply for the same because of the age factor.

Dr Saima said before visiting the VC office, she talked to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) chairman and conveyed him the entire matter. She said the HEC head advised her to visit the VC office in person and explain him issuing the NoC was in accordance with UoG and HEC rules.

The lecturer stayed in the VC office waiting area for two hours but she was not called in by the VC. She said when the VC came out of the office perhaps to leave the campus, she tried to speak to him but without listening her, he started shouting at her in the presence of several other staff and visitors. “How dare you trespass my office without my permission. It’s me who is law and I will run the university on my own will and desire and I’m not supposed to listen to people of mean understanding like you,” Dr Saima quoted the VC as saying.

She said the VC insulted her and shouted with inappropriate language in front of junior staff and executive. “Does a female doctor has no respect in front of VC or he has the right to humiliate and harass female faculty in public,” she

asked. She questioned where was the law to protect the rights of females in Punjab or if it was not applicable to UoG where the style of governance was like dictators and not an academician?

She requested the Punjab Chief Minister to look into the matter and save her from such a bullying attitude in future and also probe why the VC is so rude with female staff. She also filed a complaint with the ombudsman's office

VC Dr Ziaul Qayyum said he neither misbehaved nor insulted the female lecturer since her case file had not yet reached his office and that, too, would be treated as per process. He said the lecturer should have honored the decorum of the VC office while pursuing her application as the VC could not personally listen to each and every member of some 700 faculty members.

He said that he could not accept such a conduct of a staff member to bypass the rules for getting her application processed in a hurry for which he warned the concerned lecturer to beware in future. The VC said he would direct his staff to initiate an inquiry into the misconduct of the lecturer.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243718>

RELIGIOUS PARTIES REJECT WOMEN PROTECTION BILL

Dawn, March 6th, 2016

Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: Mainstream religious parties belonging to all schools of thought on Saturday rejected the women protection bill recently passed by the Punjab assembly and termed the hanging of former Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer's assassin a judicial murder.

The announcement was made at the official residence of Maulana Fazlur Rehman in the Ministers Colony here. The meeting was attended by Jamaat-i-Islami emir Sirajul Haq, Awais Noorani, son of late Shah Ahmed Noorani and the leader of Jamiat Ulema Pakistan (JUP-N), Dr Sahibzada Abul Khair Mohammad Zubair (JUP-N), Allama Arif Wahidi of Islami Tehreek of Allama Sajid Naqvi and Allama Abdul Aziz Hanif of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadis led by Senator Prof Sajid Mir.

Announcing the decisions of the meeting, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the participants rejected the 'judicial murder' of Mumtaz Qadri and called him a martyr.

"The mainstream religious parties will meet in Mansoor, Lahore, on March 15 to discuss the next course of action against the conspiracies being hatched by the government," the JUI-F chief said. He added that there were chances of a nationwide agitation against the ill-intended moves of the government – similar to the one organised by religious groups in 1977.

"We understand that the hanging of Mumtaz Qadri was based on a bad intent and it could be part of a conspiracy to abolish the blasphemy laws in Pakistan. But we will never tolerate this," he said, adding: "All such attempts by previous governments had failed and this will also happen now."

The JUI chief said the meeting also noted with concerns that the women protection bill had been promulgated by Punjab only to destroy and distort the family system in the country.

"We all have agreed that domestic violence and ill-treatment of women should end and we will welcome laws in this regard. But the clauses in this bill will eventually lead to the break-up of society," he added. "This is not right in an Islamic country and many clauses in the Bill are contrary to Quran and Sunnah."

He said the representatives of all the religious groups had decided to resist these moves as they termed it "conspiracies to make Pakistan a secular country." Allama Arif Wahidi said they considered Qadri's execution and passing of the women protection bill as devious moves by the ruling party as both the actions were planned and carried out secretly.

The religious leaders also criticised Pemra and the government over the blackout of all the news related to Mumtaz Qadri by the media.

When asked why he was speaking against the government when his party, the JUI-F, was a coalition partner, Maulana Fazal said he believed in a true democracy.

“This is the true spirit of democracy. We are with the government but we have our principles and will not be part of any illegal or un-Islamic act,” he said.

About the allegations of former Karachi nazim Mustafa Kamal against the MQM chief, Maulana Fazal said, “As far as anybody’s connections with RAW etc., are concerned, it is not our responsibility to check or correct it. Such allegations are not new regarding MQM but the agencies should be asked why they have failed to cap the alleged RAW links.”

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1243896/religious-parties-reject-women-protection-bill>

April 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 25th TO MAY 1st 2016

PA ADOPTS BILL TO RESERVE 33PC LOCAL GOVT SEATS FOR WOMEN

Dawn, April 27th, 2016

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: The provincial assembly on Tuesday carried an amendment to the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013, increasing the local government seats reserved for women from 22 per cent to 33 per cent.

Besides, five per cent seats reserved for the youth have been included in the local government along with five per cent seats for non-Muslim community members and labourers or peasants.

The Sindh Local Government (Second Amendment) Bill, 2016 was one the three bills pertaining to the Sindh Local Government (Second, Third and Fourth Amendment) Act, 2013. However, the consideration of the two other bills seeking further amendment to the act was deferred till Wednesday. Also, as many as 17 lawmakers across the floor participated in a discussion on three quarterly reports of the finance department regarding current budget expenditure, its utilisation and pre-budget proposals for the annual budget 2016-17.

Referring to a previous amendment to the local government act, Senior Minister Nisar Ahmed Khuhro recalled that the previous amendment was rejected by the Sindh High Court and the Supreme Court of Pakistan also upheld the verdict of the high court.

He said the house had carried the amendment to change the procedure of elections to the offices of mayor and chairman of local bodies by show of hands instead of secret ballot.

While the Supreme Court agreed that it was within the assembly’s power to change the procedure, it was declared a violation of the law as the amendment was made after the announcement of the election schedule.

Following the adoption of the amendment bill on Tuesday, Mr Khuhro took up another amendment bill for consideration. But it was deferred till Wednesday after leader of the opposition Khwaja Izhar-ul-Hassan sought clarification regarding Section 18-A of Sindh Act No XLII of 2013 citing that the copy of the SLGA-2013, which was provided to him, did not carry Section 18-A that was to be revived.

He said the Supreme Court had given time till April 29 as such consideration of the two other bills should be deferred till Wednesday so that the opposition could get time to read and consider the omitted section. Besides, he said, it was not appropriate to carry out legislation in haste. The issues being confronted to the province ought to be solved through collective wisdom, he added.

Meanwhile, leader of the opposition Khwaja Izhar-ul-Hassan demanded that the report of Thar commission be tabled in the assembly.

Speaking on a point of order raised by MQM lawmaker Mohammad Hussain, he regretted that the commission was the outcome of a discussion in the assembly but the assembly came to know about its report through media although the chief minister had vowed to present the report in the house.

Mr Hussain drew attention of the house that the Thar commission report had been made public by the media but it was not presented in the assembly. In this report, he said different provincial departments had been held responsible for the Thar situation along with bad governance. In the report, he said, almost all the points, which had been pointed out by the opposition, were raised.

Senior Minister for Finance Syed Murad Ali Shah said he could not say how this report was released to the media as it was submitted to the chief minister and only he could explain about it.

The house, which was called to order by deputy speaker Syeda Shehla Raza in the absence of Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani, at 11 am, witnessed discipline throughout the session in which 17 lawmakers participated in a discussion on quarterly reports of the budget 2015-16 and budget proposals for the next financial year.

MQM lawmaker Mahmood Razzaq initiated the discussion by saying that only Rs11.22 per cent of the development budget was spent during the nine months which was regrettable. Heer Sohu said that not a single rupee was released for 263 schemes out of the 590 development schemes. She said funds were released only to those departments where corruption was rampant. She also questioned the release of Rs11 billion for subsidies, grants and to write off loans.

PPP lawmaker Rehana Leghari said Sujawal was made a district some three years back but only Rs93 million had been released for the district since then. She said special development package be announced for the new district.

MQM lawmaker Mohammad Arshad Khilji said the approved budget by the assembly was modified by the bureaucracy. MQM lawmaker Syed Waqar Hussain said the people of Sindh could not be hoodwinked any more with mere slogans.

PPP legislator Khairunnisa Mughal said infrastructure schemes of water, sewerage, educational institutions be included in the new annual development programme.

Dr Sohrab Khan Sarki highlighted the need for monitoring development schemes.

MQM lawmaker Raana Ansar said the Hyderabad city was totally ignored in the development schemes. PPP lawmaker Shahnaz Begum said it was wrong to claim that the PPP government had ignored Karachi as work on mega projects was in progress.

MQM lawmaker Dr Zafar Ahmad Kamali said Rs32 billion was spent on the health department but condition in all hospitals continued to be miserable where neither doctors nor medicines were available to the patients. Rs101 million was spent on the Mirpurkhas Medical College but there was no building on the ground, he added.

PML-N lawmaker Syed Amir Haider Shirazi said that Thatta district had historical importance yet it was totally ignored in the budget with the result that it gave a look of devastated city.

PPP lawmaker Allah Bukhsh Talpur said that Badin was totally neglected where 80 per cent schools were in dilapidated condition. Waryam Faqir of the PML-F said the roads and major arteries and link roads in Sanghar were in bad shape.

MQM lawmaker Mohammad Hussain and Deewan Chand Chawla also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1254603>

SUSPECT IN SISTER'S MURDER CASE REMANDED IN POLICE CUSTODY

Dawn, April 29th, 2016

KARACHI: A judicial magistrate remanded on Thursday a suspect in police custody in a case pertaining to the murder of his teenage sister.

Hayat Khan has been booked for stabbing his 18-year-old sister Sumaira to death in their Fareed Colony house in Orangi Town on Wednesday.

The police produced the suspect before a judicial magistrate (west) and sought his custody for questioning. The court handed him over to the police on four-day physical remand.

The police said the suspect had confessed to have killed his sister because he saw her talking to a youngster on the doorstep of their home and added that the youngster ran away when he arrived there.

Hayat, in his early 20s, told journalists after the hearing that he had repeatedly asked his sister not to go at the door, but she did not listen to him. On the day of the incident he saw her which infuriated him and he grabbed a kitchen knife and stabbed her four to five times.

According to the investigating officer, after getting wounded the victim begged his brother to take her to hospital, but he refused and tried to escape, but neighbours caught him and informed the police about the incident. The girl was taken to hospital, but she succumbed to her injuries, the police added.

The case was registered at the Mominabad police station on the complaint of the state since the victim's father had refused to lodge an FIR against his son.

The Rangers informed on Thursday the administrative judge of the antiterrorism courts about 90-day preventive detention of four suspects for questioning.

The paramilitary soldiers accompanied by their legal team produced Kashif, aka Kashi; Rahim Baig; Adnan, aka Kaku; and Mohsin, aka Bali, said to be political workers, before the administrative judge of ATCs Karachi along with intimation applications, detention orders and jail warrants.

They informed the court that upon receiving credible information about their involvement in targeted killing, kidnapping and extortion punishable under the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997, they were placed under three months preventive detention as provided in Section 11-EEEE of the ATA for an inquiry.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1255064/suspect-in-sisters-murder-case-remanded-in-police-custody>

THE BATTLE FOR PATRIARCHY

The Express Tribune, April 30th, 2016

Social systems that govern both individual and communal relationships are human constructs, not forces of nature like gravity or electromagnetism. They do not predate the existence of humans. Simply put, social systems are not static and they need to evolve or be discarded as societies evolve.

Patriarchy, the ruling social system for several millennia, is now under threat in many parts of the world. In Pakistan, however, it is still enforced through disenfranchisement and violence, and has held sway because it pits genders against one another and benefits one over the other to such an extent that any changes to it are seen as impossible and unnecessary.

This is still a country in which brothers can murder their sisters in cold blood in the name of honour and not feel any guilt as happened in a tragic incident on April 28 in Karachi. A resident of Orangi Town stabbed his sister multiple times after beating her severely.

According to the brother, he had caught his sister talking to a boy at the doorstep of their house, which had enraged him.

While there seems to be a slow shift towards the development of a more egalitarian society in Pakistan in which women are treated more as equals and less as property, the incident in Karachi tells us that we still have a long hard road ahead before patriarchy loosens its holds on our society.

Another incident highlighting the hold of patriarchy was witnessed in a college in Peshawar where a room-full of young men, while watching Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's Oscar-winning documentary on honour killing, cheered when the murderer confesses his crime and links it to honour. This face of Pakistan shows us that the honour of patriarchs is in crushing those who, through the expression of free will, subvert their authority.

They are engaged in protecting their supremacy, a battle that has been waged for years and one that will continue whilst honour and self-interest continue to mean the same thing.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094222/the-battle-for-patriarchy/>

CENTRE MULLS UNIFORM CHILD MARRIAGE LAWS

The Express Tribune, April 30th, 2016.

Maryam Usman

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is considering the possibility of contacting provinces over reforming child marriage laws in a bid to make them more coherent and consistent in the country.

“Some internal discussions have been going on in this regard,” said a senior official in the law ministry. “There is a need to address the issue at the national level, for which the government will have to invite resolutions from provinces to enact a consistent legislation.”

Variance in laws, the official said, for the offence was likely to complicate the matter, and there was a need for criminalising such marriages.

According to him, there was also a need for delineating the concurrent jurisdiction after the devolution process. However, in the case of a conflict, the federal legislation should prevail under Section 144, he added.

Following the 18th amendment, Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2013 and Punjab Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act of 2015 were promulgated.

Other provinces are still considering draft bills on the subject.

In Sindh, contracting, solemnising, promoting or permitting such marriages, of persons below the age of 18 years – regardless of their gender, to be solemnised, is punishable. The punishment is: “Rigorous imprisonment which may extend up to three years but shall not be less than two years and shall be liable to fine.”

Under the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, currently applicable in federal territories, including Islamabad Capital Territory, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (because these regions do not have their own legislations on the subject) child means “a girl below 16 years and a boy below 18 years of age” and punishment for contracting, solemnising or promoting or permitting child marriages to be solemnised is “simple imprisonment which may extend to one month, or with fine which may extend to Rs1,000, or both”.

The punishment for the same offence in Punjab is “simple imprisonment which may extend to six months and fine of Rs50,000”.

Under Article 143, above stated punishments fall under the ambit of criminal law and consequently the federal law supersedes provincial laws.

On the other hand, provinces are empowered to legislate for children, hence provincial law is competent. This legal discrepancy is yet to be resolved.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1094503/centre-mulls-uniform-child-marriage-laws/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 18th TO APRIL 24th 2016

WOMEN PROTECTION ACT: RELIGIOUS BLOC REJECTS TORS FOR AMENDMENTS

The Express Tribune, April 19th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Religious parties have rejected the terms of reference (TORs) of the panel formed to amend the controversial Women Protection Act of Punjab.

The provincial assembly passed the long-awaited Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2015, on February 24, much to the chagrin of rightwing political parties. The law contains remedies for victims of violence, criminalises all forms of violence against women and also recommends setting up of special centres for victims.

On April 5, Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif formed a committee to recommend amendments in the bill after Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman conveyed his reservations to him.

The joint committee comprises Ulema and government representatives and will propose necessary reforms after a detailed review of the bill.

The panel held its first meeting with the representatives of religious parties on Monday.

Sources in the religious side told The Express Tribune the meeting remained inconclusive as the parties rejected the TORs of the commission presented by the provincial law ministry.

From the government’s side, Punjab Law Department deputy secretary and social welfare secretary presented the draft of the law.

The meeting was chaired by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Senator Sajid Mir. Jamaat-e-Islami’s Asadullah Bhutto and JUI-F’s Kamran Murtaza are also members of the panel.

The committee members thoroughly read out each section of the draft of proposed amendments. In the end, however, they declared the language of the changes “vague”.

One of the members, who requested not to be named, said the provincial law ministry did not remove any of the controversial anti-Islamic injunctions clauses in the law.

The religious parties unanimously rejected the TORs and insisted the law ministry officials convey their reservations to the Punjab chief minister.

“It seems the Punjab government is unwilling to remove controversial clauses from the bill,” said another member of the committee.

Sajid Mir, who heads the committee, confirmed the meeting has been postponed for an indefinite period as consensus could not be achieved on the TORs, which he also believed needed changes.

On the other hand, the religious parties have called a meeting today (Tuesday) to discuss the current political situation especially in the wake of Panama Papers. The meeting will be chaired by Fazlur Rehman.

JI leader Asadullah Bhutto told The Express Tribune the basic objective of the meeting was to review the country’s overall situation, including the controversial pro-women bills and the Panama leaks.

Another important issue which needs to be reviewed is the Sindh government’s decision to announce Friday sermons officially.

Bhutto said a decision on how to initiate a movement against the government on these controversial decisions was also expected.

Religious parties have already demanded that the government constitute a commission to probe the Panama Papers. “We believe the prime minister should resign on moral grounds,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1087479/women-protection-act-religious-bloc-rejects-tors-for-amendments/>

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD GIRL FORCED INTO MARRIAGE TO SETTLE DISPUTE IN MANSEHRA

The Express Tribune, April 20th, 2016.

MANSEHRA: An eight-year-old girl’s fate was decided by a jirga when it ordered her family to marry her off as vani to settle a dispute.

Police told The Express Tribune on Tuesday Mariyam Bibi married Ashfaq at a court 10 days ago. This resulted in a dispute between the families of the husband and the wife. Their families approached a jirga to find a solution.

A few days ago, the jirga decided Ashfaq’s niece, eight-year-old Iqra Bibi will marry Mariyam Bibi’s father Ghulam Hussain. If using the child to negotiate the dispute was not sufficient, the jirga elders also asked Ashfaq to pay Rs500,000 in fines to solemnise marriage with Mariyam Bibi.

However, officials claimed the jirga’s decision was not implemented due to police interference.

A police official said, “A majority of jirga members opposed this decision.” He added, “The jirga finally agreed to visit Hussain’s house to convince him to forgive the couple and strike a compromise under local traditions.”

Mansehra DSP Muhammad Hafeez said, “Timely intervention by police foiled the vani attempt.” He pointed out, “Since the offense was not committed, I have sought advice from prosecutors to see if we could take legal action against the parties and jirga members.”

However, officials informed The Express Tribune the jirga has decided to hand over the minor girl to Mariyam Bibi’s father as vani on April 20.

In a similar case in 2015, at least six members of a family were arrested for allegedly forcing a 14-year-old girl to marry a 40-year-old man under Swara in DI Khan. Allah Ditta Baloch’s son Ameerullah was abducted and the

kidnappers threatened to kill Ameerullah if Baloch did not marry his 14-year-old daughter, Shehnaz Bibi, to 40-year-old Abdullah. Baloch was forced to give in to the kidnapper's wishes to save his son's life. However, police conducted an investigation and arrested Abdullah along with five of his relatives who were involved in the incident.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1087894/no-voice-eight-year-old-to-be-forced-into-vani-to-settle-dispute/>

WOW FESTIVAL TO BE HELD ON MAY 1

Dawn, April 21st, 2016

Peerzada Salman

KARACHI: Karachi is the first South Asian city to host the Women of the World (WOW) Festival. The event that aims to highlight the issues pertaining to gender equality will take place on May 1 at the Beach Luxury Hotel.

This was said by Sumbul Khan, who looks after the arts programmes at the British Council Karachi, while speaking with a group of the city's bloggers on Wednesday.

Ms Khan said WOW was launched a few years back on International Women's Day by Jude Kelly of SouthBank Centre London, and ever since it had become a global movement. She said the festival had taken place in different cities of the world and Karachi was the first South Asian city where it would be held in collaboration with the British Council and its six local partners. She said the objective of the event was to mobilise people, especially women, through a series of sessions. She said for the purpose a diverse group of women got together to find out the relevant topics that could be discussed, some of which are: equality at the workplace, sexual violence, breast cancer awareness and child marriage.

Rahma Mian gave a relatively detailed presentation of the festival's programmes. She said there were eight curators covering as many areas. The first one was WOW Talks, a series of panel discussions focusing on key questions facing young women of Pakistan. The sessions in WOW Talks will be on the following subjects: feminism today; bringing up girls — it takes a village; conflict in the city — Karachi as a woman; and women surviving vulnerability.

Ms Rahma said WOW Bites would entail under eight minutes' conversations which would begin with poet Attiya Dawood's verses. Speed Mentoring, she said, would have four sessions, participated by experts from different fields, ranging from artists to doctors and journalists to activists. Then there would be Feminism Under 10 Corner, Performances (having conceptual art, installations, music etc), Workshops, Market (main bazaar, dining area, info booth) and Marketplace. She said individuals such as Tina Sani, Nighat Said Khan and Mukhtar Mai would participate in the festival.

After Mr Rahma's presentation, WOW's Domino Pateman addressed the bloggers via Skype. She said the festival was a global movement celebrating everything that girls and women had done. She said with regard to gender equality we should examine the society that we are in and change what needed to be changed. She said the festival had been taking place in different cities of the world and gave the example of a city in Australia where the aborigines were brought together with the white settlers. She said such efforts catalysed people to thinking about what they wanted to change. She said it was also better for men and boys to have gender equality because it's a human rights issue.

In the context of the Karachi edition of the festival, she called for bringing men and boys along. She said "you are now part of a massive network of people". She said the situation in some of the cities where the festival had been organised was similar to what's happening in Karachi.

Ms Pateman's speech was followed by a couple of members of the British Council asking the bloggers to spread the word through their platforms.

Replying to a question, Ms Rahma said they intended to bring in women from every segment of society into the venue for which they were trying to sort out the transport issue. The bloggers were also told that live performances would comprise music by Sounds of Kolachi, dramatic readings by Zambeel, among other things.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1253385>

CHILD, BRIDE AND MOTHER IN LAW

International New York Times, April 23, 2016

Stephinie Sinclair

Rain clouds hung over the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal on the morning of April 25, 2015, soaking the hillside villages. In Kagati, a small farming community on the outskirts of the capital, Durga, 25, was boiling potatoes from his field, when a deafening noise rang out and his house began to shake violently. He and his wife, Niruta, 23, ran across the wildly shifting ground, but then he stopped in his tracks — in the confusion, the couple had left their newborn daughter inside.

“I grabbed her and quickly jumped off the terrace on the hill,” he recalled. The house collapsed behind him. “One second later and When I returned to check in on the young couple in 2014, the long days spent farming along the impossibly steep slopes had aged them. Yet they were determined to give their children, then 5 and 8, a better life. “I will not let them marry early,” Durga told me. “If they don’t study, they will become like us — or worse.”

He was right to worry. In the wake of natural disasters, rates of child marriage increase. How this happens became clear to me in February, when I visited the couple again, this time to see how they had fared since the earthquake.

They had barely been able to cope with life’s ordinary hardships, let alone an earthquake. Niruta told me that some months before the tremors, she had discovered she was pregnant with her third child. Without telling her husband, she attempted to have an abortion, a common recourse for girls who are forced to marry young and never learn about family planning. The procedure led to extensive blood loss, and Niruta feared for her life.

“I had pain all over my stomach,” Niruta explained. “I cried, saying, ‘I am about to die!’ ” The fetus remained unharmed, and six months later, she realized that she was still pregnant. She delivered a baby girl just weeks before the earthquake.

Shortly afterward, Durga’s father died after a three-year battle with cancer. Attempts to treat his illness left the couple with crippling debt. Making matters worse, the father had been in the middle of a legal battle over farmland he bought in a handshake deal. Young, uneducated and inexperienced, Durga and Niruta lost the case, and half their land — a devastating blow.

Add to all of this a catastrophic earthquake, and one can easily see how hopes for their children’s futures can be dashed. “I’m ashamed to say, at that time, we didn’t even have food to eat,” Durga said. Beside him sat his oldest child, Sumitra. At 10 years old, she is still too young to marry off in this community — but not by much.

the child and I would have been killed. That day we were lucky.” Many others were not.

Nepal had suffered a 7.8 magnitude earthquake that killed more than 8,000 people and left hundreds of thousands, like Durga and Niruta, homeless.

I first met the young couple on their wedding day, eight years earlier. They were just 14 and 16 years old. Nepal has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world — 41 percent of girls and 11 percent of boys marry before age 18. That day, theirs was just one of several adolescent weddings held in the village temple. Durga’s father hadn’t liked the idea of his son’s abandoning his education and marrying young, but after Durga’s mother died, the family needed help in both the home and the fields. So they found a suitable young bride.

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/04/24/opinion/24exposures.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 11th TO APRIL 17th 2016

DIGITAL SOLUTIONS AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION

The Express Tribune, April 15th, 2016.

In spite of being relegated to a secondary societal status, Pakistani women have an important role at the household and subsistence economic level. Besides running the household, they engage in a number of economic activities; i.e., working as domestic help, farm labour and other menial jobs, thus contributing their vital bit in the informal segment of the economy.

Invariably, any exchange of money for such services or activities is in the form of cash and it is important to note that because the informal sector of the economy is unregulated, these cash-based transactions are insecure in nature, lack transparency, are prone to frauds and do not reflect in the country's Gross Domestic Product figures.

This preference to cash, over any other means of settlement, is due to a host of reasons. Mutual lack of trust between the transacting parties, hence need for an immediate settlement, illiteracy and consequent lack of knowledge and mistrust about the available alternative, i.e., Digital Financial Services (DFS).

Another factor of relevance is that owing to their vulnerable status in society before and after marriage; by and large Pakistani women, particularly in the rural set-up, have an instinctive tendency to "save" from their earnings. This habit is further accentuated after marriage because spectrum of their obligations becomes diversified, for example dowry for daughters, healthcare needs, economic uncertainties and above all, need to have a permanent shelter.

These savings are usually hidden in household pots or stashed elsewhere within their homes, perhaps under the bed or tucked away in pillows or garments. Needless to say, money saved and stored this way is at risk of ending up in the wrong hands (be it a robber or a demanding relative) and these currency notes can easily become soiled or tarnished, hence unusable.

It is not difficult to imagine the potential of upscaling the economic participation by the women folks only if they can manage their money in a safer environment, thus eliminating the above-cited risks. This is a perfect situation for introducing DFS which holds the key to the above and many other related problems. However, the prevailing illiteracy in rural areas, gender-specific social taboos and lack of trust towards the service providers unbeknown to them as well as resistance by the counterparties for their own vested interests pose major obstacles.

The prevailing state of affairs warrants a sustained and user-friendly approach to sensitise Pakistani females particularly at the lower end of the economic strata by creating relevance between DFS and ease of handling and security of their cash which presently is an easy picking for anyone and everyone. This should be done by launching a well-focused financial literacy initiative in media and road shows particularly in the rural set-up.

To make the acceptance process easier greater care must be taken to highlight the accruable benefits of DFS for the end- to-end users. Lower costs and increased transparency, greater empowerment for women in terms of control of funds and improved access to markets are a few benefits, just to name for reference.

The idea of saving money digitally, that too with complete confidentiality, is potentially a matter of great attraction for women who are never sure whether their savings will be used by them or taken away. Going forward, DFS can also be leveraged to introduce various general and life insurance related services for the users. More importantly, the data from DFS based transactions also help build credit profiles of the users which come handy when seeking assistance from financial institutions.

It is a long-haul exercise because bringing about a change in the mindset of illiterate people requires unflinching perseverance on the part of those who are aiming to bring about the much-needed change for women with regard to handling of money matters by them.

Financial literacy initiative offers another window of opportunity for educating the masses on how DFS can play an effective role towards developing savings habits at individual level. Besides low-cost smartphones, prepaid cards can also be used for mobile savings account services through which the savers may be offered incentives on their accumulated savings for a curtailed period of time.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1084659/digital-solutions-and-women-participation/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 4th TO APRIL 10th 2016

VIOLENCE AT HOME

Dawn, April 4th, 2016

AMIDST robust campaigning by liberal sections to activate the feminist lobby and strong criticism by clerics defending Islam's endowment of women's rights, there is a risk of overlooking the essence of what is a major human rights and public health issue — domestic violence.

Today, domestic violence is recognised as a 'global' public health issue that is prevalent in high-, middle- and low-income countries. While the presentation of domestic violence may be culture-specific, it exists in all countries, cultures and religions. The reported rates vary; generally a third of all women suffer some form of domestic violence in their lives.

The aetiology of violence is best described by the model which proposes that violence is a result of factors operating at four levels: individual, relationship, community and societal. These feature low levels of education, poverty, witnessing or experiencing violence as a child, substance abuse, personality disorders, low socio-economic status of women; weak legal sanctions against domestic violence; and broad social acceptance of violence.

Research strongly suggests that domestic violence and mental illness go hand in hand. Domestic violence and depression are intertwined and part of a vicious cycle. In addition to depression, domestic violence is strongly linked with physical injuries, chronic poor health, homicide and suicide. Serious adverse effects have also been observed in children.

According to the 2016 bill proposed by the Punjab government, violence is, "any offence committed against a woman including abetment of an offence, domestic violence, emotional, psychological and verbal abuse, economic abuse, stalking or cybercrime". Although the bill proposes to address a broad array of violent crimes against women, both within and outside the house, the text fundamentally focuses on domestic violence.

Quite clearly, this is a complex issue where it might be difficult to implement the law.

The definition of violence in the bill is blurred as the term 'domestic violence' already includes physical, emotional (psychological, verbal abuse included) and sexual forms of abuse and controlling behaviour, such as economic abuse. More importantly, the prevalent aspect of 'sexual abuse' is missing here.

The bill offers protection from relationships through 'consanguinity and marriage'. Therefore, it goes beyond partner violence and includes abuse from other members of the family. The protection order directs the defendant to 'stay away' or 'leave the house'. This is already difficult to apply in cases where the defendant is the husband; but what if the defendant is, for example, the mother-in-law?

Criminalising the behaviour of the 'defendant' might be a deterrent in the short term, but certainly a more comprehensive conflict-resolution approach will be needed to address the underlying causes.

Many cases of domestic violence lack tangible evidence and are hard to verify. It is easier to have a court of inquiry when violence results in physical injury. Similarly, it might be easier to evaluate a single incident of violence in isolation, but domestic violence is usually an ongoing process where it becomes incrementally more difficult, even clinically, to assess the role of each partner in perpetuating violence over a longer period.

Many abused women choose not to report or leave their partners. The reasons may include fear of retaliation; lack of economic support; concern for their children or fear of losing them; lack of support from family and friends; stigma of divorce; or hope that the partner will change. These conflicts make it difficult for outside agencies including the legal system to intervene.

Providing a toll-free number must be followed by effective response. Does our law-enforcement system have the capacity to respond to the huge number of calls that will inevitably come?

Then there is the big question of rehabilitating victims which is, rightly so, a part of the bill. Does the state have the capacity to support, train and employ them so that they can look after themselves and their children in the long run?

The bill proposes the appointment of women protection officers. If this materialises, it might turn out to be a large unwieldy taskforce considering how common the problem is. It might be more feasible if existing 'public servants' are trained in psychosocial interventions in order to handle the sensitive nature of these conflicts.

While the bill should be lauded for drawing attention to an important issue, it is equally essential to approach its implementation in a manner in which vulnerable groups find it easy to use it as an avenue of recourse. The initial phase of implementing this bill should focus on identifying families at risk and to provide early-intervention services, including legal advice; social and counselling services for marital discord and referrals for specialised interventions for serious mental disorders.

At the societal level, it is important to build coalitions of government, religious and civil society institutions focusing on behavioural principles and avoiding a confrontational approach that will polarise communities.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1249779/violence-at-home>

FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN WORKFORCE MAKES SENSE – AT ALL LEVELS

The Express Tribune, April 4th, 2016.

KARACHI: The declining trend in export revenue is alarming. Despite the GSP Plus preferences awarded by the EU to Pakistan, exports to Europe have failed to achieve the desired level of growth.

The major contributing factor to this decline is the loss in competitiveness of exporters in Pakistan vis-à-vis the exporters in other countries along with rising electricity tariffs, higher gas prices, and increasing labour costs and taxes.

As Pakistan mainly exports products whose revenues are sensitive to changes in their price, the products become less appealing to the consumers in the foreign markets. Industries such as garment and apparel, textile as well as food and beverages rely upon sources of unskilled and cheap labour and consumers are sensitive to small changes in prices.

In order to develop strategies to counter the loss in competitiveness, we need to understand the factors that have allowed other countries to increase their exports.

The lack of "feminisation" of employment in Pakistan, particularly in industries that consist of mainly unskilled and cheap labour, is seldom discussed in major economic forums in Pakistan as a factor that affects the competitiveness of the exports.

The newly industrialised countries of South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia took advantage of an increased participation of females in the workforce in their earlier stages of industrialisation.

According to the statistics borrowed from the World Development Indicators, compiled by the World Bank, the labour force participation of females in Pakistan in 2014 was approximately 25% compared to more than 50% globally and 58% in Bangladesh.

The number of female workers in Pakistan was approximately 30% of the number of male workers compared to approximately 70% globally as well as in Bangladesh. This pattern is disconcerting as Pakistan mainly exports goods produced by unskilled workers that require minimal training in order to participate in the workforce.

It is reported that the garment industry in Bangladesh now employs more females than males. There is strong empirical evidence that employment of female workers in industries that are reliant on cheaper labour and unskilled workers benefits the producers as it lowers the costs of production.

It is estimated that the wages paid to the female workers range between 50 and 70% of the wages paid to their male counterparts. Although female participation in the labour force is low across all segments of the society, this discussion focuses on the poorer strata. A large proportion of females in these strata are unpaid workers, who could benefit tremendously from formal employment.

Women in developing countries are often described as “source of competitive advantage” to producers in industries reliant on cheaper labour and unskilled workers.

For instance, females employed in apparel and garment manufacturing industries are not only paid lower wages than their male counterparts but are also more likely to work as subcontractors on piece-rate wage payments. This provides the employers with greater competitiveness in their markets relative to other producers who may not have adopted similar strategies.

In Bangladesh, there is a concerted effort to increase participation of female workers in the apparel and garment industry. The success of the efforts is apparent as Bangladeshi exporters have not only captured a large proportion of the global market in apparel and garment sector but have also introduced newer products that have generated considerable consumer appeal in their destination markets.

As females may be employed at lower wages relative to their male counterparts, it adds to the savings of the exporters, who subsequently reinvest to improve the product quality and further increase their sales.

Furthermore, greater labor force participation for females provide additional sources of family income that is likely to benefit their households since women tend to be more prudent in their expenditures and are more likely to spend a larger proportion of the income on the needs of the households relative to their male counterparts.

As future employment opportunities improve, we may observe higher female enrollment rates in schools and universities, which will provide numerous social and economic benefits. Improvement in national competitiveness will likely reduce gender inequalities that currently plague the social and economic environments in Pakistan.

It is imperative that Pakistani policymakers promote employment of female workers, particularly in industries that rely on unskilled workers. The government may provide subsidies to employers that hire a certain proportion of female workers, which can be transferred to the workers. This may allow fair wages to be paid to female workers relative to their male counterparts and female employment may serve its purpose to reduce the costs of production.

Similarly, reduction in tariffs on the imports and exports of products that incorporate a greater proportion of female employment may be emphasised.

The government can also provide technical and vocational training to female workers so that female workers can avail better jobs when the opportunity arises.

The displacement of male workers may not be necessary to achieve greater participation of female workers. It is likely that tasks such as operation of machinery and equipment and tasks that require higher skill levels will be performed by males, while tasks that can be subcontracted or performed with lower levels of skills to be performed by females. Such has generally been the case in Bangladesh and during the earlier stages of industrial development in the newly industrialised East-Asian countries.

The government must address this issue and at the same time implement rules and regulations that reduce the disparity between males and females. The competitive advantage that can be generated may increase the exports, improve the living standards of the poorer segments of the society and may eventually lead to better working conditions in factories. Inclusive strategies that promote employment opportunities for females are necessary if Pakistan is to achieve higher levels of economic growth.

The writer is an Assistant Professor of Economics & Research Fellow at CBER, IBA

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1078220/export-competitiveness-female-participation-in-workforce-makes-sense-at-all-levels/>

THE DIRTY OLD MEN OF PAKISTAN

International New York Times, April 4, 2016

Mohammed Hanif

Karachi, Pakistan — IN the world we live in, there is no dearth of pious men who believe that most of the world's problems can be fixed by giving their women a little thrashing. And this business of a man's God-given right to give a woman a little thrashing has brought together all of Pakistan's pious men.

A few weeks ago, Pakistan's largest province passed a new law called the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act. The law institutes radical measures that say a husband can't beat his wife, and if he does he will face criminal charges and possibly even eviction from his home. It proposes setting up a hotline women can call to report abuse. In some cases, offenders will be required to wear a bracelet with a GPS monitor and will not be allowed to buy guns.

A coalition of more than 30 religious and political parties has declared the law un-Islamic, an attempt to secularize Pakistan and a clear and present threat to our most sacred institution: the family. They have threatened countrywide street protests if the government doesn't back down.

Their logic goes like this: If you beat up a person on the street, it's a criminal assault. If you bash someone in your bedroom, you're protected by the sanctity of your home. If you kill a stranger, it's murder. If you shoot your own sister, you're defending your honor. I'm sure the nice folks campaigning against the bill don't want to beat up their wives or murder their sisters, but they are fighting for their fellow men's right to do just that.

It's not only opposition parties that are against the bill: The government-appointed Council of Islamic Ideology has also declared it repugnant to our religion and culture. The council's main task is to ensure that all the laws in the country comply with Shariah. But basically it's a bunch of old men who go to sleep worrying that there are all these women out there trying to trick them into bed. Maybe that's why there are no pious old women on the council, even though there's no shortage of them in Pakistan.

The council's past proclamations have defended a man's right to marry a minor, dispensed him from asking for permission from his first wife before taking a second or a third, and made it impossible for women to prove rape. It's probably the most privileged dirty old men's club in the country.

Some of us routinely condemn these pious old men, but it seems they are not just a bunch of pampered religious nuts. In fact, they are giving voice to Pakistani men's collective misery over the fact that their women are out of control. Look at university exam results; women are hogging all the top positions. Go to a bank; there is a woman counting your money with her fancy nails. Turn on your TV; there is a female journalist questioning powerful men about politics and sports.

One of these journalists recently was grilling a famous mufti opposed to the bill. Bewildered, the mufti said: Are you a woman, or are you a TV journalist? She was professional enough not to retort: Are you a mufti, or just another old fart?

It wasn't supposed to be like this. Three decades ago, most Pakistani women who had paid jobs worked at menial tasks, and the others were confined to traditional professions like medicine or teaching or, occasionally, law. There was a small and brave women's movement.

Women were writing novels and making movies, but they were few in number. Now they are flying planes, heading companies, policing the streets, climbing mountains and winning Oscars and Nobel Prizes. There are millions of women across the country running little beauty parlors from their homes, employing other women and gaining a measure of independence.

But for every bank teller, there are still millions of women who are farmhands or house help. For every TV journalist, there are many more women who live in half-slavery, scrubbing and cleaning, and shouldering the heavy burden of protecting and raising their kids.

Let's not just blame the mullahs and muftis. Misogyny is way older than any religion. Even people who have never seen the inside of a mosque or the Sufis who want to become one with the universe wouldn't think twice before treating a woman as something between a pest and a pet goat.

Some members of Parliament stayed away when this bill was being passed in the Punjab assembly. They probably represent a majority. Some of us even call ourselves feminist. "See, I have never stopped my sister from going to school, never given my girlfriend a black eye. That makes me a feminist, right? But we must protect our families. You don't want a family-loving feminist man going around with a GPS tracker, do you?"

What really scares the so-called feminist men is that a lot of women are actually quite bored with talking about being a woman. They talk about their work. A film director talks about bad actors. A development worker talks about idiotic funding patterns. A maid talks about her cellphone and the quality of detergents.

There's a woman in my neighborhood who walks fast. She is always carrying two kids in her arms. Not infants but 3-, 4-year-old sturdy kids, heavy weights. She walks fast. Probably you have to walk fast when you are carrying two kids. She doesn't expect a lift from the many cars passing by. She can't afford a cab. She is walking toward her bus. Always with the two kids in her arms and a bag around her shoulder. She gives Quran lessons at people's homes.

I don't think all those pious men, or anyone else, can tell that woman with the two kids how to walk her daily walk. If someone asks her how it feels to be a woman in this society, she'd probably answer, "Can't you see I'm working?"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/opinion/sunday/the-dirty-old-men-of-pakistan.html>

AGAINST FCR: WOMEN MISSING AT MEETING ON FATA'S FUTURE
The Express Tribune, April 6th, 2016.

PESHAWAR: The absence of women from the meeting held in Landikotal, Khyber Agency to facilitate the FATA Reforms Committee did not go unnoticed. Representatives from Takrah Qabailee Khwenday have voiced their concerns; the forum seeks to safeguard the rights of women from the tribal belt.

According to a press release issued by the forum on Tuesday, members of the committee visited the region a day earlier. "The committee was headed by Adviser to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz," the statement read. "Governor Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Lieutenant General (retd) Abdul Qadir Baloch were among those who visited Landikotal."

As per the press release, two consultative sessions were held with stakeholders in Landikotal Jirga Hall.

"Although committee members met a large number of tribal elders, parliamentarians and journalists, [there were] scores of tribespeople who protested outside the hall," the press release stated.

Takrah Qabailee Khwenday has demanded adequate representation of tribespeople, particularly women, in reforms. According to the press release, representatives from the organisation said the plight of tribespeople has worsened with time. "Fata has become the epicentre of terrorism and the war against militancy," the statement quoted one of the representatives as saying. "Military operations have displaced a large number of people from their homes."

The statement added women from the tribal areas have faced a string of problems.

"A majority of people have lost their homes, property and [means of] livelihood," the press release stated.

It added, "Poverty has increased by 70% and illiteracy remains a problem. Female literacy rate stands at 3% and many girls continue to dropout from school."

As per the press release, health conditions are no exception and maternal mortality ratio in Fata is much higher than other parts of Pakistan.

"The people of the tribal belt operate on patriarchal values," read the statement. "Takrah Qabailee Khwenday believes women from Fata should also participate in discussions to decide the fate of the region. We strongly urge the governor of K-P to include women in discussions over the abolition of the Frontier Crimes Regulation."

On March 22, a large number of women from the tribal areas joined hands with those demanding the abolition of FCR.

They held a conference in Peshawar to highlight their reservations about the matter. This was the first time in national history that a group of women from Fata who are both educated and politically aware voiced their concerns about the status of the tribal belt.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1079232/against-fcr-women-missing-at-meeting-on-fatas-future/>

PARTIES 'ACROSS WOMEN LAW DIVIDE' DRUM UP SUPPORT

Dawn, April 8th, 2016

LAHORE: More than 50 Left-oriented parties and groups are meeting here on Saturday (tomorrow) to lend their support to the recently-passed women protection law.

The need for the step was felt after seeing the pressure religious forces were putting on the government to get the law repealed on the excuse of its being anti-Shariah, says Farooq Tariq, general secretary of the Awami Workers Party hosting the April 9 show.

For fear of religious circles the government is not notifying the law though it had been passed by the Punjab Assembly on Feb 24 and duly signed by the governor later on.

AWP President and known lawyer Abid Hasan Manto will chair the moot to be held at the Royal Palm Club.

Prominent groups and parties invited to the meet included Awami National Party (ANP), Balochistan National Party of Akhtar Mengal, National Party of Dr Abdul Malik, PkMAP of Abdus Samad Achakzai, Pakistan Seraiki Party of Taj Langah, Sindh United Party of Jalal Mehmood Shah, Qaumi Watan Party of Aftab Sherpao, PPP factions led by Ghinwa Bhutto and Naheed Khan, Pakistan Communist Party, and Mazdoor Kissan Party.

Similarly, Women Action Forum, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, Pakistan Medical Association, presidents of Supreme Court, Lahore High Court and Lahore Bar associations, All-Pakistan Trade Union Federation, All-Pakistan Workers' Confederation, various journalist bodies and civil society organisations are also among the invitees.

On the other hand, the Punjab government is also approaching various religious schools of thought to tame their opposition to the law.

A delegation of religio-political parties led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman had met the chief minister the other day in which Law Minister Rana Sana had shrewdly turned Maulana Fazl's 'big no' to the law by asking him "to prove his legendary intellect of giving solutions to problems instead of just mentioning a problem."

Maulana Fazl "took the bait" and gave the solution of forming a committee to review "controversial" clauses of the law.

On Wednesday, a delegation of clerics from all schools of thought was invited to meet Shahbaz Sharif on the issue.

The chief minister told the visitors that the government could not even think of legislating against the Quran and Sunnah.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250667/parties-across-women-law-divide-drum-up-support>

GANG RAPE VICTIM MOVES SC TO SAVE OTHERS

Dawn, April 9th, 2016

Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: A woman who claimed to have been subjected to sexual exploitation, including gang rape, and was now being blackmailed, invited the attention of the Supreme Court on Friday to the heinous crimes committed also by members of law-enforcement agencies.

The woman from Khanpur Bagga Sher village of Muzaffargarh district invoked the jurisdiction of the apex court through her counsel Zulfikar Ahmad Bhutta under enforcement of fundamental rights, claiming that by doing so she intended to save a number of women who become victims of similar exploitation because of broken and ineffective law-enforcement mechanism in the country.

Advocate Bhutta told Dawn that he had moved the petition because it had become necessary to highlight such crimes being committed with impunity under the nose of the high-ups as well as police. He recalled that a few years ago net café scandals surfaced in Rawalpindi and Islamabad as a result of which many unfortunate girls were killed by their relatives to save family honour.

He said it had been stated in the petition that the petitioner was not the only woman who had been victimised but several others were facing a similar situation. Such crimes were spreading in Punjab rapidly also because no one dared to come forward, he added.

The petition requested the Supreme Court to direct the Punjab chief secretary and the inspector general of police to submit complete record of cases or FIRs in which a number of girls had been victimised through discreet snapping of indecent pictures or videos to blackmail them for sexual favours.

It also requested the court to order the high-ups to carry out investigations and prosecute the people involved in such heinous crimes and to ensure registration of similar cases by police under section 354-A of the PPC. The section deals with assaulting a woman or using criminal force against her and stripping her clothes and suggests life imprisonment as a sentence.

The petitioner also attached a copy of FIR she had registered in the Model City police station, Muzaffargarh, under sections 365B (kidnapping or inducing or compelling a woman for marriage), 376 (punishment under rape), 380 (theft) and 420 (cheating and dishonesty) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

According to the FIR lodged on March 26, the complainant joined a private security company near Faisal Stadium in Muzaffargarh in July 2015. A few weeks after taking up the job, she was asked by her 'master' that he would escort her to a 'madam' who will brief her about a field duty which was a requirement of her job. But instead of arranging the meeting with the woman, he took her to a vacant house where she was raped and subjected to indecent exposure before camera.

Later the employer started blackmailing her by threatening that if she failed to extend favours or ever informed anybody about the incident, he would upload the pictures on internet.

The FIR stated that on the next date her tormentor took her to another house where he, along with drunken members of a law-enforcement agency (police), sexually assaulted her. The police personnel warned her that if she failed to comply with their directions, her parents would be involved in heinous crimes.

The accused also introduced her on mobile phone to someone who claimed to be Muzaffargarh DPO. He also threatened her with dire consequences if she disclosed the incident to anyone.

According to the FIR, she was subjected to rape for eight months during which she and her family were threatened by the local police that they would be implicated in fake and forged cases. They even threatened to kill her on March 26 and got her signatures on a blank nikah form so that she could be exploited in future also.

The complainant stated that she had revealed the ordeal that she had undergone to save other women who were being subjected to similar treatment. She also threatened in the FIR that if she was denied justice, she would commit self-immolation outside the office of the Muzaffargarh District Police Office.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1250960/gang-rape-victim-moves-sc-to-save-others>

WOMEN PROTECTION LAW PARTIES WANT ALLIANCE AGAINST OBJECTIONS

Dawn, April 10th, 2016

LAHORE: Speakers at a multi-party conference organised by the Awami Workers Party (AWP) stressed on Saturday the need for an alliance of left-leaning and secular forces to confront right-wing extremism in all its manifestations, including economic exploitation of working people.

They also vowed to wage a joint struggle against attempts by the religious right aiming to have the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act withdrawn or amended by the government according to their wishes.

A joint declaration passed by representative of 29 political and social organisations and trade unions at the end of the conference condemned religious parties for preventing recognition of women's right to protection against domestic violence and stressed the need for public mobilisation in support of a progressive agenda.

“Before discussing Punjab's Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act, we must think in depth why it was criticised in Punjab alone despite the fact that more or less the same law was passed by the provincial assemblies of Sindh and Balochistan,” Awami National Party general secretary and former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa information minister Mian Iftikhar Husain said while talking to Dawn on the sidelines of the event.

He challenged Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chief Imran Khan to get KP women protection draft bill approved by the Council of Islamic Ideology that it had earlier rejected and termed it against the principles and spirit of Shariah.

Husain extended support to the declaration and urged the gathering to seek allies without parliamentary parties and state institutions. He said struggle for a society free of gender-based violence needed to be waged in collaboration with all like-minded forces.

AWP President Abid Hasan Minto said the law passed by the provincial assembly was not adequate to guarantee recognition of women's constitutionally guaranteed rights and protection from domestic violence. However, he said it was important for all progressive political parties, social movements, trade union activists and civil society organisations to gather in support of the law and resist religious parties' opposition to domestic violence and other pro-women laws.

He condemned the provincial government for beginning negotiations with religious parties to address their concerns over the law. He said progressive forces should not let the government submit to pressure from religious parties and weaken the institutional framework proposed under the law to provide redress to victims of domestic violence.

Minto called “absolutely wrong” the verdict issued by a five-member Sharia bench of the Supreme Court to declare agriculture reforms against Islamic norms, and said: “It was all done during the regime of Gen Ziaul Haq, who intentionally wanted this case treated in such a way.”

Women's Action Forum's Hina Jilani said the state could not be allowed to shy away from its responsibility to protect its women citizens from acts of violence. She said all crimes that affect women should be recognised as crimes against the state rather than against individuals.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Ali Zafar said that alongside street agitation against religious parties an intellectual battle was also needed to discredit their propaganda on pro-women laws.

Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party President Mahmood Khan Achakzai extended support of his party to the declaration and said his party's activists would join progressive forces in their struggle against the religious right-wing.

Representative of several other progressive political parties, trade unions, human rights organizations, non-violent social movements and civil society organisations participated in the conference, including National Party, Balochistan National Party-Mengal, Jeay Sindh Mahaz, Sindh

United Party, Hazara Siyasi Party, PPP-Shaheed Bhutto and Workers, Supreme Court and Lahore High Court Bar Associations, Punjab and Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists, Pakistan Trade Union Federation and Pakistan Bhatta Mazdoor Union (Punjab), Anjuman Mazareen Punjab, National Students Federation and Democratic Students Alliance and Feminist Collective.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and eminent rights activist I.A. Rehman and others also attended the conference.

May 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 23rd TO MAY 29th 2016

BODIES AND BULLIES

Dawn, May 25th, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

“I HATED who I was.” So confesses lawyer Zainab Chughtai in a video produced by Al Jazeera Plus on the bullying and shame inflicted on young Pakistani girls and women. Chughtai’s declaration is followed by many more — woman after woman relating the crude and hurtful statements she has been subjected to by family members about the way she looks. It is a litany of shame and emotional persecution, and because it is so familiar to women, in particular Pakistani women, the video has gone viral.

This is a good thing. It can be said with some degree of confidence that nearly every woman and probably several men who are reading this article now have been made to feel ugly, inadequate or unwanted based on their physical appearance.

But, as with everything else in Pakistan, the brunt of this brand of bullying also falls unequally on the shoulders of Pakistani women. As the women say, many have been harassed since they were girls and told that they are obscene, ugly, too dark, too fat, too tall and generally unworthy.

In a follow-up video made by the BBC, the group of women points out that bullying and body shaming begin very early; little girls listen to the degradations but have no means of responding to them. Instead, they take them to be the truth and the voices and aspersions become a crucial and often indelible part of the psychological geography. They will hear those disparaging voices for the rest of their lives.

Matters only get worse once they are older. In a society that otherwise claims to care a lot about propriety and honour, crass quips and conversations on the failings, the fatness, the tiredness or oldness of women by women (and also men), is entirely acceptable. Weddings, those venues of social warfare, are the prime arena for this bloody sport, the butchers out with sharpened knives to excise pounds of flesh from their victims.

The caring and the compassionate are destined to be the losers in this game, always unprepared, it seems, for the comments by the distant aunt, the long-forgotten neighbour: ‘Wow, you’ve just puffed up’ or ‘Beta, you should really go on a diet’.

What may be left undone in these semi-public venues is taken up at home. Girls, even the richest, with the most loving parents, must be starved and scolded, trussed up and painted to participate in the manically competitive marriage market. Merchandise these days requires top-notch packaging, inventive marketing.

What is permissible at home morphs into evermore mordant iterations at work. Young women duly qualified are routinely turned down for jobs because of their inability to meet some beauty standard that usually male (but sometimes even female) employers have set for them.

In one such case, a female applicant was told she was too fat, in another too short, and in a final one too old. There are no laws, no guidelines, no restrictions at all to prevent this, and those who inflict the harm are already informed and educated. It’s not that they do not know that what they say is hurtful and unjust; it’s that they believe that they are entitled to make such pronouncements.

Zainab Chughtai and the women in the Al Jazeera Plus video are brave for their honesty, for admitting and sharing publicly the consequences of the verbal wounds inflicted on them from when they were young.

There is not a female in Pakistan who has not shared their experience, her weight, her height, her complexion, her gait, her hair, her voice judged and pronounced unsatisfactory, not enough, not right. It is only when the scars inflicted on the recipients of these judgements are exposed and the damage made visible that they can be talked about.

Shaming someone, male or female, because of the way they look is an act of cruelty and it is moral change that is required for it to be understood as such. Zainab Chughtai's organisation Bully Proof is attempting to do just that, going to schools all around the Lahore area with presentations that underscore how such treatment is wrong.

Young girls must be told that they are all beautiful, that they should love and respect their bodies and expect others, all others, to do the same. It seems so simple, and yet it is a message unavailable to too many, to most, in Pakistan.

A society in which body shaming is not even considered a problem by many is one that is peopled by the invisibly maimed. Those who are hurt themselves hurt others, and a constant chain of small but deadly cruelties encircles the emotional life of nearly everyone.

Bully Proof is one small-scale attempt to correct this, to replace cruelty and disparagement with honesty and respect. The problem, however, needs much more attention and participation by anyone and everyone.

Young children, particularly young girls, can be taught that the criticisms and shame that rain down on them are wrong; but ultimately it is those who inflict it who must be stopped, forced to behold the cruelty of their characterisations.

The newspaper columns of the country are routinely filled with vexing and complicated problems whose solutions are far beyond the ability and effort of the individual reader. This is not one of them.

A correction of the epidemic of body shaming, where those not fitting into some constricted category of physical beauty are treated poorly, made to feel worthless and inadequate, requires the participation of one and all.

On this issue, there is enough to taint all, a bully in every home, a cruel degradation on the tip of every tongue — and so the pledge to change must also encompass all. The solution here is simple: all bodies are beautiful and all bullies must be stopped, shunned and made irrelevant; perhaps then can there be a return to dignity and an end to shame.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1260493>

GENDER WAGE GAP

Dawn, May 26th, 2016

Zeenat Hisam

Hope is the thing with feathers — perches in the soul — and sings the tune ... and never stops. — Emily Dickinson

THE women of Pakistan keep on struggling on sheer grit and eternal hope but if you glance at the global data you would laugh at their tenacity and this 'thing with feathers' called 'hope': we live at the bottom of the pit when it comes to the gender gap.

According to the Global Gender Gap Index, 2015, Pakistan stands at the bottom — 144 out of 145 countries in the world. The index, prepared annually by the World Economic Forum, examines the gap between men and women

covering four fundamental aspects: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

The highest possible score is one (equality) and the lowest zero (inequality). Pakistan earned 0.559. But don't sulk. Take this moment to rejoice at the status our Bangladeshi sisters have achieved: Bangladesh ranks 64 out of 145 with a score of 0.704. This restrains you from throwing in the 'religious card' as a reason for the sad state of affairs in Pakistan.

Let us single out the economic participation of women. You may say, who gives two hoots for economic participation and its indicators (such as the wage gap) when there are a hundred other sordid affairs confronted by women, ranging from inequity in education, skills and health to horrific extremes of sexual violence and social degradation — unless you win the argument that poor economic participation is linked with all other aspects of gender inequality.

In the Gender Gap Index, 2015, economic participation and opportunity is counted as a crucial measure of equality, and comprises five aspects: labour force participation, wage equality for similar work, estimated earned income, number of legislators, senior officials, managers, and number of professional and technical workers.

Pakistan is doing poorly in all five: the female labour force participation rate is 22pc versus that for men at 67.8pc; women are paid 23pc less than men for similar work; women's average monthly income is Rs9,760 compared to men's monthly earnings of Rs15,884, and only 0.3pc women are employed as managers, 6.4pc as professionals and 0.9pc as technical workers (Labour Force Survey 2014-2015).

Since the 2015 Oscar acceptance speech by Patricia Arquette, wage inequality in Hollywood has brought the issue of gender wage gap to the mainstream discourse. Globally, women's average wages are between 4pc to 36pc less than men's. According to a 2014 global dataset, Nordic countries are at the top with the least gap (0-5pc) in men and women's wages. In Europe and the US, the figure is between 15-20pc and in the Asian countries the gap is bigger at 20-25pc.

Gender pay gap is defined as the difference between women's and men's average full-time equivalent earnings expressed as a percentage of men's earnings. The gap between the earnings of men and women is a composite of many factors including the women's level of schooling and skills, social stereotypes, motherhood, unpaid care work or family responsibilities leading to part-time or flexi-work, and direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of sex.

The gender wage gap is divided into two parts: an 'explained' part which is accounted for by variables such as an individual's level of education or skills, and an 'unexplained' component which, according to the International Labour Organisation "...captures what remains after adjusting for these observable characteristics, and, therefore, suggests discrimination in the labour market".

If you scrutinise the five factors of the gender gap score card, you will note that Pakistan ranks 88th among 145 countries when it comes to wage equality for similar work, while Bangladesh stands at 126 and India even lower at 129. I have not come across any research on this aspect. Economists can explain it better.

Perhaps Pakistan's low female participation, compared to India's 33pc and Bangladesh's 58pc, is one of the factors. With the bulk of women working as unpaid employees the number of women in professional jobs and higher positions that bring better remuneration is skewed. The corporate sector does not pay a miserly sum to professional women though the number of women at the top is negligible. Government employees' pay scale from grade one to 21 is the same for both men and women though fewer women make it to grade 22.

What can be done to close the gender gap? The report says that "the closure or continuation of gaps is intrinsically connected to the framework of national policies". Would our largely male policymakers want to close the gap? According to the World Economic Forum, the global pay gap between men and women is here to stay until another 118 years. So, till then we better keep struggling and nursing the thing with feathers called hope.

CII JUSTIFIES 'LIGHT BEATINGS' FOR ERRANT WIVES

Dawn, May 27th, 2016

Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has observed that it was only justified for men to beat their wives 'gently', without humiliating them, if they needed to be disciplined.

Speaking at a press conference after a council meeting on Thursday, CII Chairman Maulana Mohammad Khan Sheerani said that Islam focused on the promotion of the family system and wanted societal values to be strengthened. "Men have certain responsibilities and women are given particular roles, but violence of any kind is not permitted," Maulana Sheerani said, but then amended his statement to, "Violence by any of the spouses is not allowed under Islam."

But when asked about the conditions under which a man could beat his wife, he outlined certain parameters. "He cannot scratch her skin, draw blood or damage any of her bones," he explained.

The CII chief then elaborated what the council believed a man should do if his wife went against Sharia principles. "This does not necessarily mean something to do with her character alone," he clarified, adding that the man has to follow a five-step regime that shows his displeasure before resorting to physical discipline.

Firstly, a man should express his annoyance; then — if the couple sleeps in the same bed — they should not face each other; thirdly, the man should sleep in a separate bed; and fourthly, he should sleep in a separate room. If the woman fails to mend her ways despite these rebukes, the CII chief said that her husband was then allowed to show aggression towards her, albeit gently.

"But aggression does not mean that he can slap her face, or any of the soft parts of her body. He also cannot degrade her by hitting her with something like a broom, no matter how lightly," Maulana Sheerani added.

Throughout the presser, the CII chief was accompanied by senior council member Maulana Iftikhar Naqvi, who continued to assist Maulana Sheerani with his choice of words.

Highlighting the rights of women in Islam, Maulana Naqvi said that a man could not order his wife to prepare meals for him nor could he address her in a harsh tone, and there was no question of mistreating one's wife in Islam.

"There is a general trend in the country that people only criticise [for the sake of criticising], but we have shown that apart from Islam, nearly all monotheistic faiths of the world grant special rights and privileges to women," Maulana Sheerani said.

The three-day meeting was the last CII gathering before the end of the current financial year. The key agenda was discussion on a 75-page 'Women Protection Bill', drafted by a CII member Maulana Imdadullah. Although the bill contained 163 articles, the council could only discuss 26 of these points in its three-day session.

The bill was drafted by the CII after it rejected the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence bill, which was approved by the Punjab Assembly was denounced by nearly all religious segments, except the Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jaffaria (TNFJ). Led by Allama Hamid Ali Moosavi, the TNFJ had welcomed the bill and termed it a positive step to "tame the illiterates" in the country.

Even though the bill has been ratified by the Punjab Assembly, it has yet to be notified due to a backlash from clerics and conservative quarters.

Meanwhile, a similar draft, forwarded to the CII by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government, was also rejected. The CII had announced that it would prepare its own bill to highlight the rights and powers granted to women in this regard.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1260903>

CII: OF WHAT USE?

Dawn, May 28th, 2016

If the Council of Islamic Ideology's regular anti-women pronouncements were turned into satirical theatre imagine the shock value, given the body's peculiar fixation with all things women.

The latest example focuses on the CII's 75-page women protection 'bill'. Clearly in response to the Punjab Women Protection bill (rejected as 'un-Islamic' by the CII), the council, under its chairman Maulana Mohammad Khan Sheerani, has suggested that a husband be allowed to 'lightly' beat his wife 'if needed', among other such clauses.

Surely the word 'protection' has been misconstrued. Another recommendation is that while women should be allowed to enter politics they should not be permitted to receive foreign officials.

What is lost on the council is that Pakistan was the first Muslim country to elect a female prime minister with potential for the same in the future given the number of committed women legislators. Moreover, Pakistani women have proved themselves as the best ambassadors for their country as sportswomen, filmmakers, diplomats, pilots, scientists, doctors and entrepreneurs.

With its history of baseless attacks on women, will the CCI be allowed to dictate how women are treated and how they should conduct themselves? Or will parliamentarians exert themselves to ensure that such pointless interventions are not taken seriously?

It is exactly this sort of regressive mindset that hampers the implementation of pro-women legislation that is the outcome of years of relentless campaigning by rights activists.

Among its many interventions, the CCI has rejected the admittance of DNA testing as primary evidence in sexual assault cases, insisting on the testimony of four male witnesses; argued that nine-year-old girls are of marriageable age; and criticised the existing law that requires written approval from the first wife if her husband wants to marry a second time.

Further, it had a hand in thwarting the passing of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) bill in 2010 in the Senate, terming it un-Islamic because it would increase the divorce rate.

While it is true that the CII's recommendations are not legally binding, politicians have often failed to resist the religious body's assault — a case in point is the KP government that despite the CII's known views on women enlisted its help in vetting the provincial domestic violence bill.

If the CII were trying to effect genuine social change, it would also take note of non-women issues and offer recommendations to end extremism and curb hate speech besides lobbying for greater protection of minorities.

In any case, in a freely elected democratic polity, should there be space for an obsolete body such as the CII? Parliament is already bound by the Constitution to legislate in a manner that does not deviate from Islamic principles. Perhaps that is the most pressing argument in favour of disbanding the CII.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261054/cii-of-what-use>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 16TH TO MAY 22ND 2016

VILLAGERS RESIST NIKAH OF 10-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Dawn, May 16th, 2016

SUKKUR: Residents of Mian Mahar village situated near Pannu Aqil on Sunday held a demonstration outside the Sukkur Press Club against forcible marriage of a 10-year-old girl with a 30-year-old man.

The protesters, led by Waryam Mahar, Sarang Mahar and Tahir Hussain Mahar, told the media that feudal lords of the area including Mir Mohammed Mahar, Buland Mahar, Sahibo Mahar and Sajan Mahar, were forcing them to hand over a 10-year-old girl, Bachal, to an elderly man by solemnising their Nikah.

They said that they resisted the order but the feudal lords sent a group of armed men to their village who beat up her defiant parents and relatives and warned of dire consequences if they did not come to terms of the village elders.

Sarang Mahar said that the same feudal lords had snatched his 12-year-old daughter, Fareeda, and forcibly solemnised her marriage with a 30-year-old man, Dilbar Mahar, a few months back.

They said they approached SHO of the Mubarakpur police station Ahmed Ali Halepota but he along with his subordinate policemen instead carried out raids on the their homes and picked up a youth, Mohammed Urs Mahar, who was still unaccounted for. They alleged that the area police were subservient to the feudal lords.

They urged the higher authorities to intervene in the matter and provide protection to them against the feudal lords' high-handedness. They also called for action against the area police.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258590>

UNDERAGE MARRIAGES PRODUCE UNHEALTHY GENERATIONS, SEMINAR TOLD

Dawn, May 16th, 2016

HYDERABAD: Participants at a three-day workshop opposed underage marriages while observing that such custom always leads to unhealthy generation and even male members are seen as victims because they fail to resist this custom.

The workshop, which concluded on Saturday, was organised by the Sindh Community Foundation (SCF) in collaboration with the UN-Trust Fund to help end violence against women. Representatives of community-based organisations from nine districts attended it.

They decided to form a civil society alliance against this custom (underage marriage). The alliance aims at strengthening coordination with government functionaries, educationists, professionals, health providers, religious leaders, parents and media regarding the issue.

SCF head Javed Hussain said that now sustainable development goals (SDGs) were set in the world and the SDG-5 focuses gender equality.

He urged stakeholders to come forward for effective mechanism, awareness regarding legislation at grassroots level and implementation of laws.

Shahida Khaskheli from Tando Muhammad Khan said cultural practices hindered activists to address the issue as in many cases parents compromised over local pressure; even law could not take its course.

She emphasised the need for collective efforts to stop this exercise. She quoted some cases in which education played role when girls themselves foiled attempts of their underage marriage. Shahnaz Sheedi, Punhal Sario of the Sindh Hari Porhiyat Council and Zulfiqar Halepoto moderated the sessions held at the workshop.

Speakers pointed out that behavioral change among parents was necessary. Any impulsive decision could create problems in families which impacted lives of girls. They discussed mass campaigns to create awareness about the law against underage marriages. Orangi Pilot Project Director Anwar Rashid, writer Aquila Ismail and development expert Tasneem Siddiqui distributed certificates among participants.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258589>

SUSPECTED RAPE VICTIM DIES AT PIMS

Dawn, May 17th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: A 20-year-old patient, who was allegedly raped at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) over a month ago, died on Monday morning after remaining on the ventilator for almost two months.

However, the investigation into the incident could not arrive at any conclusion even though the matter was taken up by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Human Rights.

On April 9, Pims was rocked with the allegation that the woman paralysed by the Guillain-Barré (GB) Syndrome had been raped by an official of the hospital.

GB syndrome is a disease in which a virus attacks the spinal cord and the person affected with it is paralysed. Sometimes the paralysis starts from legs and travels towards the upper part of the body and sometimes it starts from the upper part of the body and travels towards the legs.

On the complaint of the patient's father, the Pims administration constituted a three-member committee, headed by Dr Abid Farooqi, to probe the matter. In the meantime, the prime minister's inspection team also reached the spot and finally the matter was referred to the police who arrested the suspect.

On May 2, at a meeting chaired by Babar Nawaz Khan, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Human Rights, also took up the matter.

Pims Vice Chancellor Dr Javed Akram informed the committee that the medical report had showed that the girl was not raped. Moreover, he said, there was no witness to the incident.

He suggested the committee to wait for the forensic report, which is, however, yet to be received.

An official of Pims, requesting not to be identified, said the patient remained on the ventilator for almost two months and died without getting justice.

"The incident raised many questions whether CCTV cameras should be installed in the intensive care units (ICUs) and what steps should be taken to avoid such incidents," he said.

In ICUs, the official said, CCTV cameras cannot be installed to ensure patient's privacy.

"Though there is a standard operating procedure, it is a problem all over the world. As many as 17 such cases were reported in the US during the last one year."

Dr Javed Akram told Dawn that the patient died at 6am on Monday.

He said patients suffering from paralysis rarely recovers from the disease. He said the Pims administration had made arrangements to transport the body to the native town of the deceased in KP.

“The incident became a matter of embarrassment for the medical community. A new SOP has therefore been prepared for the hospital under which no male nurse can touch a female patient. In case of paralysis or semiconscious patients, treatment can only be given during the presence of an attendant,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258871>

PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE: WOMEN DIG, SPS IN NEW SCHEME OF THINGS

Dawn, May 18th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The provincial government has decided to create the post of a woman DIG and depute women SPs at the Violence against Women Centres (VAWCs) to effectively enforce the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act.

The stated aim of the gender specific set-up is to protect women against violence without the influence of the male-dominated provincial police. It is a complete paradigm shift from the existing model of registration and prosecution of gender violence cases which currently rely heavily on the male-dominated mindset.

The chief minister on Tuesday directed the IGP to create the post of DIG Women Protection after his secretariat's Special Monitoring Unit's (Law and Order) head Salman Sufi gave him a briefing.

Officials confirmed the availability of a woman DIG officer who could be posted against the new post. They said the first woman SP would be posted at the maiden centre in Multan, where all justice delivery departments including FIR lodging, police reporting, prosecution, medico-legal, forensics and post-trauma rehabilitation are being placed under one roof.

The centres would be established gradually and there might not be any problem in arranging for women SPs for them, they said.

According to officials, the woman DIG will have powers to make decisions for the protection and rehabilitation of women victims of violence across the province and ensure the delivery of justice, without unnecessary delay or moral judgments. She will be able to collaborate with the women SPs at the VAWCs.

The DIG Women Protection post is proposed to be placed in the CPO under the direct command of the IGP. The women police officers to be placed in VAWC's across 36 districts in Punjab will benefit directly from this step as there will be a higher official to curb typical political pressure or red tape marring successful investigation or case registration of VAW Crimes, officials said.

The job of the DIG will be to supervise working of police officials deployed in the centres in all districts of Punjab. She will keep record of all VAW cases, and ensure registration of FIRs in any police station of any district of Punjab and referral of women victims to VAWCs even in districts where they will not immediately be available.

She will supervise collection of all evidence, crime scene preservation, forensics and consequent investigation, liaise with prosecution to ensure higher rate of convictions of perpetrators of crimes against women, overlook targets, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, maintain records and publication of information. She will also liaise with district women protection committees, district women protection officers and women protection officers.

The SPs at the centres will have complete autonomy to issue FIR against any case of violence against women. Their jurisdiction will not only be limited to cases that directly come to the centres. They will also handle other cases in nearby areas and redirect them to the centres for investigation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259088>

DEMANDING JUSTICE: MURDERED WOMAN'S RELATIVES STAGE PROTEST

The Express Tribune, May 18th, 2016.

DERA GHAZI KHAN: Dozens of people staged a protest demonstration on Tuesday against police for not arresting a woman's murderers.

The protesters marched from Qadarya Chowk to the RPO office. They staged a sit-in outside the RPO office.

They burnt tyres and blocked the road for traffic. They chanted slogans against Muzaffargarh's Civil Lines police station.

Sheikh Iftikhar, a resident of Block-P, said that area police were not arresting those who had kidnapped and later murdered Mehwish Bibi.

"Mehwish, daughter of Sheikh Yameen, was married to Muhammad Asif, a resident of Muzaffargarh. Last week, she returned to her parents' home in Dera Ghazi Khan after quarreling with her in-laws.

A few days later, her father-in-law, Ashiq Ali came there. He convinced her family to let her go home with him. The next day, he informed Yameen that his daughter had been kidnapped by unidentified people.

We registered a complaint with police. A few days later, we learned that the police had found a body. It later turned out to be Mehwish. She had been murdered," he said.

He said that Yameen had lodged a complaint with Civil Lines Police against Asif and Ashiq Ali for murdering Mehwish.

"Police have not taken any action so far against any of the suspects," he said. The protesters demanded that police immediately arrest the accused. They then dispersed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1105294/demanding-justice-murdered-womans-relatives-stage-protest/>

BLAMING FEMINISM

The Express Tribune, May 18th, 2016.

Feminists are wrong.' 'They don't have any idea of Pakistani culture.' 'They are elite who represent the privileged strata of Pakistan'. 'They don't understand the complexities of Pakistani society.'

These are some of the arguments that people in Pakistan make against feminists. The dilemma is: a majority of the critics are not aware of the roots of the feminist movement or its aims. The latest example is a piece published in this newspaper titled "Just another open letter to feminists". The writer, Ummia Shahid, asks a few questions and then develops a case against feminists based on those questions.

The questions posed confuse feminism and the feminist movement with other struggles. Let me clarify one thing before presenting counter arguments. Humans hold so many identities at a given time. For example, I am a male (gender identity), dependent on salary for survival (economic identity), Pakhtun from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (ethnic and geographic identity). Being a male in Pakistan, I am from a privileged class.

If you want to judge me by my ethnic identity, I am underprivileged in Pakistan. The feminist movement is about the performance of gender identities in the socio-historical context.

Now let us dissect Ms Shahid's questions and arguments.

The first question she poses is, "Did you know that hundreds of Third World boys are viciously murdered on a daily basis?" Based on this question, she argues that "all everyone (including media and feminazis) talks about are the girls

who are kidnapped or tortured”. Yes, she is right. Both boys and girls get killed. But does she know what the feminist manifesto or agenda is? The movement is a resistance against historical male dominance in society.

It is about resisting patriarchy. The movement has a clear agenda: the empowerment of women and resisting male dominance. Feminists never said that killing boys is right but protesting against the killing of the opposite gender is not on their priority list. We should look at the feminist movement in the socio-historical context. The killing of both men and women in society does not mean that both are equal, or equally suppressed. Women have been historically marginalised.

The feminist movement is about gender inequalities. Do you think that males and females in Pakistan have equal opportunities to go to school? No. Do you think both are punished equally for the same amount of crime? No. Do you think that women, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan, are empowered enough to make their decisions themselves? No. Feminists protest against every atrocity committed against females by the opposite gender.

They resist the killing of women for a crime committed by their male counterparts. The equal number of murders cannot justify the historical suppression of women that still continues in patriarchal societies. Again, feminists are more interested in investigating and resisting gender inequalities than economic or ethnic inequities.

The second question the writer asks is: “Did you know that Third World boys make up possibly more than half of all sexually exploited children?” And then, she bemoans that the boys are getting neglected because of feminists. I don’t understand how the writer links this question with feminism? Yes, feminists don’t write about boys, simply because they are striving for something else. But did feminists stop someone else from writing about “sexually exploited children”? No. Other scholars interested in that issue can always write about it.

There are people who are writing about child labour, child sexual abuse and economic inequality. Feminists are striving for gender equality and resisting male dominance. Resisting economic or other social inequalities is not at the centre of their activism.

Now let us analyse the third question that Ms Shahid poses: “Did you know that a bulky chunk of Third World boys live their lives enveloped in slave labour and under appallingly inhuman conditions?” The writer probably doesn’t know what feminists mean by “labour”. She generalises “slave labour”. I am appalled by how the writer, a woman herself, thinks that boys and girls are made to do an equal amount of “slave labour”.

Look at the gender inequality in the socio-historical context. A majority of women, especially in the rural areas of Pakistan, are doing slave labour 24 hours a day. The decision of whether they will go to school or not is taken by their father, husband, or brother. They cannot decide on their own whether they will earn their livelihoods. They cannot make even a single decision on their own. Feminists resist against that “institutional male dominance and suppression of women”.

Ms Shahid, addressing feminists, then claims that “This may surprise you, but many women who confine themselves to societal norms don’t believe they’re oppressed at all”. This opinion won’t surprise feminists. Privileged and dominant institutions in society — in this case male — always maintain their hegemony through a combination of force and consent. The dominant classes make you believe that you are making your decision by choice when in actual fact, you aren’t. Foucault noted that “naturalisation is the royal road to common sense”.

Interestingly, common sense is determined by those who have power and resources: in this case, males. Hundreds of women believe that male dominance is natural. It isn’t. Male dominance is socially created. Feminists want to create awareness among women about their historical exploitation. They want women to make their decisions themselves. They would argue: do whatever you want based on your own informed opinion.

I would recommend that Ms Shahid read feminist literature before writing about feminism. Her arguments against feminism have no relevance to the feminist movement. It is just like blaming Shahid Afridi for not scoring goals in the English Premier League.

Disclaimer: I am not part of any feminist movement. However, I am against institutional hegemony.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1105132/blaming-feminism/>

PROTECTING WOMEN

Dawn, May 19th, 2016

PUNJAB appears to be leading the way in putting concepts of women's protection into actual practice. In February, its provincial assembly had passed the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2015. In many ways, this is perhaps the most comprehensive legislation on the subject because it also takes into account cultural realities that make women doubly vulnerable in this society and stipulates measures to address them.

Then, on Tuesday, the Punjab chief minister directed the province's top police official to create the post of DIG women protection — to which a woman will be appointed and which will be under the IGP's direct command — and depute women superintendents at the Violence Against Women Centres in order to implement the aforementioned legislation.

It is encouraging that not only has the Punjab government resisted the pressure from religious parties to roll back or modify the Women's Protection Act, but has seen fit to take follow-up steps fairly quickly. Many a good law on our statute books has been unable to make any impact because of lack of implementation. The domestic violence legislation in Sindh and Balochistan, passed in 2013 and 2014 respectively, is a case in point.

In fact, where setting up implementing mechanisms is concerned, laws pertaining to violence against women or to cultural practices that violate women's rights are particularly prone to foot-dragging. There is simply not enough enthusiasm within the relevant political circles or the bureaucracy — both of them overwhelmingly male — to change a status quo so skewed in their favour.

The VAWCs are the linchpin of the Women's Protection Act, containing under one roof all the facilities required to deal with cases of gender-based violence from initial reporting all the way up to post-trauma rehabilitation. Appointing a senior woman police officer specifically to head them, and giving her the requisite powers to do so effectively, makes eminent sense. Care must be taken, however, that these centres retain their specialised purpose and do not become an extension of women's police stations.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1259165>

HONOUR KILLING: WOMAN SHOT DEAD BY BROTHER

The Express Tribune, May 22nd, 2016.

Amjad Hussain Raja

KALLAR SYEDAN: A woman was shot dead on Saturday by her brother in an apparent honour killing, the Kallar Syedan police said. The victim, identified as Saiqa Qayyum, 30, was shot twice in head at her house in Dhoke Sabri and died on the spot.

The victim's husband, Abdul Qayyum, is working abroad and she was living at her in-laws' house along with their four children.

The preliminary investigation suggests that the woman was allegedly planning on eloping with a local man, Tufail. On Saturday, the victim's brother, Zubair, visited her house to talk her out of her out of eloping. He shot her when she refused to do as he said, the police added.

Kallar Syedan SHO Khizer Hayat said one of the victim's female in-laws told them that "Qayyum was packing her bags to leave when her brother arrived and he shot her after a heated exchange."

The victim's brother-in-law told the police that he was at work when he was informed of the incident. He said that at the time, he did not know who the shooter was, but was later given details of the incident by other relatives.

The police shifted the body to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital for medico-legal formalities. Hayat said that a case has been registered and an investigation has begun, adding that the suspect will be arrested as soon as they track him down.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1107772/honour-killing-woman-shot-dead-brother/>

ACID ATTACK SURVIVOR GANG-RAPED IN LAYYAH

The Express Tribune, May 22nd, 2016.

LAHORE / LAYYAH: A married woman, who had lost her eyesight in a 2002 acid attack, was allegedly gang-raped in the southern Punjab district of Layyah, police said on Saturday.

Muhammad Younus, a neighbour of the 35-year-old victim, allegedly sexually assaulted her at his residence along with two friends, Saleem and Khalid, according to DSP Saddar Akram Niazi.

Younus had met the victim at the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) Kot Sultan, where she had gone for the medical checkup of her 12-year-old daughter. Younus lured her to his house, saying that he had Rs3,000 in Zakat donation for her.

Since it was the Friday prayer break at the hospital, the woman went to Younus's place along with her daughter to collect the money. However, when she reached there, she was allegedly subjected to sexual abuse.

Police said the woman – a mother of four and wife of a day labourer – belongs to a poor family, which has been receiving financial assistance and charity from the alleged rapist.

The family told The Express Tribune that the alleged rapist and his accomplices first tied up the victim and her daughter before sexually assaulting her in a separate room. The victim said Younus also threatened her that he would also rape her daughter if she disclosed what had happened to her.

Police registered an FIR under Section 376 (rape) and 496-A (enticement to have illicit intercourse) of the Pakistan Penal Code against Younus and his accomplices.

SHO Kot Sultan police station Shahid Rizwan told The Express Tribune that they have detained two of the alleged rapists, Younus and Khalid, in raids. He added that the victim was medically examined at the THQ to establish rape.

Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif took notice of the incident and ordered the provincial police chief to arrest the culprits and submit a progress report within 24 hours.

The victim had lost eyesight in 2002 when her cousin threw acid on her after she rejected his marriage proposal. The accused was convicted for the attack and was released after six years in jail when both parties reached reconciliation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1107842/acid-attack-survivor-gang-raped-layyah/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 9TH TO MAY 15TH 2016

WOMEN SEEK LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTANI STARTUP CULTURE

The Express Tribune, May 9th, 2016.

Ligia Aguilhar / Aroosa Shaukat

LAHORE: When Jehan Ara opened her startup incubator Nest I/O last year in Karachi, only one woman applied in the first batch. In the latest one, however, 35% of the applicants were women.

For Ara, the ongoing effort to bring more women in the technology sector makes it even more challenging in an environment lacking due support.

President of Pakistan Software Houses Association for IT (P@sha), Ara started her own technology company during the mid 1990s. She comes from a generation of female technologists who helped shape the Pakistani IT industry and brought more women to the job market. Since then many women have made it to the corporate world. But, according to Ara, they still need to forge a system that provides a support structure to allow women to break barriers and get to the top.

“We have women in leadership [roles] but it is [still] not enough,” she says.

As one of the first female leaders in the local IT sector, she felt it was time to act. Ara went to universities around Pakistan to promote the Karachi-based incubator and push women to apply. “Technology companies still don’t provide women with flexible working hours,” she says. According to Ara, facilities like day care and transportation are still lacking in the sector. “This is why I have been telling women they have to start their own businesses in technology,” she says.

With the rise of the Pakistani startup scene over the past few years, many women in technology are finding their way to the top.

“The workplaces in Pakistan are not very child-friendly which is what makes it difficult for the mothers to become productive at work,” says Dr Umar Saif, founder of Plan9, Pakistan’s largest startup incubator, and chairman of the Punjab Information Technology Board. “I believe internet and ecommerce have leveraged the field for female entrepreneurs. While in a traditional business you have to interact with your clientele, over the internet you can do your business from your house, which makes it easier for females.”

Wajiha Kashan is one of the examples of Pakistan’s new generation of female entrepreneurs. After working in the software industry for years, she decided to make her dream of being an administrator come true. The opportunity to become an entrepreneur chanced upon her after her marriage. In partnership with her husband, also one of her former subordinates, she went on to create three startups: a peer-to-peer sharing consignment store Affordable.pk, the digital design agency Concept Beans and the consultancy agency Simple Media.

“My husband and I started working on our first business third day into our marriage. We bought a computer from the gift money we got at our wedding and started working from our bedroom,” she said. Today she manages a 16-hour work schedule with the help of her family that takes care of their two children.

More incentive to female leadership also helps Pakistan avoid some of its brain drain. An example is Sahr Said, who after completion of a two-year MBA in Cornell University, turned down opportunities in the US to become an entrepreneur in her own country. Last year she co-founded Beauty Hooked, a startup that helps Pakistani women book beauty services.

“The tech environment in Pakistan is very conducive for women, more than any other employment circle,” she said.

Because she is a woman, Sahr says investors and mentors are more open towards helping her. She finds this important as she needs the expertise and networking to attract investors to her business. “There is a certain type of individual in the startup industry that is very educated and driven and they don’t care about stereotypes, because stereotypes come with the passing of generations.” With the rise of more female entrepreneurs like her, Sahr expects to help the industry stay away of stereotypes.

The gender equality issue has been a major problem for most developed countries. In the US women make it for 59% of workforce, but only 15.6% work in IT, according to the latest Census data. In Pakistan, females correspond to 25% of the workforce, according to the World Bank, and around 14% work in the IT sector, according to P@sha.

But the Pakistani gender issue is more complex. The 2014 Gender Global Entrepreneurship and Development Index, a report on women entrepreneurship sponsored by Dell, ranked Pakistan 30 out of 31 countries from all the continents for favorable conditions to promote female entrepreneurship.

“Pakistan needs to focus on improving fundamental issues such as women’s rights, women’s access to resources such as education and bank accounts, women’s access to broader labor force sectors as well as improving the business regulatory environment,” says the report. According to it, only 3% of Pakistan’s management positions are held by women, versus 59% in Jamaica and 43% in the US.

Some Pakistani companies are trying to make a difference. At We R Play studios, a videogame company in Islamabad, 42% of the workforce is female. The company offers three-months paid maternity leave and allows female staff to work from home.

“After launching in 2010, the first five hires were men,” says Mohammed Usman Khan, head of marketing at We R Play. Mohsin Afzal, the CEO, then recognised the need to recruit women early in the company’s life in what he describes as an effort to develop a female-friendly work culture as the company grew. “Females definitely bring in a lot of diversity. They seem to take their jobs as leads with more responsibility and pay more attention to hiccups. All our Quality Assurance projects are currently led by females,” says Afzal.

Statistically, women form a strong qualified workforce in the IT sector. In Karachi’s NED University of Engineering and Technology, there are 53% of female students earning their Bachelor of Science in Computer Science & Information Technology programme and 63% in the Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering programme.

“The challenge for Pakistani women is that there is a strong family culture that worries about girl’s safety and security. It is difficult for many girls to pursue high education because they will marry early. We need a cultural shift,” says Sheba Najmi, founder of Code for Pakistan – a group that teaches digital skills to encourage more people, including women, to develop digital solutions to many of the country’s problems.

A Stanford University grad, Najmi currently works in the technology industry in the Bay Area, in the US.

“Being a woman from Pakistan I feel there are enormous opportunities because it is kind of not-great for women everywhere. In Silicon Valley the system is not designed with motherhood in mind, the barriers are similar”, she says. “In Pakistan there is not a bro culture like in Silicon Valley. Coworkers treat you well and in schools, girls generally outshine boys.”

A recent survey conducted with support of Stanford University reveals that 60% of women working in Silicon Valley have experienced some kind of harassment in the workplace. In Pakistan, though, a 2012 survey made by P@sha shows that 55% of women in the Pakistani IT sector consider it a good industry to work because of the opposite: there is no harassment and they feel highly appreciated.

Arusha Imtiaz, a 25-year-old who recently graduated from Pakistani accelerator Plan 9, says that although the IT and startup industries are female-friendly, founders from both sexes will struggle with limitations from the country’s young startup scene. She recently set up an office for her startup, SMAC Factory, a system that connects parents with teachers to provide more information about their children’s education.

“If you are not part of an environment as in an accelerator, hiring is very difficult, because Pakistan does not have a culture where people work in their rooms. There are challenges raising investment, finding mentors and a good team, especially if you are young or a female,” she said. Her company recently received an investment that valued it at \$2 million.

The 25-year old entrepreneur who looks at Mark Zuckerberg for inspiration says all Pakistani women need to thrive is equal opportunities. “But I don’t think women need a movement. I am totally against treating men and women

differently because that is how you start creating the differences yourself. What we need is to create the same opportunities for women and men.”

The article is a joint project of the Medill School of Journalism and The Express Tribune

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1099558/women-seek-leadership-in-pakistani-startup-culture/>

WORLD BANK URGES PAKISTAN TO SPEED UP REFORM, EMPLOY MORE WOMEN FOR GROWTH

Dawn, May 10th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must speed up reform of the energy sector and bring more women into the labour force if it wants to quicken economic growth that lags far behind regional peers, the World Bank’s country representative said on Monday.

The World Bank expects Pakistan’s economy to expand by 4.5 per cent in 2016, missing the government’s 5.5pc target and trailing behind other South Asian nations where growth is expected to average about 7pc this year.

The bank sees 2017 growth edging up to 4.8pc in Pakistan, a nation of 190 million people. Experts say the economy needs to expand by at least 6pc a year to absorb new entrants to the workforce.

Illango Patchamuthu, the World Bank country director, said Pakistan had benefited from a collapse in global oil prices and tough fiscal measures by the government over the past few years to stabilise the economy.

But he urged faster reform in the energy sector, which has suffered decades of under-investment. Businesses say frequent power outages hurt growth and investment.

“To me, the whole story around power reforms is still only half done,” Patchamuthu told Reuters in an interview.

He said Pakistan must tackle its so-called circular debt problem, which stems from unpaid government subsidies that build up until power plant owners cannot afford fuel. It stands at about \$3 billion.

The government expects its electricity rationing system of “load-shedding” to end by 2018 after it signed more than \$30bn in energy generation projects as part of the \$46bn China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

But efforts to privatise a host of electricity distribution companies have stalled, as have other reforms.

Mr Patchamuthu said the government has been focused on power generation, but it must also seek to improve distribution and upgrade ancient transmission systems.

“A lot more needs to be done in the next several years to build up the whole power infrastructure,” he said.

Mr Patchamuthu said another way for Pakistan to significantly boost growth is reforming its male-dominated labour market, where women account for only 22pc of the workforce.

“If Pakistan wants to get to 7-8pc (growth) with structural reforms, they also have to do much more in drawing women into the labour force,” he said.

In 2014, Pakistan was ranked as the second worst nation in the world for gender equality after Yemen, according to the Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum.

“There are social and cultural challenges,” Mr Patchamuthu said. “But if the women are skilled and they are given the right opportunities the economy is only going to bloom and blossom.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1257337>

A WOMEN’S JIRGA

Dawn, May 11th, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

When interviewed by Reuters, Zardad Khan, from the village of Makol to which 16-year-old Ambreen belonged, said, “This barbarity has never happened before.” The teenager was killed, her body put in a van and burned.

His words may be true for the village of Makol but not for Pakistan in general. Over recent decades, village after village and, in particular, jirga after jirga, has been implicated in ordering murders and even rapes of women under the pretext of preserving ‘honour’. Over a decade ago was the famous case of Mukhtaran Mai, ordered raped and humiliated in Meerwala. More recently, a tribal jirga in Kohistan condemned four women because they were seen clapping and singing apparently in the company of men in a grainy mobile phone video. They had been attending a relative’s wedding.

The numbers are probably greater than most imagine and, as is the case with crimes against women in Pakistan, difficult to tabulate with real accuracy. Pakistani society, at all levels, is adept at cover-ups for the crimes of men, at subterfuge supporting the easy erasure of women. The status of the jirga- or panchayat-ordered killing, an ironic form of ‘justice’, is a sub-category within the larger compartment of ‘honour killings’, both populated with the lost lives of women who died to sate the anger and bloodlust of men.

Functioning as instruments of communal justice, jirgas often dole out sentences unfettered by the constraints of the laws of the country. As Ambreen’s tragic end reveals, they can carry out their sentences. Outcry, if it follows at all, takes place after the object of their wrath is already dead. In many cases, once outcry and attention have faded, all those indicted for the crime (if they are indicted at all) are often freed to live their lives.

In a country where a woman’s life has meagre worth, why should men be punished for taking it? Given the regularity with which women are ordered killed, there seems to be implicit agreement on this point.

In their current form, jirgas are composed almost entirely of men and unbound by the limits of the law of the country. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the form of justice doled out by them is misogynistic and brutal. In simple terms, a community’s need for expedient dispute resolution is manipulated by its powerful men and then used to order and enforce punishments that serve their own interests.

The weakness of the state’s own legal system, the cost involved in availing oneself of it and the deadly delays that ail it further bolster the reach and mandate of local jirgas. Even for the villagers of Makol, which isn’t far from larger towns and cities, the court system, it seems, was too far away, too distant from the lives of Makol’s inhabitants.

It does not have to be this way. The work of one woman in the valley of Swat reveals how the actual need for justice and the provision of it at a communal level can be harnessed to protect and empower women, rather than leaving them at the mercy of ruthless and self-interested men. Three years ago, Tabassum Adnan inaugurated a Sister’s Council or ‘Khwendo Jirga’ in the village of Mingora.

According to Adnan, who was herself married at the age of 13 and endured domestic abuse, the existing tribal councils in her community did not permit women to join them. Fed up of this decision, she got together a group of women and began discussing the issues and concerns of the community with them.

The women then pressed the men on the jirga council to take their decisions and consensus into account. According to Adnan, nearly 1,000 women in the area are now involved in the Sister's Council by bringing their problems to it and participating in its processes.

Tabassum Adnan's work has received international acclaim. She has received the International Women of Courage Award and just last month was also awarded the Nelson Mandela-Graça Machele Innovation Award.

Her pioneering strategy deserves attention and implementation beyond Swat. A council where women of a community are empowered to intervene and participate in communal decision-making can be a crucial and pressing form of intervention in a situation that has become increasingly untenable.

Tabassum Adnan's jirga does not currently receive any kind of monetary support from the government or from any other source, but its work and powers of enforcement could be enhanced even further if the state invested resources and empowered its leaders. The Sister's Council, with its grass-roots and women-centred agenda, its rootedness in the community, represents a promising answer to a difficult problem.

Not only have honour killings continued in Pakistan, many women's organisations report that their numbers have increased. One reason for this is that while there have been various legislative measures to try and combat the persecution of women and their relegation to the status of objects that can be exchanged or extinguished, there has been no effort towards actually bringing about change at the community level.

Honour killings continue despite laws and campaigns against them, because those committing these crimes continue to believe that they are doing the right thing. They will not stop, unless others in their community speak up, and these others have to be women.

Ambreen was killed at the behest of a jirga; she is just one among so many Pakistani women who have lost their lives in similar ways with community collusion and consensus. A change can only occur if women from communities are empowered to create their own alternate jirgas whose decisions are binding on the community as well.

To help these women's jirgas gain credibility within communities, the state should invest in them, recognise their leaders and incentivise participation. Male jirgas have made Pakistan a home for grotesque and brutal crimes, women's jirgas may actually make it a more just and equitable place.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1257618>

‘LACK OF EVIDENCE HURDLE TO JUSTICE IN VIOLENCE CASES’

Dawn, May 14th, 2016

PESHAWAR: A research on medico-legal services in Peshawar and Swabi districts has revealed gaps in the procedures and approaches adopted by the relevant departments to support the survivors of violence, especially rape victims.

The research was conducted by the Noor Education Trust with the support of Provincial Commission on the Status of Women and Trocaire.

It was launched here during a special ceremony, where forensic and health experts, lawyers and police officers were present.

NET head Zubaida Noor said there should be a one-window service to provide support immediately needed in violence-related cases, especially to rape victims.

Sabahat Mushtaq of the NET said the study was conducted after a violence victim died while resisting the attempt of kidnapping.

She said in many such cases, families failed to produce medico-legal evidence to get justice.

The study researched on the implementation of the medico-legal procedures with the gender-based violence victims and survivors at different government hospitals including LRH, KTH and HMC, forensic medicine and toxicology department, forensic sciences laboratories and police stations and even lower courts.

The study said service accessibility of medico-legal clinics in Peshawar and Swabi districts had many flaws and that the facility lacked equipment and some cases were referred to other provinces.

It added that many respondents from the police and even health department were not aware of the forms of VAW and had no knowledge of laws related to such kind of violence.

The study said many such facilities lacked staff, especially at the forensic department.

“Often health and medico-legal service providers don’t know if the consent of violence survivors or victims should be taken before medico-legal procedure,” it said.

The study also said there was no code of conduct or guidelines for the officials while writing a medico-legal report while dealing with violence survivors.

It said the record-keeping and follow-up mechanism was not available at the police department in medico-legal cases, while the violence survivors or victims needing medico-legal services did not have any security.

Sabahat Mushtaq said a team of experts from different relevant departments had visited Bangladesh and studied the medico-legal practices model used in Bangladesh.

The study conducted to know the gaps and then look for solutions in light of Bangladesh model also gave some recommendations and way forward to improve existing policies and practices in the province.

It suggested the recruitment of relevant staff members and capacity building of the existing staff to deal with the medico-legal cases.

According to the study, although the medico-legal services are being provided in emergency or casualty units of the public sector hospitals in the province, there is a need for hiring sufficient staff to provide all related services on one-window basis. It called for the awareness of the relevant forensic and medical staff at hospitals about laws on women’s protection.

The participants discussed different problems, lack of coordination among the relevant departments as well as lack of staff and suggested that SOPs or standard operating procedures be developed so that medico-legal cases could be dealt with properly.

They said the medico-legal services needed to be provided at districts.

Chairperson of the PCSW Neelam Turo said the commission could form a task force to take up on developing SOPs and force the government to start one-window medico-legal facility at each district hospital.

She said the policy on the women’s empowerment should include support for women victims or survivors of the violence and medico-legal facilities for them.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258302>

ASSAULT CONFIRMED: HYD WOMAN ALLEGEDLY GANG RAPED AT KARACHI HOSPITAL

The Express Tribune, May 14th, 2016

Faraz Khan

KARACHI: A 24-year-old woman from Hyderabad was allegedly raped by at least six men working at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) early on Friday.

SIUT, a reputable medical institution in the country that provides free-of-charge specialised medical care to people suffering from kidney- and liver-related diseases, denied the family's claims. A press release issued by the hospital on Friday evening claimed that they had security footage proving the girl was not raped.

H*, a dialysis patient, was a regular visitor at SIUT. She was discharged from the hospital on May 9 after nearly two weeks of treatment and was called for a follow-up check-up on Thursday night.

"I was with her," said the victim's nephew, Saddam Hussain, while speaking to The Express Tribune. "The dialysis was scheduled for 12am but the doctors delayed it till 3am," he said. The doctors took her to the second floor for the dialysis and asked Hussain to wait outside the dialysis centre. "They took advantage of my absence," he claimed.

According to Hussain, the doctors and paramedics allegedly raped her and then took her for the dialysis. She was asked to go home after 6am. "I had no idea what had happened to her at the hospital. She seemed shocked which caused suspicions," shared Hussain. "We started questioning her and, around 9am, she narrated all that happened."

H told the family that a group of six doctors and paramedics gang raped her before the dialysis. The family rushed her to Eidgah police station where the police asked for a medical examination before registering the case.

They took H to Services Hospital situated near Civil Hospital, Karachi, where Dr Sumayya conducted her medical examination. According to her initial medical examination report, H was subjected to gang rape. "The police registered a case in the afternoon after we returned with the medical report," said Hussain. "We want justice and we appeal to the higher authorities and the media to help us."

Eidgah police confirmed that an FIR No 79/16 has been registered against six unidentified men. "We have just started recording the statements of the [hospital] employees but so far we could not find any suspects," said Eidgah SHO Naeemuddin. "As the medical report has also confirmed the rape, we will have to obtain the CCTV footage as well," he added. "The woman told us that she can identify their faces and we will have to arrange an identification parade soon."

Meanwhile, SIUT issued a press release completely denying the incident took place. There is no iota of truth in the incident of alleged case of criminal assault, said a hospital spokesperson, adding that senior officials at SIUT reviewed the in-house security camera footage along with the police officers for the time duration that the woman was inside hospital premises.

"The subject woman remains visible throughout the period while she was at SIUT," stated the press release, adding that this was merely an attempt to tarnish the institute's image..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1102895/assault-confirmed-hyd-woman-allegedly-gang-raped-at-karachi-hospital/>

'ONLY 2PC CRIMES IN NAME OF HONOUR GET REPORTED'

Dawn, May 15th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Only two per cent crimes in the name of honour get reported in the media, while most of such complaints being reported to the police are lodged by men as women approach the law enforcement agency only in seven per cent cases.

These views were expressed by Dr Salman Asif, an expert on gender, on Saturday while speaking at a consultative workshop on Safety Challenges for Female Media Professional in Pakistan. The event was organised by the Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) with the support of Open Society Institute.

The workshop, which discussed safety challenges faced by women in general and those working in the media in particular, was divided into two sessions. One focused on the aspects related to gender-based violence and the second session focused on the challenges faced by women in the media where women journalists from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh shared their experiences.

Senior journalist Afia Salam and PPF Secretary General Owais Aslam Ali also spoke about the legislation on sexual harassment and committees formed by media houses and their effectiveness.

Starting off with crime in the name of honour, Dr Asif spoke about the recent killing of a 16-year-old girl in Abbottabad on the orders of a Jirga.

He said such cases were usually reported with a lot of surprise element, where the language used by reporters entailed that it was an unexpected incident. "It is not an unexpected incident when killing for honour is considered acceptable in many areas of our society," he added.

Dr Asif explained that violence against women usually began with the language used against them. He said it seemed as if the language used in the reports and related discussions on social media was intended to titillate the imagination of the public. "These posts discuss the age, gender and the crime committed against a woman but one finds almost no details of the perpetrator," he added.

Many a time, he said, the women seeking justice with regard to sexual harassment or abuse of power were sent back to the same localities and referred to an alternative system, also known as a reconciliation committee. "The role of these committees needs to be looked into deeply. Local stakeholders usually involved in those committees at times show their partiality in the judgement of honour related cases," he added.

Ninety-eight per cent of crime in the name of honour whether happening in Rajanpur in Punjab or Mirpurkhas in Sindh or any part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were never reported, Dr Asif said.

In the remaining two per cent cases, men were usually found lodging complaints whereas only seven per cent of women reported the cases to police, he said.

In the second session, Ms Salam joined Dr Asif in discussing issues related to sexual harassment and its reportage.

"Out of more than a hundred news channels and a dozen or more newspapers, only three news outlets have a committee to listen to cases of sexual harassment," said the senior journalist while opening the session.

Throughout the session, journalists from various news organisations shared their experiences and how they were isolated in the course of reporting harassment.

Ms Salam said that reporting harassment within the media outlets was a "long winding process". She elaborated that it had a lot to do with the way a committee was formed and the way it executed the cases it received. Of the 12 committee members, three were supposed to be women, she added.

However, women journalists questioned the authority and decision-making power of these women. One journalist, while sharing her experience of filing a harassment case in a reputed news organisation, said: "Half of my time was

spent in providing the details of what a colleague had said to me. After almost a year of explanations I was told that I need to wait as the committee is not in the position to decide.” She was eventually informed that there was “no ideal environment anywhere and she needs to adjust her ideals instead”.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1258332>

HEINOUS CRIME: MAN ATTACKS WIFE WITH ACID

The Express Tribune, May 15th, 2016

BAHAWALPUR: A woman was attacked with acid by her husband on Friday.

Mairaj Bibi told police in her complaint she had married Malik Wasim, a resident of Dunyapur, a few years ago. She said they had a daughter. She said soon after their daughter’s birth, Wasim declared that their nikah was not authentic. She said she had taken him to court over this issue.

She said Wasim had also abducted and raped her daughter from her first husband. She said she had moved a complaint in this regard at Saddar police station.

She said he had threatened her many times, saying she would suffer dire consequences if she did not withdraw her complaints against him.

She said she was returning home on Friday night on a rickshaw when Wasim and some unidentified accomplices stopped them near Commerce College in Cheema Town and threw acid on her. She was taken to Bahawal Victoria Hospital where doctors said she had 25 per cent burns.

A Saddar police team arrested Wasim from his house. He told newsmen that he had divorced Mairaj Bibi two months ago.

“She was blackmailing me. I paid her Rs400,000,” he said.

He said he had not attacked her with acid. “She staged this attack with the help of someone else.”

Saddar police have registered an FIR against him under Section 336/B.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1103531/heinous-crime-man-attacks-wife-with-acid/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 2nd TO MAY 8th 2016

PROMISING START: MEN, WOMEN COME TOGETHER TO FIGHT GENDER INEQUALITY

The Express Tribune, May 3rd, 2016.

Yusra Salim

KARACHI: The first Women of the World (WOW) Festival in Karachi saw women and men come together to join the struggle against gender injustice.

WOW founder Jude Kelly appreciated the role of men in attending the event and showing interest in topics such as sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. She was moderating the closing session of the festival, titled ‘Hear Reflections of the Day and Make Your Voice Heard,’ at Beach Luxury Hotel on Sunday.

Reiterating Kelly’s observation on the participation of men, Women Action Forum founder Nighat Said remarked that every person who attended the festival has learned something new, especially men.

These men are likely to better understand the problems of their wives and daughters, and treat them with respect.

Speaking about the significance of such events, Said remarked that the problems of women cannot be resolved in one day.

The people and their problems are diverse, events like these are needed to change mindsets, she added.

I remember when I was four-years-old, my mother would take me along to buy groceries. “I was kind of an escort for my mother, but didn’t know that at that age who was escorting whom,” said actor and director Sarmad Khoosat sharing an anecdote.

We have picked up the right feel for the festival and need to polish it further, he said and appreciated Kelly for organising such an event and bringing it to Karachi.

British-Pakistani standup comedian and journalist Shaista Aziz remembered Karachi and its women as creative, energetic, committed and diverse. “It is good to observe that people do not shy away from speaking on topics such as body shaming, rape and reproductive rights,” she said, adding that Pakistan is full of talented people.

Aside from discussing depressing realities of people, inspirational sessions should also be held to motivate young girls, said Said.

British Council representative Robin Davies said that the festival succeeded in changing his perception to a considerable degree within a span of six hours.

“When I entered the festival this morning I thought I knew about all the problems of women. But coming here and meeting women from rural areas, I realised, how far away from reality we men really are,” he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1095950/promising-start-men-women-come-together-to-fight-gender-inequality/>

UNEQUAL SPACES

Dawn, May 4th, 2016

Bina Shah

PAKISTANI women have always been active participants in Pakistan’s political scene, in roles of support and leadership since the country’s creation. Yet the terrible incident at the PTI rally in Lahore at Charing Cross on Sunday, when over 50 men sexually assaulted women attending the rally, has people asking the age-old question once more: should Pakistani women stay away from political rallies because it’s too dangerous for them to be there?

According to news reports, men broke into the women’s enclave during the rally and began to molest them. PTI chairman Imran Khan had to actually stop his speech and order the men to stop harassing the women and “be more respectful” of them.

The women’s wing of the PTI later wrote an open letter documenting the harassment and demanding better protection during rallies and other public appearances: “It was a nightmare for women... Some women were witnessed crying hysterically and had to be evacuated by ambulance ... it is shameful that we are incapable of protecting our women and children whom we claim to be our front face and strength of PTI.”

The men have been identified with the help of media footage of the assaults, criminal cases have been registered, and Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah says an investigation will take place that will include the PTI management, who failed in their duty to provide security for the women attendees.

In an attempt to deflect blame, PTI supporters claimed the harassers were PML-N thugs sent in to deliberately disrupt the rally. They say that they have nothing but respect for women, and that the PTI chairman stresses this again and again in communications to his followers.

Yet it's hard not to forget the behaviour of PTI supporters online, who harass and abuse women and men regularly on social media. What happened at the rally, for many who have been targeted by them in the virtual world, is the same behaviour played out in the physical world.

Meanwhile, PML-N politicians are using the event as an excuse to bash the PTI, co-opting the role of women's protectors in the light of PTI's failure. It brings to mind the events of the Islamabad dharna last year, when PML-N leaders denigrated the women attending the rally, casting slurs on their morality because they were dancing and enjoying themselves in public.

From this blame game, it seems that neither party is sincere in its claims of respecting and protecting women: Pakistani women are political pawns to be used or abused at will, whenever convenient.

In all the rhetoric, we're in danger of losing sight of the fact that what happened to the women at the PTI rally was sexual assault, regardless of which party the attackers belonged to. If unchecked, sexual harassment and assault at political rallies has the potential to harm much more than just the individual women targeted at rallies.

The PTI must make a serious effort to catch and prosecute the sexual offenders at the Charing Cross rally. If they are found to be PTI members, they must be ejected from the party with no exceptions. This would be the strongest message possible that the PTI does not tolerate the harassment of women. On the other hand, if PML-N members are to blame, it falls upon PML-N to similarly arrest, prosecute, and expel those men from the party.

If we don't take action now, our political rallies will gain the reputation of Egypt's Tahrir Square where women were and still are sexually assaulted with impunity. In February 2011, when Hosni Mubarak's government fell and 10,000 people filled Tahrir Square to celebrate, women were stripped, groped and beaten by men in the crowds.

These horrific assaults continued, many perpetrated by the Egyptian military against female protesters over the following months. A gang rape occurred in 2014 during the inauguration of President Sisi. Nine men were sentenced to prison, some for life, seen as a good precedent, but the issue continues to haunt Egypt's women who want to make their voices heard politically.

PTI spokeswoman Shireen Mazari laid the blame for the Charing Cross rally assaults on PTI workers, and said that women should not bring their children to PTI jalsas because it is "not safe". Yet we must not tell women to stay at home in order to avoid being assaulted in public spaces and during political rallies. For women to remain part of the democratic political process, they must be ceded public space, safety and security.

All parties must transcend party lines and work together to honour Pakistan's women, who have fought hard to be included in the party-based political system. Doing so will only strengthen our nascent democratic process, which gets its credibility from adequate representation and support from both men and women.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256110/unequal-spaces>

CAN WOMEN BE PROTECTED BY A BILL?

The Express Tribune, May 4th, 2016.

Umair Arif

The passage of the Protection of Women Against Violence Bill was hailed as a big achievement by many in the secular liberal circles while the religious circles are in serious opposition. The argument of the liberals is that the Bill presents a step towards the empowerment of women and the elimination of domestic violence.

It will keep those husbands in control who treat their wife/wives as their subjects and exercise different forms of violence against them. On the other hand, the APC that included 35 religious parties condemned the law and said: “This Act ... is redundant and would add to the miseries of women.” Domestic violence is a reality in Pakistan and it needs to be reckoned with.

According to Aurat Foundation, “In 2013, more than 5,800 cases of violence against women were reported in Punjab.” A 2011 Thomson Reuters Foundation expert poll showed that domestic abuse, economic discrimination and acid attacks made Pakistan the world’s third-most dangerous country for women. These are some serious statistics about which the religious group’s stance is quite frankly, ignorant.

But then, let us dig into the secular liberal stance — make a law to criminalise domestic violence and let us hope everything will turn out to be fine — which is absolutely immature. What they fail to see is that such a law does not take into consideration our unique societal dynamics. One can also question the effectiveness of such laws implemented in the Western world.

According to data obtained from Health & Social Care Information Centre, Britain, the number of acid attacks against women in the last 10 years has doubled to 925. Two women are killed every week in England and Wales by a partner. A recent article in The New York Times states that “every year, in France, 223,000 women are physically or psychologically abused by their partners”. In 2014 alone, 134 women died as a result of violence at the hands of their husbands or partners.

Even though the Western world has strict and intelligent laws on women protection-related matters, these laws are not necessarily solving this social problem.

So what is going wrong? An article, “The Limits of Law”, published in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, discusses the effectiveness and limits of a law, in an intellectual sense. Laws might fail and the failure could be dramatic if there is little understanding of society and human behaviour.

Knowing what works and what does not and what will be counterproductive is important knowledge. An article titled “Law vs morality as regulators of conduct” by Steven Shavell of Harvard Law School presents an excellent perspective. He argues that a better sense of developing morality in many cases is the best manner of controlling a specific behaviour pattern.

For instance, morality and not law is a means of control of much of our daily interactions and social discourse like fulfilling commitments or talking sensibly or treating guests or respecting the elderly, and so on. He rightly argues that establishing laws is not a very expensive process and does not take much time in being implemented. But the establishment of moral rules is extremely expensive and time-consuming.

Making a law to punish littering is easy but inculcating the moral rule that one should not litter requires constant effort over the years of childhood and social projects in elevating the values of a society.

Therefore, without understanding the social dynamics of a Pakistani household, the state will only make laws that fail miserably and are not practised by society at large. Pakistan’s family structure is strictly non-individual.

Therefore, in our society, when a problem in the home arises, the first priority is to resolve the issue within the realm of the husband and wife, but if it extends, the parents intervene and try to settle the disputes with utmost secrecy.

They consider it a disgrace to discuss their family matters even with uncles and aunts, but where necessary, the elders intervene and try to resolve it. In such a climate of social bonding, interference and family dignity, a matter taken to the police will be considered devastating for the family prestige. The consequences it can lead to need to be investigated before enacting laws.

Secondly, the issue of domestic violence is directly linked to the cultural upbringing of males in society, which creates a male-dominated society with supersized egos. The Women's Protection Bill provides for a 24-hour helpline for women, women's shelter homes, women being distanced from men using GPS, etc., giving it a feminist colour and which could collide directly with the supersized egos of our male population.

Problems are not solved by triggering the ego of another individual but by gradually changing mindsets. Moral awareness schemes through the media, sermons in mosques and through education curriculum, on the basis of correct social values are fundamental in changing mindsets.

Additionally, the style of discourse needs to change i.e., there is a need to emphasise that women are not a rare species, who are being hunted down and need protection. Let us consider women as companions living in a household setting with men, as respectable homemakers or professionals, having an equal day-to-day contribution in any family's life.

Our male-dominated society needs to be educated that women are as human as men and laws are same for them as they are for men. The current police structure should be formalised and educated in this regard.

We need to think deeply about our social dynamics to solve our problems and find ways that would work for us. Ignorance towards problems or lack of objective analysis are dangerous trends.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1096492/can-women-be-protected-by-a-bill/>

US INSTITUTES LAUD PUNJAB WOMEN PROTECTION INITIATIVE

Dawn, May 5th, 2016

LAHORE: Top American institutions and universities have appreciated the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act Centres and say that it provides a wonderful opportunity for Pakistan's neighbouring countries to follow the same lead.

"The historic legislation, that takes a firm stand against violence against women through a comprehensive and effective implementation mechanism, has pleasantly surprised not only Pakistanis but western countries as well," said Chief Minister's Special Monitoring Unit (Law and Order) Senior Member Salman Sufi upon his return from the USA here on Wednesday.

He had gone there on the invitation of the US State Department which had shown interest in the legislation. "This legislation has been warmly received by the US where the power corridors usually take a skeptical view of Pakistani policies particularly about women," he said.

He held a series of meetings with high ranking officials on Capitol Hill, Council on Foreign Relations, US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's issues at US Department of State, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour and Mr Jaleel Abbas Jillani (Pakistani Ambassador to the US). They discussed and lauded the comprehensive impact of this historic legislation on violence against women crimes.

Mr Sufi said these officials were keen to explore the genesis behind the comprehensive justice delivery system and the in-built implementation mechanism being developed in Pakistan through the Women Protection Act, making it stand out in the entire South Asian region.

While they believed that this legislation and the Violence Against Women Centres provide a wonderful opportunity for Pakistan's neighbouring countries to follow the same lead. Some also admitted that such comprehensive and integrated models still did not exist in North America or Europe.

Many top-tiered US universities arranged seminars and talks regarding Pakistan's ground-breaking legislation, which provides comprehensive protection against all forms of violence, to study its impact not only on Pakistan but also the wider Muslim world and the breaking of false notions that Islam allows for the subjugation of women.

They included Harvard Law School, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard Pakistan Forum- Women, Gender and Health at Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, University of Chicago Institute of Politics and Harris School of Public Policy and the Pakistan Student Association at George Washington University.

Students as well as faculty asked a series of questions about the opposition of the Women Protection Act along with the Punjab government's support to the law. University of Chicago's Law School showed keen interest in sending its students to Pakistan to study in depth the impact of the Violence Against Women Centres (VAWCs), that are to be established under the law, Mr Sufi said.

Meanwhile, State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement has reportedly shown interest in collaborating with the provincial government in establishing the centres.

It is already providing training to public prosecutors in Punjab in how to effectively pursue cases of violence against women for the past two years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1256388>

FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Dawn, May 5th, 2016

I.A. Rehman

AS a welcome change, this year's May Day celebrations, demonstrations and debates gave considerable space not only to the challenges faced by women workers but also to the bitter struggle the women of this country have been forced to wage for realising their elementary rights.

The list of these challenges is quite long and formidable: denial of right to work, non-recognition of women's work, non-payment for work done by women, denial of a fair wage, gaps in the legislation needed to protect women's rights, non-implementation of laws that have already been enacted, non-recognition of informal-sector workers, and, above all, prevalence of an environment that perpetuates and reinforces gender inequality by the day.

Some of these issues are already on the official agenda. For instance, the demands of home-based workers for their entitlements. The organisations working for them estimate their number at 8.5 million but they could be more.

Most of them are women. They are among the worst exploited category of workers. Unexceptionable are their demands for the ratification of ILO Convention 189, for domestic legislation required for their recognition as workers, and for creation of a monitoring system to ensure that what the law provides for is actually available to them.

The Punjab government has at least promised acceptance of their demands and now it is being pressed to honour its word. There is no reason why home-based workers should be obliged to keep marching under a blazing sun for the most basic of their rights.

The fact that organised labour has been in a state of retreat for quite some time means that the grievances of women in the civil labour force have been multiplying. They will continue to suffer more than all-male trade unions as the ruling elite is unlikely to be cured of its obsession with free-market mantras, including the shady deals under the cover of privatisation.

Even a cursory look at the problems faced by women will reveal that they are interrelated and interdependent. Each problem has been aggravated by lack of state will to resolve it.

The time has perhaps come to remove this main obstacle to women's freedom by demonstrating the state's will to go the whole length for achieving gender equality by adopting a long-term plan for women's empowerment. What this goal means should largely be decided by women themselves. During the interregnum the state and civil society should concentrate on building up women's capacity to cover the final lap to their rightful place in society.

The long-term strategy will obviously include a mechanism for filling gaps in legislation as well as for evaluating implementation of pro-women laws made over the past two decades, and especially since 2004, in order to make their enforceability certain. In order to ensure women's ability to grab their share of jobs it will be necessary to extend to them educational facilities and an adequate health cover. The failure to realise the Millennium Development Goals must spur the administration to improve its performance while addressing the Strategic Development Goals.

An important factor of women's emancipation can be an increase in their role in local government institutions. The Sindh government's decision to increase women's representation in local bodies to 33pc is worthy of emulation by other provinces. But symbolic representation will not be enough; the women local leaders must be helped to address all of citizens' problems, including their vulnerability to preachers of hate and promoters of conflict.

Instead of creating new vehicles for promoting women's empowerment, the task can be assigned to the national and provincial commissions on the status of women after enlarging their scope of work and guaranteeing them the physical and material resources required. Besides developing and executing their three- or five-year programmes they should also function as tribunals to receive and address women's grievances about the denial of their due.

Our none-too-prosperous world of letters has been rendered poorer by the passing away of Fazlur Rahman Khan of the Pakistan Administrative Service who served the country for long years in various capacities, most notably as principal secretary to President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

Fazlur Rahman Khan found his urge to express himself on a variety of socioeconomic issues blunted by his service code of conduct. Learning of this, Mr Mahmoud Abdullah Haroon, the then federal interior minister and with whom Fazlur Rahman Khan was working, urged him to write under an assumed name and if nothing else he could use his initials as his byline.

Thus it was that Dawn started publishing regular columns by MAH. These covered a wide area of issues in politics, history, sociology and culture that were remarkable not only for the writer's breadth of scholarship and incisive reasoning but also for the fluency of the columns' prose and style. It was only after Mahmoud Haroon's death in 2008 that he revealed in his final column the person behind the byline MAH, by way of acknowledging his debt to the departed benefactor.

Fazlur Rahman Khan belonged to a long line of public servants who did not allow their duties in areas of civil administration or dispensation of justice or even in police/military service to suppress their creative talent and found time to enrich contemporary literature.

The line may not have entirely dried up but it is perhaps necessary to remind the managers of academies and schools for training civil servants that they must encourage the budding civil servants to take an interest in the literature, languages and arts of their people.

This will help them develop into wholesome personalities and augment the country's literary and cultural capital. This should also enable them to better discharge their duties and thus promote good governance. Sensitive and cultured public servants are perhaps more essential to a just dispensation than Plato's philosopher kings.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256315>

14 ARRESTED FOR STRANGLING, BURNING GIRL

Dawn, May 6th, 2016

Rashid Javed

ABBOTTABAD: Thirteen members of a jirga who strangled a 16-year-old girl and set her body on fire in Galyat's Makol village last month were arrested and remanded in police custody for 14 days by an antiterrorism court on Thursday.

The mother of the dead girl was also arrested.

Police said the 15-member jirga had ruled on April 28 that Ambreen, daughter of Riasat, a labourer who works in Balochistan's Gadani area, should be killed for helping her friend Saima elope with her boyfriend. It also ordered torching of the vehicle in which the two girls tried to escape. The elopement took place on April 23.

The Abbottabad District Police Officer, Khurram Rasheed, said at a press conference that two members of the jirga were still at large.

He said that with the help of police officials of other areas, "we managed to find a clue from a phone call made by Mohammad Naseer, driver and owner of the vehicle".

Mohammad Naseer had lodged an FIR under Sections 302/436 and 427 with Donga Gali police station on April 29 against torching of his vehicle. After the jirga ended its six-hour meeting on April 28, the poor girl was taken from her home to an abandoned house where she was drugged, strangled to death and tied to the back seat of the vehicle. Then the van, parked at a bus stop in the village, was doused with petrol and set on fire. Another vehicle parked nearby was damaged in the fire.

The charred body of the girl was found in the van in Donga Gali on April 29. Police moved the body to Ayub Medical Complex for autopsy.

Police found drugs and a can of petrol from the abandoned house.

The arrested accused were identified as Siraj Ali, Shabbir Ahmed, Javed Akhter, Gul Zareen, Afzal Muneer, Mohammad Naseer (driver), Pervez (head of the jirga), Umer Zaib, Saeed, Gul Zaman, son of Abdul Sattar, Gul Zaman, son of Lal Akbar, Safdar, Pervez and Shamim, mother of Ambreen.

They were first produced before media and later before the ATC judge who remanded them in police custody for 14 days for interrogation.

The DPO said as the girl's family was poor, her mother could not resist the jirga's decision because most of its members were criminals, and not elders of the area.

The President of the High Court Bar Association, Abbottabad, Qazi Mohammad Arshad, Advocate, has offered free legal help to the victim family.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1256565/14-arrested-for-strangling-burning-girl>

'WOMEN ARE NOT OBJECTS OF VIOLENCE'

The Express Tribune, May 8th, 2016

LAHORE: Three plays covering issues faced by women and minorities were showcased at the 15th Interactive Theatre Festival which opened on Saturday.

"We picked the themes for the plays in group discussions in an eight-day workshop before the festival," said Ishtiaq Hussain, coordination manager of the festival told The Express Tribune.

He said participants of the workshop had discussed various issues which they felt were important. “The plays were developed through extensive research on the chosen themes.”

He said the cast had been chosen from the Interactive Resource Centre. “They have worked in various communities across the Punjab,” he said.

He said the actors were not professionals. “The idea is to highlight issues which they feel are important,” he said. The first play had an all-male cast.

Performers from the Mandwa Theatre Group made a comment on violence against women.

The only female presence on the stage was through a stool. Actors depicting fathers, brothers and husbands inflicted violence on the object. “It is a comment on masculinity,” Hussain said.

The performers asked questions in the interactive element of the play, discussing legislation for protection of women’s rights and its implementation. They also talked about forced marriages.

The audience disagreed with the violence carried out by the men in the play. They said the best way to counter misogyny was to change social attitudes and mindsets. The second play, Kalpana, was performed by Jaag Theatre group from Bahawalnagar.

It focused on minority rights. All characters in the play had two names. There was a name which they used in public and another at home. One character introduced herself as Shakuntla in private and Shumaila in public. The play posed questions about the status of minorities in the country and stereotypes about them in textbooks.

The third play, also by Mandwa Theatre Company, told the story of Mirza Sahibah. The festival will continue on Sunday (today). It will showcase two new plays and Mirza Sahiba will be performed again.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1099157/thematic-conversation-women-are-not-objects-of-violence/>

June 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 27TH TO JULY 2 ND 2016

WOMEN ARE KEY TO DEVELOPMENT

The Express Tribune, June 28th, 2016

Jonathan Pratt

More than 20 years ago, Zahida Kamri, a single mother of six, became Pakistan’s first female taxi driver — a job that took her from Islamabad to the country’s remote provinces. As a pioneer among women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, Zahida persevered in the face of criticism and her accomplishments resonate to this day.

Two decades later, female entrepreneurs like Hira Batool Rizvi illustrate just how far the country has continued to progress since Zahida’s first taxi run. Hira is a graduate of the WECREATE Centre, Islamabad, a start-up incubator and accelerator that was initially funded by the US State Department. In 2015, she launched She`Kab, Pakistan’s first shared taxi service for working women.

She employed more than 100 people in the first few months of her company’s operations, creating jobs and directly addressing the unmet needs of working women. Hira’s success corroborates what data has long shown, that there is a strong business case for supporting the rise of women in the economy — as entrepreneurs, employees and consumers.

Entrepreneurship is a key component of economic growth worldwide, including in Pakistan. Entrepreneurs identify business opportunities in underserved parts of the economy, utilise more of the country's human capital, and contribute to technological, intellectual, and service innovation.

Women's entrepreneurship also provides a crucial way for women to enter the workforce and help expand the economy, circumventing many of the barriers they face when seeking traditional employment. Technology further enables this trend by providing more flexible work arrangements and job opportunities.

The World Bank has underscored that the economic inclusion of women is indispensable to Pakistan's growth. Women's participation in the economy is important for the country to make full use of its rich human capital, as well as to provide the needed income to households at all levels of society. But entrenched social norms, barriers to political participation, legal restrictions and gender-based violence prevent women from accessing economic opportunities in Pakistan and around the world.

To address these gaps, Pakistan's Vision 2025 development strategy has announced steps the government aims to take to increase women's labour force participation. Improving women and girls' access to education, health care, justice, law enforcement, social services, banking and financial services, and childcare are a few of the pressing priorities outlined under Vision 2025. The ultimate goal is to increase women in the workforce from the current level of 25 per cent to 45 per cent over the next nine years.

That's why President Barack Obama dedicated a full day of last week's 7th Annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) at Stanford University to women and youth entrepreneurs. Hira was one of 150 entrepreneurs who participated that day in training sessions, meeting with mentors and investors, and connecting with peers who share common ambitions.

She was part of a group of 21 delegates, a majority of them women, representing Pakistan at the GES. Pakistan's delegation — the largest from any country outside the US — joined more than 700 entrepreneurs from around the world, along with investors and business leaders to exchange ideas and best practices for how to start and grow their businesses.

These Pakistani entrepreneurs are building the networks and acquiring the skills to be competitive in the global marketplace and shape a bright future for their country.

Engines of economic growth, the private sectors in both Pakistan and the US, are critical to expanding economic opportunities for women. The US Pakistan Women's Council is working with Coca Cola, Engro, PepsiCo and Proctor & Gamble to lead ground-breaking hiring-and-supply-chain gender diversification efforts, and USAID has partnered with several multinational corporations on projects that support women's agricultural micro-enterprises in Pakistan, in some cases increasing incomes by as much as 50 per cent.

Pakistan is poised to support its first Women in the Economy Forum, which will bring our governments and private sector partners together to propose solutions to remove barriers to women's economic participation.

The US will continue to fund programmes that promote gender equity, and increase women's access to information, economic opportunities, and ability to participate in civic and political institutions. These programmes include the Let Girls Learn initiative, which aims to empower 200,000 adolescent girls through improved access to quality education.

Hundreds of young Pakistani women have travelled on educational, entrepreneurship and leadership training opportunities funded by the US because we believe in their immense potential to bring positive change to their country and build bridges between our societies.

These investments in Pakistani women are much more than feel-good acts of corporate social responsibility. They are strategic investments that will help increase Pakistani companies' efficiency and innovation — an acknowledgement that businesses have much to gain when women go to work.

But donors and the government cannot meet this challenge alone. By joining forces with the corporate sector through public-private partnerships such as these, we can accelerate Pakistan's progress by harnessing the untapped drive and talents of its women in business.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1131385/women-key-development/>

CII BLAMED FOR RISE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Dawn, June 29th, 2016

Ikram Junaidi

Islamabad: The Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights has held the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) responsible for increased incidents of violence against women and expressed concern over the council's proposed bill for women's protection, which allows men to 'lightly' beat their wives.

PPP Senator Farhatullah Babar said the CII had submitted its final report to parliament in 1997 and, therefore, according to the Constitution, there was no reason for the council to continue.

"The recent increase in violence against women and incidents of honour killings are because of the council's recommendations. Whenever the CII recommends that a husband is allowed to beat his wife, an [enabling] environment is created for violence against women," he added.

Mr Babar said that a legal opinion should be sought from the Ministry of Law about the current status of the CII.

The senator said such incidents were also increasing due to the production of films and dramas depicting honour killings, which in his opinion, should not be telecast.

Committee chairperson Nasreen Jalil of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement agreed, and said that some actions of the CII were "annoying" and there was no doubt about the increase in violence against women.

"We are moving backwards instead of progressing. Meanwhile, parliamentarians are also staying silent over incidents of violence against women," she said.

When it comes to honour, she said, women are considered second-class citizens. Ms Jalil called for a ban on the use of qisas and diyat laws in honour cases.

"The CII's recommendations, which allow a husband to beat his wife, make no sense. Not accepting DNA tests as evidence in rape cases show the backwardness of the council's members," she said.

In 2013, the council had ruled that DNA tests were not acceptable as primary evidence in cases of rape, but could be used as supporting evidence for confirming the crime.

Senator Babar then observed that in some cases, when a brother kills his sister for 'honour', the father forgives him and that there should therefore be a ban on forgiving the culprit in such cases.

"A bill was passed by the Senate in this regard, but is pending before the National Assembly. In cases of honour killings, execution should not be forgiven," he said.

The issue came up during discussion on an agenda item regarding violence against women, particularly the recent incidents of burning women in the name of honour.

The government had been asked to pass an anti-honour killing bill, which was unanimously approved by the Senate and referred to the National Assembly. A joint sitting of parliament could not adopt it in its last session for want of a consensus.

Laws such as the Anti-Honour Killings Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2015, and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2015, were not passed by the National Assembly within the stipulated 90-day period following the assent of the Senate

A recent resolution, passed by the National Assembly, also resolved to act in earnest to prevent violence against women.

But despite getting a Protection of Women bill approved by the Punjab Assembly, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has since backpedalled and submitted that bill to the CII, which promptly rejected it and proposed its own version.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1267922/cii-blamed-for-rise-in-violence-against-women>

LANDOWNER HELD FOR KILLING SMALL GIRL

Dawn, June 30th, 2016

SANGHAR: A landowner was booked and arrested after he allegedly gunned down a nine-year-old girl while she was busy collecting fodder on his lands in Pir Bukhsh Rahu village near Chhotiariyoon town, about 20 kilometres from here, late on Tuesday evening.

Police and onlookers claimed that that the landowner, Hassan Waqar, noticed Asima Bhatti and her brother cutting off fodder grown on his land and opened fire. The girl received two bullets to her upper torso and was rushed to the Sanghar Civil Hospital where she was declared dead of arrival.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268041>

WOMAN HARASSED BY FEMALE 'MORAL POLICE' IN KARACHI

ZUBAIR ASHRA

The Express Tribune, June 30th, 2016.

KARACHI: A young woman was harassed for her 'inappropriate attire' by a middle-aged woman outside Agha's Supermarket in Clifton on Sunday.

MJ*, who refused to share her identity, was leaving the supermarket when the accused woman, whose name is not known, approached her and asked if she was a foreigner. When she replied 'No', the woman asked her if she was Muslim. "I hesitantly said I am and immediately followed it by asking what if I wasn't?" wrote MJ in a Facebook post that has become viral since Sunday.

According to MJ, the woman 'went on a rampage'. She told her she should be ashamed of what she was wearing – MJ wrote she was wearing full sleeves shirt and loose pants – especially during Ramazan. "I told her if her lecture was finished she should leave and then ignored her," wrote MJ, adding that the woman continued harassing her. "[She] told me women like me who hang around 'without clothes' are a threat to her husband, sons and brothers to which I told her that those men should not look at women like me [sic]."

MJ claimed the woman continued to touch her during the conversation despite her requests. The woman even mentioned that she knew her car licence plate and that it is blue in colour and that only God can save her now. "She

also said that people like her were sent in this world to fix people like me and that it was her duty to God,” MJ wrote on Facebook.

She warned the woman of calling the police and she eventually backed off. MJ wrote down her licence plate number, hoping to pursue legal action against the woman.

MJ complained to the police and they were able to track down the accused woman and summoned her to the police station. While the woman did not show up, her husband – who MJ described as fairly decent, educated and definitely more moderate’ compared to his wife – came and apologised for his wife’s behaviour. He insisted on wrapping up the issue amicably.

MJ agreed to compromise on the condition that the accused woman come and apologise to her. Otherwise, she warned of registering an FIR against her.

Nearly 30 minutes later, the man brought his ‘smiling’ wife to the police station. She claimed that she approached MJ after she heard two guys passing comments about her. She refused, however, to give a written apology which infuriated MJ. Eventually, her husband convinced her to write an apology. “I apologise for the incident that happened yesterday,” the woman scribbled on a piece of paper.

Despite narrating her entire ordeal through a public post on Facebook, MJ was scared to share her identity with The Express Tribune. She insisted that the matter has been resolved amicably and she does not want to highlight it further. Since then, the public post has been taken off Facebook.

Nevertheless, she left the following advice for other women who may face similar ordeals: women like these ‘incite hate and terror and their modus operandi is simple, scare girls who are easy targets, alone or without the company of someone who would stand up for them’. She advised other women to ‘be vigilant and careful not scared and oppressed’.

TV artist Anoushey Ashraf, who is friends with MJ, shared with The Express Tribune that her friend handled the matter in the best way possible as no one has a right to force his/her beliefs onto someone else. “We want to live in a free country,” she said.

Clifton police were unable to confirm details of the compromise. MJ mentioned a policeman, Usman Siddiqui, helped her deal with the law enforcers. Meanwhile, SSP Dr Farooq was unavailable for comments despite repeated attempts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1133030/woman-harassed-female-moral-police-clifton/>

WOMEN’S PLACE IN POLITICS

The Express Tribune, July 1st, 2016.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is set to make history when for the first time five women will be contesting its upcoming elections on general seats. This is a positive and welcome development, but what does this really mean in real terms? Five is a negligible number for the 49-member assembly. Of the nearly two million voters in AJK, nearly half the number of registered voters consists of women.

With five seats reserved for women in the AJK Assembly, five more women contesting the polls on general seats still make for dismal representation of nearly half the population. Among the major national parties, the PPP has awarded tickets to two women, the PML-N has fielded one candidate and most disappointingly, the PTI has failed to field a single female candidate on general seats.

Our mainstream political parties often make tall claims regarding women representation and ‘women’s rights’ but the reality on the ground is starkly different with the reserved seats for women in our assemblies having increasingly become the beginning and end of their political participation. In the past, politicians, including PTI Chairman Imran

Khan, have expressed their reservations on having quotas for women in the assemblies on the grounds that they should consist of directly elected representatives of the people.

Yet the same leaders have not shown alacrity over awarding tickets to women on general seats. Pakistan electing Benazir Bhutto as prime minister two decades ago is often cited as an example of the country's progressive politics, but this argument is weak at best and does not reflect the reality of women's place in politics and parliament.

In addition, women on reserved seats at times just serve as an extension of the largely male political elite. The derogatory remarks Shirin Mazari was recently subjected to highlights the kind of respect women are accorded in parliament from their male colleagues. Gender equality in politics must be demanded and ensured on every front and at every level. It is high time the major political parties recognised the needs of our age and started working towards gender equality.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1133680/womens-place-politics>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 20TH TO JUNE 26TH 2016

WOMEN'S QUOTAS IN THE SC

Dawn, June 21th, 2016

Reema Omer

IN May 2016, Senator Babar Awan (PPP) introduced a bill in the Senate mandating a 33pc quota of women judges in the Supreme Court through an amendment of the Supreme Court (number of judges) Act, 1997. The bill is currently pending before the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice.

Earlier this year, MNA Saman Jafri (MQM) introduced a similar bill in the National Assembly, mandating a 25pc quota for women judges in the SC. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Law and Justice, however, recommended that the bill be rejected, including on the grounds that it would lead to a "decline in quality and expertise" in the judicial profession.

The government has so far opposed both bills on the basis of highly problematic reasoning. Law Minister Zahid Hamid, for example, has argued that "lack of interest" on the part of women lawyers and judges has led to their absence from the SC and has rejected any institutional hurdles.

The government's casual dismissal of the glaring gender disparity in the judiciary is a disappointing abdication of its duty to redress that imbalance and an indictment of its commitment towards achieving full and equal participation of women in public life. In this context, the recognition of the absence of women judges in the SC by at least some opposition parliamentarians is a welcome step.

However, the effectiveness of the proposed remedy in the form of quotas for women judges in the SC requires further discussion.

The statements of objectives of the bills rightly note that Pakistan has never had a woman serve as a judge of the SC. However, this is just the tip of the malaise of gender imbalance in the legal profession that runs much deeper.

Only seven out of Pakistan's 112 high court judges (6pc) are women. Even in the district judiciary, where women are appointed judges in greater numbers, the representation of women judges sharply decreases with seniority (and hence authority).

In Punjab, for example, while 20pc civil judges are women, the figure drops to 5pc among senior civil judges. Similarly, while 7pc of additional district and sessions judges are women, the number of district and sessions judges, who have executive and judicial control over their districts, is only 2pc.

Therefore, even if quotas for women are introduced at the SC level, they will not markedly improve the overall underrepresentation of the women in the judiciary, which is prevalent in all tiers of the institution.

Another shortcoming of the bills is their failure to tackle the underlying causes of the underrepresentation of women in the SC — and generally in the judiciary.

One key issue that needs to be highlighted in Pakistan's context is the lack of transparency in the judicial appointments process for judges of the high courts and the SC.

According to Article 175-A of the Constitution, a nine-member judicial commission, comprising largely of senior judges, is responsible for nominating judges for the superior judiciary and recommending them to a parliamentary committee for approval. Currently, all nine members of the judicial commission are men.

The criteria on which the judicial commission shortlists candidates are not transparent and the commission's proceedings and deliberations are not made public. In the larger context of discriminatory practices and attitudes in the legal profession, such secrecy often works to the detriment of women and leads to the perception of bias in the appointments process.

It is therefore critical that transparent and holistic selection criteria are elaborated in relevant legislation and in rules for judicial appointments. Such criteria, for example, should expressly define merit so as to include the goals of judicial diversity and gender equality.

Additionally, the underrepresentation of women in the judiciary cannot be separated from the

near-absence of senior women lawyers in the country. Since judicial appointments to the SC can only be made from high court judges or lawyers with at least 15 years of litigation experience, even if quotas are introduced at the SC level, they will not be fully effective unless the pool of women lawyers and judges to be considered for judicial posts is expanded.

Like the judiciary, gender imbalance is also stark in the legal profession, especially at senior levels. Since its inception in 1973, the 25-member Pakistan Bar Council, the highest regulatory body for lawyers in the country, has never had a woman member. Similarly, the nearly 3,000-member Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan has less than 5pc women members.

A long overdue measure, therefore, is amending the Legal Practitioners and Bar Councils Act, 1973, so as to give real effect to the duty of bar councils to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in the legal profession.

Among other things, bar councils can play a key role in increasing the capacity and infrastructure of associations of women judges and lawyers — which exist but are nearly defunct. In countries where such associations are fully functional, they fulfil a solidarity and support role for individual women judges and lawyers; are an important source of training and education; and also enable women lawyers and judges to more effectively articulate their everyday experiences of working in the legal profession, including the many forms of harassment and discrimination faced by women in the profession.

After decades of neglect, it is encouraging to see the critical question of the gender imbalance in the judiciary receive some political attention. However, sustainable and effective efforts to advance women's representation within the judiciary and ultimately achieve gender parity in the legal profession will require express and lasting support and commitment from a range of actors including members of the government and parliament; the chief justice and other senior members of the judiciary; as well as professional organisations of lawyers.

It is key that this important debate does not start and — should the bills fail — end only at the institution of quotas for women in the SC.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1266114/womens-quotas-in-the-sc>

WOMEN'S PROTECTION BILL: CII TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON CONTROVERSIAL LAW
The Express Tribune, June 21st, 2016.

Obaid Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: The country's top constitutional religious body will convene next month to deliberate on its women's protection law after a first draft was finalised.

Last month, the council proposed its own women protection bill, recommending 'a light beating' to a wife who defied her husband's will, which was widely criticised by the public.

"Chairman CII will summon next meeting [of the council] in July and proposed [women's protection] bill will be on top of the agenda," CII Secretary Dr Ikramul Haq told The Express Tribune on Monday. It is in that meeting, Haq added, that the council will define what "light beating" entails. The bill, drafted by JUI-F's Mufti Imdadullah, contains some 163 clauses. Of these, the council has so far discussed 31.

The CII had drafted its own bill after rejecting Punjab's controversial Protection of Women against Violence Act (PPWA) 2015 while Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa continued work on its domestic violence bill.

The lone female member of the council, Dr Samia Raheel Qazi, has also been handed a copy of the draft law to study and is expected to present her suggestions at the meeting next month. She was absent at the last meeting of the council held earlier in June.

At that meeting, three members including Justice (retired) Manzoor Hussain Gilani, Dr Noor Ahmed Shahtaaz and Muhammad Abdullah, had raised objections on many clauses in the bill.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1126708/womens-protection-bill-cii-provide-feedback-controversial-law/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 13TH TO JUNE 19TH 2016
FATAL PERSUASION: WOMAN STABBED IN THE THROAT OVER DOMESTIC ROW
The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2016.

Sarfaraz Memon

SUKKUR: A young woman was stabbed in the throat by her brother-in-law over a domestic row in Ayub Colony within the precincts of Rehmatpur police station in Larkana late Saturday.

The injured woman was immediately rushed to the emergency ward of Chandka Medical College Hospital, where doctors operated upon her and pulled out the dagger.

Police have arrested the woman's brother in-law and lodged a case against him.

The victim's maternal uncle, Ghulamullah Khawar, told reporters that Rizwana, wife of Saleem Raza Khawar and mother of two, had moved in with her parents 15 days ago following intimidation by her brother-in-law, Saeed Ahmed Khawar. The family lives in Nazar Muhalla.

Since Rizwana's husband is a truck driver, he is often away from home, according to Ghulamullah. In the absence of her husband, Saeed Khawar used to bully and humiliate her on one pretext or the other.

According to reports, the two brothers had a bitter quarrel after Saleem blamed his younger brother, Saeed, for driving her away from her home. When Rizwana left her husband's house and started living with her parents, Saeed tried to

persuade her to return with him, Ghulamullah said. He said that when she refused to do so, he took out a dagger and stabbed her in the throat.

Ghulam Haider Kandhro, the head constable at Rehmatpur police station, said that the accused had been arrested and Rizwana was doing well in the hospital.

Violence against women, especially young girls, is rampant in places like Larkana. Recently, a five-year-old girl, Fatima, was assaulted and strangled to death by accused Hubdar alias Nang Bohar, who was later killed in an encounter with the police.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1121498/fatal-persuasion-woman-stabbed-throat-domestic-row/>

EMPOWERING THE MARGINALISED: WOMEN DEVELOPMENT BUDGET GOES UP BY 5.2%
The Express Tribune, June 13th, 2016.

Haniya Javed

KARACHI: The Sindh government enhanced the budget for women development by 5.2% with an increase of Rs26 million.

As per the budget document, a total of four new schemes have been introduced, including two unapproved schemes in 2015-2016. These schemes of last year, which have been carried forward as new in the current budget, are the establishment of Women Development Complex in Karachi and the establishment of women complaint cells in different districts of Sindh.

According to the budget document of last year, 25% financial progress was to be made by June, 2016. However, the document of fiscal year 2016-2017 suggests that the status of these schemes is null.

For Karachi, the Sindh government plans to improve the livelihood and wellbeing of female home-based workers as well as the development of skills of women with disabilities. Finance Minister Murad Ali Shah, in his speech to the provincial assembly on Saturday, also talked about Rs134 million set aside for poor women and children prisoners. None of this is mentioned in the annual development programme (ADP).

Seven of the total eleven schemes are ongoing. Out of these, the formation of three day care centres in Karachi and one each in Hyderabad, Sukkur and Larkana was to be completed in 2015. However, with the delay of further two years, the proposed completion plan has now been postponed till June, 2017.

Similar is the case of the establishment of a working women's hostel in Benazirabad. Similarly, two more projects, namely the women development complex at Benazirabad and a women development complex in Sukkur, were slated for completion by 2016. They have now been marked for completion in the fiscal year 2016-2017.

The allocation in the ADP for minorities has been increased by 6.5%. On the surface, the number breakdown is very much same as last year with addition of no new schemes. While the preceding fiscal year witnessed an increase of 10.5%, this year's allocation for minorities was increased by just 6.5%.

Shah, in his speech, mentioned a grant in aid for the uplift of social and economic welfare of minorities in Sindh to be increased by 200%. As was the case last year, the budget for fiscal year 2016-2017 includes no new such schemes. The 'new' scheme of last year, which is the construction of minorities' religious places, is the same for this year, too, with the only difference being the cost having been increased by Rs40 million.

None of the ongoing schemes listed in the budget document of last year, such as the repair and renovation of mandirs in Karachi and other districts, have been completed. In fact, these schemes have further been delayed for two more years. Originally set for completion in 2015, their target date of completion is now 2017 with zero financial progress.

In addition, the scheme for renovation of mandirs in Karachi having the same estimated cost of Rs99 million has been slated for June 18. The budget goes on to mention the marble flooring of Dham Raharki Sahib Darbar, Ghotki district, and renovation of Gauoshala Pir Jo Goth in Khairpur, in which no progress has so far been made in 2016.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1121376/empowering-marginalised-women-development-budget-goes-5-2/>

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILL TO BE TABLED IN KP ASSEMBLY 'SOON'

Dawn, June 14th, 2016

Sadia Qasim Shah

PESHAWAR: After going through a gruelling review and rejection by Council of Islamic Ideology, the domestic violence bill is back in the hands of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to go through another examination in hope to land on the floor of provincial assembly one day.

Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development Sikander Sherpao says that the bill would be tabled very soon in the provincial assembly.

“The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is not only going to table the domestic violence bill in the provincial assembly after reviewing and removing the objections raised by the Council of Islamic Ideology, amendments in the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act 2009 are also underway to make it autonomous and give it a status it deserves,” he adds.

When contacted to know about the status of domestic violence bill after it went through a review by the CII, as requested by the provincial government, the minister insisted that the bill was not rejected by the CII. The CII had raised some questions and needed some clarifications or changes in some definitions.

“The provincial women commission and social welfare department have started work on it. We will remove those points on which CII’s reservations are valid and then table it in the provincial assembly,” said the minister.

He said that law department had been involved too so that if CII had raised any valid point, it could be removed so that the bill was presented in the provincial assembly as soon as possible.

The Provincial Commission on the Status of Women itself has been unable to have a visible recommendatory status and the draft it prepared after several consultations was sent to CII for review which as was expected rejected it. The CII rejected some 28 out of some 32 sections of the proposed law including the very definition of the ‘domestic violence’.

The minister also admitted the fact that inability of the commission to perform as was expected of it when it was established was due to the inherent lacunas in the law under which the commission was formed. The lacunas in the law created hurdles, hampering its performance due to lack of autonomy in the financial and administrative affairs of the commission.

“The provincial law department has vetted amendments to make the commission more autonomous. After the budget session, it would be presented in assembly for approval. The commission would be more autonomous and won’t rely on social welfare department anymore,” said Sikander Sherpao.

He said that they were going towards complete autonomy and the commission should not rely on social welfare department for financial matter. He admitted that financial and administrative hindrances had affected the performance of the commission, set up to review and give its recommendations on legislation and matters relating to women.

The minister said that the entire social welfare and women development department had remained a neglected department so far. He said that his department was making necessary amendments in law of PCSW of the province to make it autonomous.

Despite being a statutory body established under the Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act 2009, the commission has powers to review provincial legislation for women, assess government programmes and projects for women and monitor the mechanism and institutional processes for social care and justice for women towards the overarching goal of achieving emancipation of women, equalisation of opportunities and socio-economic conditions among women and men and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the province. Yet the commission having such a Herculean job has not been able to make its own presence felt or achieve a status of its own so far.

There has been very little legislation on issues relating to women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite having provincial autonomy during the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, Jamaat-i-Islami and Qaumi Watan Party coalition government.

Despite reported cases of burning of girls, honour killings and beating, the provincial government has so far been wavering on legislation on domestic violence like its predecessors progressive ANP-PPP coalition government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264744>

‘HONOUR KILLING’ UN-ISLAMIC ACT: CII
Dawn, June 15th, 2016

Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has declared that the killing of a woman in the name of honour is against the law of the land and also an un-Islamic act.

The research cell of the CII, in a statement issued on Tuesday, decried the killing of women by male members of their families but also granted such men the benefit of “emotional reaction”.

The statement said: “There are laws in the country that deal with obscenity and other moral crimes. Therefore killing someone over such misdeeds cannot be allowed even if it is in the name of honour.”

But it added that “emotional reaction” was part of human nature, particularly in a situation in which one was provoked after witnessing immoral acts of a close relative.

At the same time, the statement said, no one could be allowed to kill a person despite witnessing a moral sin.

“Every accused should be brought before court and it is up to the court to declare the accused guilty or innocent,” it said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264955/honour-killing-un-islamic-act-cii>

THE ROOTS OF MISOGYNY
Dawn, June 16th, 2016

I.A. Rehman

THE outpouring of anger and revulsion at the recent spate of murders of young women who tried to exercise their basic rights will go to waste if the causes of increase in such cases are not seriously tackled.

The first thing to be noted about these murders is the escalating level of brutality. The young woman from Murree who was severely tortured before being set ablaze by her closest relatives was punished for refusal to marry against her wishes.

In Kasur a young woman paid with her life for arguing with her husband and the latter was helped by his female relatives to burn her alive.

A woman in Lahore strangled her daughter for taking a spouse of her choice and then set her on fire. In another incident in a village near Lahore, a man shot dead his daughter for having exercised her right to marry of her free will a year earlier, along with her husband and a bystander.

Apart from confirming the continued brutalisation of society these incidents reveal a growing intolerance for women's rights not only among men but also among women themselves.

While civil society organisations, women activists and some politicians have felt outraged, the public outcry has not been as loud as it is sometimes in other cases of violence against women, such as gang-rape under panchayat orders. Obviously, a section of society, including women, has been influenced by the orthodoxy's opposition to women's rights to the extent of justifying violence against all those who rebel against unjust constraints.

Oddly enough, in the debate over the surge in violence against women, the remedy is generally sought in developing new legal instruments to punish the culprits. This became abundantly clear from the brief debate in the Senate a week ago, thanks to chairman Raza Rabbani's decision to suspend the business of the house and invite members to discuss woman-burning. All the members who are reported to have joined the discussion backed the chairman's call for a strong law to punish the burning of women to death.

The Senate proceedings, though welcome, underscored the limited nature of the debate. First, no member of a religious party is reported to have considered the burning of women worth talking about, and that betrays how far Pakistan's religio-political elements have gone in their psychopathic hostility towards women. Secondly, except for one senator's reference to the role of the Council of Islamic Ideology in increasing society's hostility towards women, the honourable senators seemed reluctant to discuss the causes of the failure of laws to protect women.

It is perhaps not correct to assume that there is no law to deal with burning women to death. The offence is recognised as premeditated homicide punishable by death. What is needed is only a reversal of the process whereby rich criminals or gangsters can escape punishment by forcing the victim family to forgive them.

The real issue is the fact that it has not been possible to make women-friendly laws, nor to fully implement such laws, because of the orthodoxy's opposition. Only the other day the prime minister's special assistant for law and human rights revealed how two bills, one on 'honour killing' and the other on rape, have been stuck in parliament due to the opposition of a single religio-political party, which is, incidentally, as indispensable an ally of the present government as it was of the previous one.

The seeds of misogyny in Pakistan were sown 66 years ago when the authors of the fundamental rights chapter of the Constitution ignored Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which upholds the right of both women and men to marriage by choice and equal rights of spouses.

(The article has been excluded from the fundamental rights chapter in all of Pakistan's constitutions.) Ever since then, the state has acted on a one-sided understanding with the most obscurantist among the religious lobby that women's fate will be decided by the latter.

That women's rights will forever remain subject to the veto of those who abuse religion for political purposes is a proposition the people of Pakistan cannot afford to accept. Their right to challenge the professional clerics' invocation of religious injunctions cannot be denied. Also, the rise in woman-bashing in Pakistan since the Zia period, to a greater extent than in any other Muslim country, is a question the ulema must ponder over.

The reality is that the combination of patriarchal constraints, feudal emphasis on male supremacy and misogyny has left Pakistani women with little space to even breathe. That the party of Mufti Mahmud, who had backed the Family Laws Ordinance, should be represented by Senator Hamdullah only shows that arrogance has been added to the obscurantist's armoury.

Unfortunately, the state has failed to convince the religious scholars of the disastrous consequences of a retrogressive interpretation of the scriptures for women, Pakistan society in general, and for Islam itself. One hopes that the few religious authorities who have begun to denounce 'honour killings' as un-Islamic will devote more time to converting their community of ulema than informing laymen of their sympathy for women.

However, a vast world of opportunities for women lies beyond the religious rigmarole in which the state has trapped itself; women can be enabled to fulfil their hopes through a strong social force of enlightened women and men.

Such a force will surely materialise if women are given weightage in their share of jobs in the education and health sectors, are allowed a leading part in the local bodies, and if their role in policymaking institutions and services, including the judiciary, is progressively enhanced.

Much of this can be done if the state discovers its will to move earnestly against misogyny.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1265178/the-roots-of-misogyny>

PUNJAB'S ATTEMPT AT PROTECTING WOMEN

The Express Tribune, June 17th, 2016

Benazir Jatoi

It is now well recognised the world over that violence against women, of which domestic violence comprises the largest proportion, is beyond just a violation of a fundamental human right. It is also a public health risk of grave proportions. Legislation is just the first step to help curb the injustice. Anyone would think so, except perhaps in Pakistan, where it seems nothing should be taken for granted.

The *raison d'état* of a democratically-elected House is to legislate on behalf of the people. And that is precisely what the Punjab Assembly did when it tried to pass the Protection of Women Against Violence law.

Women legislators in the provincial assembly from differing political parties showed seasoned foresight and unity, some in defiance of the male co-legislators of their parties, in recognising the need for this government-initiated law in a country where 70-90 per cent of women face domestic violence at least once in their lives.

There were 175 members of the House who abstained from voting, mostly male legislators, perhaps afraid of shaking the status quo.

The unanimous passage of the law in the provincial assembly received extreme reactions from all quarters. And what reactions a pro-woman law attracts! The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), unsurprisingly, declared the legislation to be against the tenets of sharia.

A parliamentarian of a religious party has gone so far as to say that equality between men and women is a Western concept and does not apply in Pakistan. At the other end of the spectrum, we have also seen rights-based groups dismissing the law for not going far enough to penalise the criminal.

A celebration of the law, they say, is an acceptance of a flawed attempt to protect women in Punjab. And these are only some of the voices we can hear.

The religious right wing feels that the law encourages the break-up of the family home, is not Islamic, and amounts to Westernisation of a traditional society. So the CII, in a stroke of 'genius', attempted to put up its own recommendations for a bill to protect women of Pakistan. And in the name of protection, it asserts that husbands are allowed to lightly beat their wives.

Maybe the clerics making up the CII misunderstood the brief. Perhaps, they thought it was a bill on various ways to suppress Pakistani women, not protect them.

On a serious note, there is a case for the Punjab domestic violence law to be revisited. The law is one that combines mainly preventive measures with penal deterrents, identifying domestic violence under civil law.

Under civil law, the matter remains between the individuals concerned and does not involve the state. This requires the victim to initiate the claim. Perhaps, this is the biggest failure of this legislation: it does not recognise violence as a crime.

But it is important to look at how bringing the offence under civil law would be like. It would mean that in a court of law, the burden of proof on the person bringing the charges is less than it would be if domestic violence were labelled under the ambit of criminal law.

It was perhaps the intention of the draftsmen to bring the legislation under civil law, seeing that the prevailing domestic violence acts covered under criminal law in two other provinces have not seen a single case being brought before the courts.

Another flaw is the potential prison term for false claims brought against defendants. The fact that the case has to be proved in a court of law should be enough to ensure that the due process of law is followed. This section is detrimental to the very people that the legislation is attempting to protect.

The legislation rightly defines domestic violence beyond physical injury to include sexual violence, psychological and economic abuse, stalking and cybercrime. The definitions could have gone further, particularly when it comes to psychological abuse but giving a clear-cut definition of domestic violence is a step forward.

The great part is that architects of this law have recognised that the real mechanism of identifying and supporting a victim is at the grassroots level through protection committees and officers. Attempts have been sought to systemise and create mechanisms to address violence. Surely, a welcome sign.

In my next article, I will examine the more controversial elements of the legislation. But right now, let us appreciate that the members of a democratically-elected House tried to perform their duty to protect the people who elected them..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1124234/punjabs-attempt-protecting-women/>

GENDER BUDGETING — A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Express Tribune, June 19th, 2016.

The UNDP ranked Pakistan 121st on the Gender Inequality Index due to women's unequal access to resources and entitlement to rights in the country. Statistics show that not many women in Pakistan occupy senior positions as legislators, managers and senior officials and are mostly involved in unpaid family work and unpaid or low-paid marginal economic activities.

Moreover, despite constitutional guarantees and international commitments, violence against women is on the rise with crimes against women being committed in the name of religion, custom, honour and harmful traditional practices. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, between 2004 and 2016, 15,385 cases of honour killings were reported in the media.

Initiatives such as the National Plan of Action for Women (1998), National Policy for Empowerment and Development for Women (2002) and Gender Reform Action Plan (2004) failed to translate into implementation and concrete measures.

One criticism is the lack of adequate government budgets and mismanagement within bureaucracies, often resistant to gender-based programmes. Pakistan was one of the first countries to adopt the international agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), which includes a set of 17 goals and 169 targets to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change.

It also includes a stand-alone goal on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Success of the SDGs will rest largely on its seamless integration into the planning process in addition to the availability of requisite funds and prudent resource utilisation both at the federal and provincial levels.

Conscious inclusion of the gender perspective in the budget process allows the budget to work towards narrowing gender disparity and tackling the emerging issue of feminisation of poverty. The gender responsive budgeting (GRB) approach brings this gender awareness into policies and budgets by effectively combining two very important issues: gender equality and public financial management.

As a tool of policy analysis, it incorporates gender equality principles at all stages of the budget cycle including formulation, discussion, scrutiny and debate. In doing so, the budget transforms a simple exercise of resource allocation into an essential tool for social empowerment, economic progress and social change.

GRB ensures that resources are allocated in the budget based on the different needs and interests of individuals from different social groups. A budget that allocates a 50/50 share for women and men is by no means equitable.

Gender budgeting also does not imply just setting aside 'X' percentage for women-related schemes or enhancing female quotas in public sector programmes. This is precisely the flawed line of thinking that our policymakers and legislators have adopted over the years.

They, among others, have failed to realise that gender budgeting is not necessarily about separate and special allocations for women and girls. Instead it is a way of thinking about all social divisions including but not limited to age, sex, race, ethnicity and location.

A review of the budget sessions show that the majority of our legislators do not realise the importance of this tool. Only two female parliamentarians, though none of the males, explicitly expressed the need for GRB in the budget sessions of the last three years. In fact, it is clear from past budget speeches that there exists little realisation of the need to mainstream gender in the federal budget.

One of the strong elements of sustainable development lies in the long-term investments in human capital. This means ensuring adequate investment in health and education sectors without discrimination, as well as ensuring equal opportunities of access to justice and resources for women and men equally.

GRB has the potential to undertake policy analysis for fiscal redistribution which is required for the achievement of the SDGs. Women parliamentarians, both individually and through their caucus, can reasonably be expected to more actively raise and campaign for these issues on the floor of the House and in parliamentary committees.

The parliamentary budget debate on the whole fails to reflect a comprehensive gender analysis of the proposed expenditures and revenues. Input of parliamentarians on the budget largely revolves around party guidelines.

Much effort seemingly goes into praising or criticising the budget depending on which side of the parliamentary bench one is sitting on. Time constraints are another reason for the lack of gender focus in discussions. While the budget

session can extend from 45 to 90 days in some countries, it often lasts merely 12 to 17 working days in our parliament, which is insufficient time for an informed and productive debate.

Another factor that prevents a gender sensitive approach to public financial management in Pakistan is the failure of political parties to recognise this need in their manifestos. The major political parties do commit to resolving issues of socio-economic and political inequalities that prevent women's integration into the economic, social and political spheres.

Unfortunately, theirs is mostly a rights-based approach as the manifestos are silent on actual fiscal commitments in this respect.

As women constitute almost half of our population, economic growth and development demands public financial management to consider the needs of the vulnerable, especially women. To this end, a necessary first step is sensitisation of our policymakers and legislators about the importance of mainstreaming gender in budgets.

Gender budgeting is not just a catchphrase. Rather, GRB can equip policymakers with tools that bring much-needed gender focus to all financial plans and help achieve equitable resource distribution between individuals and social groups most in need. In this manner, it can help make significant headway towards the achievement of SDGs in Pakistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1125381/gender-budgeting-pathway-sustainable-development/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 6TH TO JUNE 12TH 2016

WOMEN PROTECTION BILL: CII 'IGNORED' OPINION OF ITS LONE FEMALE MEMBER

The Express Tribune, June 6th, 2016.

Obaid Abbas

ISLAMABAD: The Council for Islamic Ideology (CII) is said to have ignored the recommendations of its lone female member while drafting its own women protection bill.

The CII, the top constitutional body that advises parliament on whether or not a certain law is repugnant to Islam, recently rejected the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act (PPWVA) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Domestic Violence Bill as 'un-Islamic'.

Last week, the CII came up with its own women protection bill which proposed the right of a husband to 'lightly beat' his wife. The draft bill sparked a controversy and rights crusaders and NGOs came down hard on the CII.

In a letter addressed to CII's high-ups, Dr Samia Raheel Qazi referred to the council's proposals and expressed her reservations, saying her recommendations and opinion – given in CII's two earlier meetings with regard to the PPWVA and K-P bill – were ignored.

She said being a female member of the CII, the media always asked her as to how much importance was given to her opinion. "I've always given a positive feedback to the media," she added.

However, she said her opinion in the minutes of the council's 202nd meeting was mentioned briefly "which is unfair". She said her opinion was never considered as if she had no representation on the council. She requested the council to mention the different paragraphs, where she had expressed her views.

Dr Qazi, who is the daughter of Jamaat-e-Islami's late Ameer Qazi Hussain Ahmed, said the purpose of CII was to Islamise laws, so that people's problems could be resolved.

“[However] public opinion about the CII is that it does not deliberate much on women’s issues, rather women’s problems have multiplied due to the council’s recommendations,” she said. “The CII should dispel this impression, and draft a better women protection law,” Dr Rahila said.

In the letter – a copy of which is available with The Express Tribune – Dr Qazi said cases of violence against women were increasing in society due to ‘unawareness of Islamic values’. “It is our responsibility as members of the CII to take steps for ensuring women’s protection,” she added.

She argued that NGOs and civil society had become champions of women’s rights, while the opinion of religious groups was being undermined. “There is a dire need for playing our role to protect women. We must stand against violence against women. We must raise our voice,” she added.

Dr Qazi confirmed to The Express Tribune that she had expressed her reservations during the CII meetings in which the PPWVA and K-P’s domestic violence bill were rejected.

She hoped her opinion would be considered when the members finalise the women protection bill in the upcoming meeting. Sources said the council has prepared a reply to the letter which will be forwarded to Dr Qazi soon.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1117054/women-protection-bill-cii-ignored-opinion-lone-female-member/>

REPRODUCTIVE VIOLENCE

Dawn, June 7th, 2016

Tahir Mehdi

TWO things happened in Islamabad on the same day recently, one pertaining to the Council of Islamic Ideology and the other to Pemra, the electronic media regulator. CII sanctioned ‘lightly beating’ of wives and Pemra banned (and then partially withdrew) advertisements of contraceptives.

The two seemingly unrelated events have more than their timing in common. Their relationship is intriguing and intense and covered by the same ignorance that so many in our society defend in the name of religion and culture.

But before I dilate on the link between the two, let me first contradict the maulanas who topped their shenanigans by declaring that wife-beating does not exist in our beloved country which is inhabited by pious Muslims. It not only exists, it is rampant.

There is no doubt that this area is understudied and lacks specific data and information but whatever little is available makes it evident that wife-beating is the rule and not an exception. A small study (which I helped to conduct) a few years ago in two villages of central Punjab revealed that two in every three women were beaten by their husbands.

A quarter of them were not only slapped, boxed and shoved but beaten with sticks and shoes at a frequency of ‘often’ to ‘regularly’. Nine of the 190 women who were interviewed reported having bled at least once as a result of being beaten, and seven had one of their bones broken in a single bout.

If these horrendous statistics could be extrapolated to the 38 million or so married women of the country, the picture becomes extremely grave. But that’s not what one sees from the windows of the CII office in Islamabad.

Besides attempting to quantify the practice of wife-beating, information was also sought on the marriage age of respondents, the number and sequence of male and female children born and perceptions about who was at fault, what triggered the incidents, their mitigation strategy and which family member played what role during and after the act of violence. That’s where links between wife-beating and misplaced concepts about reproductive performance of the couple become evident.

As a rule, women in Pakistan are married young. Young men entering a marriage are under pressure to produce evidence of their male prowess — and what better proof than a pregnant wife? The young brides are thus expected to conceive immediately and if they fail owing to any natural or health- or age-related factor, the men take it as an affront. There were incidents reported in the study when men started beating their wives for months after the marriage but stopped when the woman became pregnant.

The average Pakistani male's understanding of sex and reproduction is at best at the level of what it used to be in the mediaeval ages. Male egos thrive in this sea of ignorance. It is impossible for them to accept that their wife's failure to conceive can also be due to some reversible or irreversible problem at their end.

It is the women who have always been faulted and who must bear the brunt. Two middle-aged men in the study, who savagely beat their wives, took second wives as the first ones did not bear them any children, but their second wives remained issueless too.

When a bride is finally pregnant; her next 'assignment' is to give birth to a male child. Women giving birth to girls first or to more girls than boys are considered inferior. Such women lose the sympathy of even their close circles and their 'poor' husbands are seen justified in venting their frustration.

There was considerable difference in the pattern of violence involving women who were proud mothers of sons compared with those who bore only girls. No one has a clue about the scientific fact that it is the man who is responsible for whether the offspring will be male or female. This fact could only become part of common knowledge if talking about sex and sex education were not taboo.

Almost half of the women (mostly in their 30s) beaten by their husbands reported that they were no longer beaten. But that comes when the man's age is close to 40 and his children have reached adulthood. Most women of this group reported that when their husbands intend to beat them, their sons tell them not to. There were women in this group, however, who said that their husbands had stopped beating them as soon as the coveted male heir was born.

This, however, is not to say that the archaic understanding of reproductive matters is the sole instigator of such violence. But if the ego of a large section of Pakistani males is deconstructed, their poor understanding of sexual matters will be found as one of its important factors.

Ignorance breeds ignorance. Our young men and women have no institution to fall back on for guidance on such matters. Sex education in schools gets an even stricter rebuke from the authorities than the Pemra ban on contraceptive ads.

This chosen ignorance then becomes a huge market for quacks offering dangerous quick fixes and for 'pirs' bestowing amulets and other more hazardous prescriptions. There is a reason why every village wall is painted with their advertisements.

A few vertical programmes related to reproductive health have attempted to raise communities' knowledge base but they too face stiff resistance from the guardians of public morality. These programmes are implemented by young workers who lack authority. Any affirmation of what they say by the national media lends them credibility and makes them more powerful and effective.

It is ironic that the acts that deprive them of this clout, damaging their cause, come from the highest level of government that is actually supposed to lead these campaigns with vigour and resolve.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263136/reproductive-violence>

SEXISM AT THE SOVEREIGN

Dawn, June 9th, 2016

Hassan Belal Zaidi

ISLAMABAD: Sexism may be as institutionalised in Pakistani politics as it is in our society, but insulting behaviour towards women was not on display so frequently in parliaments of the past.

Whether parliamentarians are aware of the implications their remarks carry or not, sexist comments are all too common, even on the floor of the house. However, Khawaja Asif's remarks about Shireen Mazari on Wednesday went beyond sexism; they were downright insulting.

"The one who started it all was Sheikh Rashid Ahmed," recalls veteran journalist Nusrat Javeed, who has covered the National Assembly for well-over two decades.

He recalled two incidents from the first PPP government. "Benazir Bhutto was wearing a Pakistani green shirt and white shalwar. When she walked in, he quipped 'You look like a veritable parrot', which did not go down well with Ms Bhutto at all and caused a ruckus in the house."

But the real kicker came the day Ms Bhutto wore a yellow suit to the house. "She was on her way out just as Sheikh Rashid rose in his seat, and he protested her exit during his speech by calling her a name which is considered very derogatory on the streets of Rawalpindi."

"The governor of Punjab was supposed to meet with Ms Bhutto later that day and legend has it that when she went to see him, her eyes were red. That was the same night Sheikh Rashid was booked in a terrorism case for possessing illegal weapons. The rest, as they say, is history."

For his part, Khawaja Mohammad Asif also has some history of making disagreeable and insulting comments towards women members in the house. Even when his party was in opposition from 2002 to 2007, Mr Asif did not spare the women of the treasury benches. At one time, it was Begum Mehnaz Rafi of the PML-Q, who was on the receiving end.

Khawaja Asif called Ms Rafi, who walked with a limp, a 'penguin'. Although he was reprimanded by women parliamentarians across the board, it did not seem to make any difference to the no-filter politician from Sialkot.

Another incident took place in April 2015, when women from both sides of the aisle walked out to protest the unfair distribution of development funds.

Then too, Khawaja Asif had stirred things up when he said that women who were elected on reserved seats had no constituency except for the directly-elected MNAs from their area.

"It is not appropriate to demand equal treatment," he told his women colleagues then, insisting that they were given funds due to parliamentary convention, not because the Constitution said so.

But he is not the only one in his party who has made unsavoury remarks about women lawmakers.

In January 2015, Abid Sher Ali invoked the ire of PPP's Shazia Marri when, instead of answering her question, he instead chose to comment on her appearance.

In June 2015, PML-N MNA Talal Chaudhry invoked the opposition's ire when he called Ms Mazari "aunty". At the time, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq had reprimanded the offending lawmaker and immediately asked for the remarks to be expunged.

Earlier this year, around the time that the assembly was debating the formation of Pakistan Airways, State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab made a lewd remark with reference to Ms Mazari.

The PTI whip was badgering the minister to explain, during Question Hour, what international standards of security were being observed at the Islamabad airport. “In airports abroad, they also strip-search you. Is that the international standard she wants,” he responded, to peals of approving laughter from the treasury benches.

Although the women’s parliamentary caucus is supposed to take up issues like this, many women lawmakers Dawn spoke to did not sound optimistic.

Dr Nafisa Shah lamented the lack of interest shown by the women’s parliamentary caucus in addressing such sexist behaviour in the house.

“The caucus did not take a stand on the issue of development funds, which are guaranteed to all members. Women have been consistently denied these,” she told Dawn.

Referring to how the speaker of the UK House of Commons had recently ejected a man who refused to apologise for calling the prime minister names, she questioned why Mr Asif was allowed to remain in the house.

She also said that if they were not satisfied with the response, “colleagues are considering withdrawing from the caucus”. However, she maintained that the PML-N women should stand with them on this issue. “When the PPP was in power, we women stood together. We didn’t care for who was in what party,” she concluded.

PTI’s Munazza Hassan told Dawn that when she and Dr Shah went over to speak to MNA Shaista Pervaiz – who heads the women’s caucus – Marvi Memon, who was sitting nearby had interjected to say that if her voice was compared to a man’s, she would take it as a compliment.

“I told her that may be her opinion, but I am a woman and do not need to pride myself on manliness,” she said.

When pressed to recall past incidents of such blatant sexism on the floor of house, Nusrat Javeed narrated another story from the days of Ayub Khan.

“Begum Zahid Khaleequzaman was minister for railways. While answering a question in the house, she had said ‘I have so much work that I have one foot in Karachi and the other in Rawalpindi’. At this, someone from the backbenches had shouted ‘The people of Rahim Yar Khan must be enjoying themselves’. What happened next, I do not recall,” Mr Javeed concluded.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263662>

CII REFORM A PRIORITY

Dawn, June 9th, 2016

I.A. Rehman

THE issues raised by the Maulana Sheerani-led Council of Islamic Ideology’s keenness to ensure that wife-beating does not end in Pakistan will be solved neither by protests by women activists nor by the growing storm on social media.

The real issue is whether the Muslims of Pakistan can afford to be led by the nose by a state institution determined to prevent their release from concepts unjustly described as Islamic.

No informed Pakistani should have been surprised by the CII’s latest broadside because the council has been proclaiming its love of retrogression quite regularly. Its liking for corporal punishment in schools and child marriage, its rejection of co-education in post-primary institutions and women’s working with men in offices and factories, and

its closed mind on the rights of non-Muslim Pakistanis have long confirmed it as the champion of narrow-minded conservatism. What it has done now is to sum up its case for denying women's basic rights.

These efforts of the CII have off and on revived debates on the justification for its existence. It has often been pointed out that the CII opposes the Muslim people's right to interpret Islam so as to enable them to face the challenges of the age and defreeze the Islamic fiqh, an objective for which Iqbal had called for a Muslim homeland in the subcontinent.

Iqbal had also specifically opposed the creation of a body of ulema to advise democratically elected representatives on religious issues on the grounds that parliaments alone were competent to rule on religious questions as well as on other issues.

Further, the need for an Islamic research body to help Muslims get rid of concepts and practices rooted in superstition or feudal culture has often been recognised. At one stage, Dr Fazlur Rahman, the great scholar who fell foul of Ayub's dictatorial regime, had conceived of the CII as a national body presiding over the work of provincial research and reform councils that could help the country benefit from ijtehad.

Perhaps it is time to retrieve the Fazlur Rahman plan and reconstruct the CII as a dynamic institution to rid Islam in Pakistan of its un-Islamic accretions.

Those who demand disbandment of the CII rely on Article 228 of the Constitution, which describes review of the existing laws as the council's primary function, and Article 230, which requires the CII to submit its final report within seven years of its appointment.

The council completed the task of examining the existing laws many years ago. As for fresh legislation, the need to end the council's encroachment on the rights of parliament as advised by Iqbal is manifest.

However, the CII is not going to be dissolved soon because no government is likely to give up, in the foreseeable future, the policy of appeasing the religious orthodoxy. Besides, Muslims in Pakistan, as a whole, have not even begun to realise the horrible consequences of mixing religion with politics.

Thus, neither the state nor society is in a position to appreciate the harm a CII dominated by retrogressive elements could cause to their future. Realism demands that, while waiting for the rise of a secular Pakistan, priority should be given to restructuring the CII so as to enable it to better serve Islam and the people's interests.

First of all, it is necessary to re-examine the principles that should guide the government while selecting CII members, especially the body's chairman. (This issue will acquire additional importance in December this year when Maulana Sheerani's second term as CII head comes to an end.)

Considerable confusion has been caused by the authors of the Constitution by providing for the CII immediately after the article that calls for bringing all laws in conformity with Islamic injunctions and prohibits the making of any law that is repugnant to such injunctions.

This has tended to limit the CII's functions as the final authority for determining the legitimacy of laws, and this impression is further strengthened by the language of Article 230 which defines the CII's functions. It also extends indefinitely the period of the council's encroachment on parliament's authority to decide upon legislative measures' repugnancy or otherwise to Islam.

The CII was never intended to be dominated by traditionalist ulema. Its members are to be chosen from two groups: "persons having knowledge of the principles and philosophy of Islam" and those having an "understanding of the economic, political, legal, or administrative problems of Pakistan".

The council must comprise eight to 20 members, and it is reasonable to expect that the two groups referred to here should be evenly represented on it. Further, it is not necessary that the CII should be headed by a traditionalist aalim.

In fact, various governments have avoided appointing tradition-bound ulema as CII chairmen, except for Allauddin Siddiqui, Maulana Kausar Niazi and Maulana Sheerani. Out of the 12 heads the CII has had, five were retired judges, three non-traditionalist scholars (Prof Halepota, Dr S.M. Zaman and Dr Muhammad Khalid Masud) and one lawyer-politician (Iqbal Ahmad Khan).

If the CII is to work towards freeing the Pakistani people from the effects of a 'frozen fiqh' and enable them to reinterpret their faith through ijtehad, a few changes in its composition are absolutely essential.

First, the CII head should be a scholar who understands the socioeconomic problems of Pakistan and can engage the ulema in a progressive discourse.

Secondly, the ulema, should be chosen from both traditionalist and progressive schools.

Thirdly, the quota for women members should be raised to at least one-third (if not 50pc) of the total membership. For every two women appointed to the council, one of them must represent the forward-looking woman.

At some stage, the government may consider giving the National Commission on Human Rights, the National Commission on the Status of Women and the National Commission on Minorities (whenever it is set up) observer status at the CII.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263639>

WOMAN BURNT BY HUSBAND, IN-LAWS

Dawn, June 10th, 2016

KASUR: A woman received third-degree burns after she was set on fire allegedly by her husband and in-laws over a domestic issue in the Purani Sabzi Mandi area on Thursday.

The woman, identified as Nadia Bibi, was referred to the Jinnah Hospital in Lahore in a critical condition.

According to B-Division police, Nadia of Khudian was married to Muhammad Saleem of Kasur about one and a half years back. The couple had a son.

On Thursday, Nadia and Saleem exchanged harsh words over some domestic issue. Later, Saleem, a kerosene dealer, along with other family members allegedly sprinkled kerosene on Nadia and set her on fire.

The neighbours came to the rescue of Nadia and rushed her to the District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital but there was no burn unit in the hospital and doctors referred her to the Jinnah Hospital.

According to Station House Officer Malik Tariq, Nadia was in a critical condition in the hospital. He said the police had yet not received any application from the family of Nadia and they were looking into the incident from different angles, including the possibility of a suicide attempt.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263862>

WOMAN WHO DRANK ACID DIES

Dawn, June 10th, 2016

MULTAN: A woman who had drunk acid and also allegedly forced her two minor daughters to consume it died in Nishtar Hospital on Thursday.

The girls – Minahal Fatima (2) and Hijab Fatima (1) – had died on Wednesday.

Mazhar, of Garaywala, lodged a first information report with the Saddar police that he had married Tayyiba three years back.

He said due to poor financial circumstances, they would frequently exchange words and it also happened on Wednesday morning. Elders of both families, however, managed reconciliation between them.

He said he left the home for the Nishtar Hospital where he works as security guard, and in the evening he was informed about the incident.

He said when he arrived at home, he found his daughters dead while his wife was shifted to the hospital in a critical condition.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263859>

CII BLAMED FOR RISE IN INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Dawn, June 10th, 2016

Amir Wasim

ISLAMABAD: Holding the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) responsible for the rise in incidents of violence against women, senators on Thursday called for making murders in the name of 'honour' a "non-compoundable" offence.

During a discussion on the death of 18-year-old Zeenat Rafiq, who was burnt alive by her mother in Lahore, the senators said 'honour' killings would continue as long as parliament failed to legislate to make such murders non-compoundable.

For the first time in parliamentary history, the Senate suspended its proceedings for five minutes to "sensitise" society and – as Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani called it – provide a shock to society over such incidents.

At the outset of the session, Mr Rabbani drew the attention of the house towards the incident, in which a young woman was killed by her mother on Wednesday for marrying a man of her own choosing. The chairman condemned the incident, and referred it to the house functional committee on human rights to suggest legislation.

During the discussion that followed, Opposition Leader Aitzaz Ahsan and Farhatullah Babar of the PPP called for abolishing the CII, saying that "the anti-woman bias of the CII as expressed in its recommendations and pronouncements" allowing violence against women had "contributed to crimes against women with impunity".

The CII is currently being led by Maulana Mohammad Khan Sherani of the JUI-F. A number of JUI-F members, including Deputy Chairman Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, were present in the house when the PPP senators spoke against the council, but remained silent, realising the sensitivity of the matter.

Mr Babar also called for the urgent adoption of a bill against 'honour' killing that had been moved by former PPP senator Sughra Imam. The bill was passed unanimously by all the political parties in the Senate in March last year, but was not passed in the recent joint session for want of a consensus.

Mr Babar said it was beyond comprehension that the bill was opposed by some of the very parties in the joint sitting of parliament that voted for it in the Senate.

He said the CII had lost its relevance as well as its constitutional basis, and called for examining the validity of its continued existence and the submission of annual reports to parliament.

Mr Ahsan said it was painful to see a woman “burning” her own daughter and having no regret over the act. He said the 14 alleged killers of Ambreen, a woman who was burnt alive in Abbottabad last month, had been arrested but the suspects were putting pressure on her father.

He feared that soon all the alleged killers would be roaming free, taking advantage of the weakness of the country’s laws.

He also criticised the government for allocating Rs100 million for the CII. He said council members could see nothing except women, and supported Mr Babar’s assertion that the council should be abolished because it had no constitutional or legal standing.

In other developed nations, he said, individuals were being given importance whereas in “our society we are still killing women and children in the name of honour for family or tribes”.

He asked the government to convene the joint sitting of parliament within a day or two, to pass the bill against ‘honour’ killings. He added that there were still people sitting in parliament who were opposed to the bill.

“Had the bill been passed, the killers of Ambreen, Zeenat and Maria might have been convicted,” he said, referring to three victims of recent ‘honour’ killings. He expressed the hope that religious parties may review their decision on the bill after this latest incident.

The bill against ‘honour’ killings, which was passed by the Senate, could not get through the joint sitting after it was opposed by religious parties, mainly the JUI-F and Jamaat-i-Islami. However, last year, JUI-F members piled their votes in support of the bill.

In an apparent reference to Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy’s recent documentary of ‘honour’ killings, PPP’s Sherry Rehman said the prime minister had seen the film on ‘honour’ killings, and Pakistan had received an Oscar for it, but the bill to prevent the crime was still pending before parliament.

Leader of the House Raja Zafarul Haq said he had supported Sughra Imam’s bill in the Senate and as a member of the committee as well. He also called for early legislation on the matter, before it was too late.

Mr Haq said the incidents of the ‘honour’ killings had now acquired a “viral stage”. He was of the view that the number of ‘honour’ killing incidents which did not come to the light could be higher.

However, he gave no assurance if the government would convene the joint sitting of parliament to pass the bill that would make ‘honour’ killing a non-compoundable offence.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1263920>

HOW TO FIX FEMINISM

Judith Shulevitz

International, New York Times, JUNE 10, 2016

HILLARY CLINTON’S securing of the Democratic nomination doesn’t just put a woman in range of the White House; it puts a mother there. And that’s momentous. Over the past half-century, unmarried childless women have overcome every barrier to opportunity you can think of, and now earn 96 percent of what men do. Mothers, on the other hand, aren’t doing nearly as well: Married mothers are paid 76 cents on the dollar.

To me, Mrs. Clinton’s sheer professional survival is as inspiring as any of her other accomplishments. A woman with a small child can easily lose faith that she’ll ever do anything else again. God knows I did. For the first five years of my child-rearing life, I was supposed to be writing a book, but mostly I dodged my editor’s calls. The 3-year-old had

separation anxiety, so I waited it out on one of the nursery school's kid-size chairs. I lacked the heart to say no to play dates, so I shut my computer and attended to juice boxes.

Then there was Ladies' Night, when the mothers on my cul-de-sac got together to drink too much wine. Fun, sure, but really: "Ladies' Night"? The fact that I went every week proved that my professional viability was fast disappearing, or so I thought at the time.

How did Mrs. Clinton hold on to hers? How did she rebound from the years in which she was raising a daughter, pursuing a law career and serving as first lady of Arkansas? She has a steely will, as everyone knows. But another answer is that it was in many ways easier to be a working mother in 1980, when Chelsea Clinton was born, than it is today.

Between the '80s and the aughts, when I had my children, a cloud of economic anxiety descended on parents, tightening what the sociologist Arlie Hochschild has called "the time bind." The workweek of salaried professionals ballooned from 40 hours to 50 hours or more, not counting the email catch-up done after the kids' bedtime.

Union protections, predictable schedules and benefits vanished for vast numbers of blue-collar workers. Their jobs in the service or on-demand economies now pay so little, and child care costs so much (168 percent more than it did a quarter-century ago) that parents have to stitch together multiple jobs. Meanwhile, terrified that their offspring will sink even lower, parents siphon off time and money to hand-raise children who can compete in a global economy.

Women like me who scale back in the face of impossible expectations feel themselves morphing into caricatures: attachment freaks, helicopter moms, concerted cultivators, neo-traditionalists. These stereotypes are just plain sexist, but I don't know many mothers whose careers, paychecks and sense of self-worth haven't been eroded by all the compromises they've had to make.

Our worlds have narrowed; our bank accounts have dipped below the minimum balance; and our power within the family and the world has dwindled. We'd be quick to tell you that we wouldn't have done it any differently. Still.

What if the world was set up in such a way that we could really believe — not just pretend to — that having spent a period of time concentrating on raising children at the expense of future earnings would bring us respect? And what if that could be as true for men as it is for women?

We live in an age rich in feminisms. One celebrates our multiplicity of identities: black, lesbian, transgender. Another has effectively anathematized sexual violence. Yet another — I think of it as C-suite feminism — chips away at the glass ceiling that keeps women out of the most powerful jobs, such as, say, the presidency.

But we need another feminism — and it needs a name that has nothing to do with gender. Let's call it, for lack of a better term, "caregiverism." It would demand dignity and economic justice for parents dissatisfied with a few weeks of unpaid parental leave, and strive to mitigate the sacrifices made by adult children responsible for aging parents.

Mrs. Clinton could be a champion of caregiverism. She has been blunter this electoral season about family-friendly policies than she has ever been before. She emphasized paid family leave when she began her campaign and again in the opening statements of the first Democratic presidential debate.

In May, she said she'd cap the cost of child care at 10 percent of a household's income, down from what, for a household supported by minimum-wage workers, can now be more than 30 percent.

But she needs to go further. Her focus is on wage-earners; what about the people who want to get out of the workplace, at least for a while? Mrs. Clinton should talk to Representative Nita Lowey of New York, who last year introduced a bill that would give Social Security credits to caregivers who left the labor market or cut back on hours — a public nod to the reality that care is work and caregivers merit the same benefits as other workers.

Mrs. Clinton belongs to an earlier generation, one whose objective was to free women from the prison of domesticity — at least the middle-class women who didn't already have jobs — and send them marching into the work force to demand equality there. But true equality will take more than equal pay and better working conditions. It will require something more radical, a “transvaluation of all values,” in Nietzsche's phrase.

Am I calling for a counterrevolution? I don't think so. Feminists have not always seen work as the answer to women's problems. Many who put in sweatshop hours in the textile industry or open-ended days in domestic service fought for the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which established the 40-hour workweek.

Working women “were not just organizable; they were the best constituency for struggle over the working day,” write David Roediger and Philip Foner in “Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day.”

There is also a venerable tradition in feminist history of trying to overturn a status quo that esteems professionals and wage-earners while demeaning those who do the unpaid or low-paid work of emotional sustenance and physical upkeep.

In the 1960s, the largely African-American National Welfare Rights Organization demanded welfare payments that would maintain a decent standard of living, partly on the grounds that these mothers were working already, raising future workers, and partly because they couldn't find jobs that would support them.

“I am 45 years old; I have raised six children,” wrote the group's chairwoman, Johnnie Tillmon, in 1972. “A job doesn't necessarily mean an adequate income. There are some 10 million jobs that now pay less than the minimum wage, and if you're a woman, you've got the best chance of getting one.”

Around the same time, the Marxist feminists Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James began a campaign called Wages for Housework that called for the overthrow of a capitalist order subsidized, in their view, by the unpaid slog of homemaking and, yes, sexual services.

This did not mean that women should necessarily go out and find jobs. “Not one of us believes that emancipation, liberation, can be achieved through work,” they wrote. “Slavery to an assembly line is not liberation from slavery to a kitchen sink.”

Liberal feminists accused them of wanting to push women back into domestic drudgery, but they denied it. “We have worked enough,” they wrote. “We have chopped billions of tons of cotton, washed billions of dishes, scrubbed billions of floors, typed billions of words, wired billions of radio sets, washed billions of nappies, by hand and in machines.”

So what did they want? I asked Silvia Federici, a founder of the New York chapter of Wages for Housework who writes prolifically on these questions. Actual wages for housework aside, she said, the movement wanted to make people ask themselves, “Why is producing cars more valuable than producing children?”

The expectation that all mothers will work has been especially hard on single mothers. When Franklin D. Roosevelt established the welfare program Aid to Dependent Children in 1935 it was a given that poor single mothers would tend to their young (poor single white mothers, I should say, because black women were expected to hold jobs).

By the 1970s, that presumption having vanished, Ronald Reagan could argue that welfare mothers were “lazy parasites” and “pigs at the trough,” laying the groundwork for welfare reform.

The program put in place by Bill Clinton in 1996, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, cuts off benefits after five years or less; forces women to hold or look for jobs, whether or not there are any to be had; and allows states to shunt welfare funds into other programs. And so, from 1996 to 2011, the number of families living in extreme poverty — on \$2 per person a day or less — more than doubled. A majority of those households were headed by single mothers.

IN an important new book, “Finding Time,” the economist Heather Boushey argues that the failure of government and businesses to replace the services provided by “America’s silent partner” — the stay-at-home wife — is dampening productivity and checking long-term economic growth.

A company that withholds family leave may drive away a hard-to-replace executive. Overstressed parents lack the time and patience to help children develop the skills they need to succeed. “Today’s children are tomorrow’s work force,” Ms. Boushey writes. “What happens inside families is just as important to making the economy hum along as what happens inside firms.”

Knowing that motherhood can derail a career, women are waiting longer and longer to have children. In the United States, first-time mothers have aged nearly five years since 1970 — as of 2014, they were 26.3 as opposed to 21.4. Some 40 percent of women with bachelor’s degrees have their first child at 30 or older. Fathers are waiting along with the mothers — what else can they do?

I had my children at 39 and 40. (Mrs. Clinton was 32.) My 12-year-old daughter is already calculating how soon she’ll have to have children if I’m going to be strong enough to lift them. Younger than I was, I tell her. But she’s bright and ambitious. I could see her going to graduate school

I recently got into an argument with a professor friend about the plausibility of restructuring higher education and the professions so that women — and men — wouldn’t have to hustle for positions like partner or associate professor just as they reach peak fertility. Many universities, I said, now stop the tenure clock for a year when assistant professors have children. My friend laughed. A year is nothing when it comes to a baby, she said. She’d never have won tenure if she’d had her son first.

I didn’t know what to say. At least she had a child, unlike friends who waited until too late.

Here’s a fantasy my daughter and I entertain: What if child-rearing weren’t an interruption to a career but a respected precursor to it, like universal service or the draft? Both sexes would be expected to chip in, and the state would support young parents the way it now supports veterans. This is more or less what Scandinavian countries already do. A mother might take five years off, then focus on her career, at which point the father could put his on pause. Or vice versa.

Vice versa was the deal struck by characters on the Danish TV series “Borgen,” a member of Parliament and her husband. He’d schlep and clean for five years; then she’d do the same. (As it turned out, she became prime minister and their marriage went to hell. But that’s a problem few of us would ever have to face.)

What really makes the “Borgen” model a mismatch for the United States is that American families, particularly low-income families, can’t do without a double income, given wage stagnation and the cost of children in a country that won’t help parents raise them. But having to work should not be confused with wanting to work, at least not without some stops along the way. “It takes 20 years, not 12 weeks, to raise a child,” as the feminist legal scholar Joan Williams has written.

Those 20 years are what made Sheryl Sandberg’s exhortation to women to “lean in,” or work extra hard, before and after they started families, seem so ludicrous. (Ms. Sandberg has softened her stance since her husband’s death last May. “I did not really get how hard it is to succeed at work when you are overwhelmed at home,” she recently wrote.) When Marissa Mayer, now chief executive of Yahoo, reported that when she was in Google’s employ, she slept under her desk, one disgusted feminist, Sarah Leonard, wrote, “If feminism means the right to sleep under my desk, then screw it.”

But what should feminism mean instead? One thing it should not mean is a politics of the possible. We’re fighting for 12 weeks of leave when we need to rethink the basic chronology of our lives. We live longer than we used to.

A caregiverist agenda should include stretching career paths across that longer life span, making it easier for parents of both sexes to drop in and out of the work force as the need arises. Automation may eliminate jobs in all sorts of fields. Perhaps we should lobby for a six-hour workday, yielding both more jobs and more time for family.

It's a little late for me, if not, thank goodness, for my daughter. I fled my cul-de-sac before I should have, in part because I convinced myself that it was becoming a lovely, leafy, azalea-pink prison. City life is great, thank you, but I have regrets. I should have gone on longer rambles with the babies; blown more deadlines; been quicker to heed my son's demand to "see train" at the nearby station. The articles could have waited; the sight of a little boy clapping as

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I should have gone on longer rambles with the babies; blown more deadlines; been quicker to heed my son's demand to "see train" at the nearby station. The articles could have waited; the sight of a little boy clapping as a train squealed to a stop could not. As for Ladies' Night, it took me a long time to assemble a coterie of mothers as genial and supportive. If I'm ashamed of anything now, it's how little I appreciated them then.

www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/opinion/sunday/how-to-fix-feminism.html

GENDER & DISABILITY

Dawn, June 12th, 2016

Rukhsana Shah

WOMEN with disabilities face triple discrimination the world over on the basis of disability, gender and poverty. They are the most marginalised of all population groups including men with disabilities. The negative stereotyping of women with disabilities puts them at greater physical risk as they are exposed to neglect, emotional abuse, domestic violence and rape.

According to the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programmes, 83pc of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime, while the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa reports that these women are less able to escape abusive caregivers.

The 2011 World Report on Disability indicates that the global female disability prevalence rate is higher at 19.2pc against 12pc for men because women are discriminated against since birth in terms of nutrition, immunisation and medical interventions.

The global literacy rate for women with disabilities is 1pc with only 20pc of them getting any rehabilitation services. They are paid less than their male counterparts at work, given fewer loans for education or self-employment, and face stronger barriers in accessing vocational training, leisure facilities and justice.

With these global givens, it is not surprising that in Pakistan where being female itself is debilitating, women with disabilities live at the very peripheries of society, differentiated and unequalled by a culture that is patriarchal, religiously obscurantist and anti-women.

The family, community, institutions and the state — the touchstones of human civilisation — are arrayed against them. Seventy per cent live in rural areas in the most appalling conditions where even provision of rehab services and assistive devices is discriminatory, making everyday living a challenge in itself.

Disability should not be a stigma, but accepted as a natural human condition by all the protagonists — people with disabilities, families, communities, civil society and the government. Last year, Madeline Stuart became the world's first model with Down's syndrome to appear on the catwalk at the New York Fashion Week.

Television channels and social media networks should use social marketing to influence social behaviours and raise awareness about disability in collaboration with educational institutions, while women's groups should initiate membership drives focusing on women with disabilities in order to empower them.

A great deal of work has been done at the international level under the aegis of the UN to create a comprehensive legislative and policy framework for a rights-based and barrier-free inclusive society.

Apart from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ESCAP has taken a number of initiatives, among which are the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five, the Bali Declaration adopted by Asean, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, the Beijing Declaration on Disability-Inclusive Development, and the Incheon Strategy, to accelerate action during the current Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022.

The Incheon Strategy also mandates member states to report triennially on the progress made on its time-bound and measurable goals.

Despite these international commitments and provisions in Articles 25, 37 and 38 of the Constitution, women with disabilities continue to languish in the darkest spaces in Pakistan, uncounted and uncared for. It is imperative for the government to take visible and affirmative action to ensure that its image at least in the international community is not further tarnished due to inaction on this front.

A high-profile policy dialogue with organisations representing people with disabilities should be arranged to discuss legislative and implementation mechanisms in line with UN conventions and the Incheon strategy, along with the formation of a specific parliamentary body to carry out this task.

There is no data on persons with disabilities in Pakistan as no serious attempt has been made since 1998 to conduct a census to assess their numbers. The government needs to initiate compilation of gender-disaggregated disability data, include the disability dimension in all policymaking and budgeting exercises, and encourage the private sector to promote disability-inclusive business practices.

It is not rocket science to advise public-sector banks to float disability-friendly loans, fix job quotas for women with disabilities, subsidise the use of new technologies, introduce tax rebates for their families as is being done in India, and make BISP conditional upon the safety, education and vocational training of the disabled.

Instead of signal-free roads, the government should set up fully equipped community resource centres to provide them opportunities for mobility, training and leisure time.

However, at present, all federal government structures relating to these critical constitutional and human rights issues stand disempowered after the 18th Amendment. If the government wishes not to remain within the confines of Islamabad, it will need to reclaim its lost spaces by acknowledging its responsibilities towards this most marginalised of communities groups in the country.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1264245/gender-disability>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 30TH TO JUNE 5TH 2016

AUTHORITY TO IMPLEMENT PRO-WOMEN LAW IN PUNJAB

Dawn, May 30th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The Punjab government is now establishing the Violence Against Women Centres Authority (VAWCA) to ensure implementation of the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act without any bureaucratic or procedural hurdle.

The chief minister has approved the authority upon the recommendation of his Special Monitoring Unit, Law and Order, head Salman Sufi. It will supervise working of the Violence Against Women Centres (VAWCs) to be established in all 36 districts of Punjab.

“This authority will be formed in order to overcome bureaucratic hurdles, red-tape and unwarranted delays in the effective implementation of VAWCs (project) across the province,” says Mr Sufi.

The VAWCs aim to streamline the case-flow process by converging all components of justice delivery, including FIR lodging, prosecution, medico-legal, forensics, psychologists and shelter homes, under one roof.

The construction of the first VAWC began in September 2015 in Multan district at Matti Tal road and after undergoing dilatory bureaucratic processes it is due to be completed by the end of this summer.

Preempting the delays and complexities that result from the involvement of bureaucratic departments, the authority will ensure sustainability of the VAWCs project, irrespective of who is in power.

Former female judges, senior government officials and lawyers will be among the members of the authority who will supervise the formation of VAWCs and ensure provision of justice to the victims. They will also utilise funds for construction of more centres, software development and the required enhancements to strengthen the justice-delivery mechanism for the victims.

A special committee under the law minister and comprising Mr Salman Sufi, Rana Maqbool, Punjab police inspector general (IG), secretaries of the law, home, social welfare and women development departments has been notified in order to deliberate upon the formation, structure and functions of the VAWC Authority.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261559>

WOMEN COMMISSION REJECTS CII BILL

Dawn, May 31st, 2016

LAHORE: The Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) has rejected the Council of Islamic Ideology's (CII) proposed 'model' bill for the "protection of women" and condemned it as unconstitutional, illegal and in complete violation of fundamental human rights.

The CII's proposal contravened fundamental rights of women enshrined in the Constitution and violated international laws and treaties Pakistan signed and was bound by, said the PCSW in a statement on Monday.

"In the light of Article 25 of the Constitution that upholds equality of all citizens before the law, the proposed bill adds no value to the rights of women," the statement said.

The CII bill contains some 163 recommendations addressing issues of property, marriage and motherhood, besides crimes (including violence) committed against women. It also proposes steps like allowing men to "lightly beat their wives" and banning co-education past the primary level, that sparked a controversy.

All the rights that the CII claims to grant women under its "model" bill are already enshrined in the laws, the PCSW argues.

It ridicules the CII advice of getting codified in law that "women will not be permitted to receive foreign officials and state guests" and urged all concerned citizens and government bodies to reject the bill as unconstitutional and redundant for it not only impinges on the women's rights but also reverses the rights gained over a century through a process of evolution of fundamental rights and freedoms.

The CII's draft bill reduces to nothing the rigorous efforts made by the government to protect the rights of women and it treats them as legal minors and property of men by prescribing that they need to be instructed in all matters of life, the commission says.

Criticising CII recommendations for women on co-education, breastfeeding, ban on formula milk, use of contraception, criminalising abortion after 120 days, barring women from labour-intensive work and military combat, the PCSW says women all over the world have excelled in every walk of life.

From accomplishing the most physically challenging of tasks to running governments and big corporations, there is nothing that women have not been able to accomplish, it says, adding Pakistan is among one of the few nations in the world which has had a female head of the state.

"The CII appears to have forgotten the roles played by eminent women such as Ms Fatima Jinnah, Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, Ms Maleeha Lodhi and current ministers Ms Saira Tarar, Ms Anushay Rahman and Ms Hameeda Waheed-ud Din. CII's position would be in all respects a huge step back from the progress that has been made to date."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1261766>

WOMEN'S ELECTORAL RIGHTS

Dawn, June 2nd, 2016

I.A. Rehman

THE decision by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to set up a working group for promoting women's electoral rights through partnership with civil society organisations is sound in principle. However, the first reports of the group's working suggest the need for greater clarification of the project and of its place in the overall scheme of the electoral reforms under way.

The Gender and Disability Electoral Working Group, headed by an additional director-general of the ECP, a woman made responsible for gender affairs, has invited many civil society organisations to help the ECP raise the voter turnout from 55pc to 70pc and to reduce the gender gap.

The activities undertaken by the working group include: promotion of voter education through various means; organisation of training sessions for media persons; research on electoral practices, polling trends, etc; and focus on women voters and disabled/ marginalised/ vulnerable groups.

Obviously, on the one hand the working group intends to cover almost the whole range of matters related to elections, which means the emphasis on women's concerns will be diluted, and on the other hand it seems to be skirting the main hurdles to women's due participation in elections.

The project lumps together two target groups — women and the people living with disabilities (PLWD), and the problems this conceptual flaw will create have already been pointed out. A large number of people with disabilities cannot exercise their right to vote or otherwise take part in the electoral process and everything possible should be done to help them. We will take up this matter on another occasion.

Meanwhile, the ECP working group may take a look at Zahid Abdullah's paper on the subject including his admirable study, *Disabled by Society* and the recommendations of the national convention organised by the International Federation for Electoral Systems in Islamabad in September 2014, which was perhaps the largest ever gathering of PLWD in the country.

The plea that matters related to women's voting and those concerning the people with disabilities should be treated as separate projects or separate parts of a single project merits proper discussion. The UNDP, that is providing funds, should not be averse to making the project more sharply focused. If nothing else, the project can be split into two parts, one part for women's concerns and the other for PLWD.

The issue of enabling the women of Pakistan to fully participate in the electoral process has frequently been discussed in the context of a wider reform of the system. Unfortunately, the parliamentary committee charged with the task of developing a comprehensive electoral reform package has taken much too long to deliver.

It has caused considerable confusion by getting the 22nd Amendment, to change the eligibility criteria for the chief election commissioner and the ECP members, passed by the National Assembly.

That these offices need not be filled exclusively by members of the superior judiciary, serving or retired, had no doubt been demanded by civil society but this was not the central issue in the debate. The government's desire to have the 22nd Amendment passed before the term of the present ECP members expires is understandable but there was no need to hold back on what else there is in the reform package.

The mist can easily be cleared by generating a public debate on all the reform proposals finalised by the committee.

Civil society has been vigorously arguing for the inclusion of at least one woman in the ECP so as to give the commission the benefit of women's perspective on electoral issues. This need is not met by appointing a woman as an additional director general for gender affairs. A woman is needed in the policymaking echelon of the ECP.

The most critical issue faced by women is that they are prevented from voting under unlawful compacts among the political parties taking part in an election. Many years have passed since the judiciary held this practice to be illegal; although Sections 171-C and 171-J of the Penal Code are quite clear, the matter is still hanging fire.

The ECP nullified a by-election in Dir on the grounds that women had been barred from voting. The decision was overturned by the Peshawar High Court and now the matter has been raised in the Supreme Court. One should like to know what the parliamentary committee has proposed to put an end to the most vile practice of preventing women from exercising their right to franchise.

The ECP has consistently been urged to prepare a separate record of women's voting in all constituencies. It had promised to do so by 2013 and it must redeem its pledge before the next general election that is due not later than 2018.

This data will play a crucial part in implementing the proposal to countermand election in any constituency if ballots cast by women are less than 20pc of their number on the rolls. The reform-makers may consider raising the figure to 30pc or even higher.

A key issue in the debate on the subject under discussion is the lack of attention to defend the rights of non-Muslim women. Apart from a fully fledged campaign to ensure that these women get their CNICs issued and that these cards are not appropriated by waderas and other professional contestants, there is need to remove the obstacles they face while presenting themselves as candidates for election.

If fatwas are issued to warn Muslim voters against voting for a non-Muslim man, similar treatment is likely to be meted out to non-Muslim women candidates. That these edicts have been criminalised under the Penal Code has been ignored for decades. Should we hope that the ECP and the parliamentary committee have found a way to prevent the abuse of religion in electoral matters?

That, indeed, is the most critical issue that affects not only the rights of women but the fairness of the entire election system.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1262097>

July 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 25TH TO JULY 31ST 2016

IN A FIRST, WOMAN MAKES IT TO ECP

The Express Tribune, July 26th, 2016.

Danish Hussain

ISLAMABAD: After over a month of bickering with the opposition, the government has notified three former judges and a retired bureaucrat as members of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). But a controversy marred the decision, as two opposition groups accused the ruling party of cutting a deal with the PPP – the largest opposition party.

Of the four names selected by a bipartisan 12-member parliamentary committee on Monday, one is a woman. And this is the first time a woman has become a member of the country's top poll supervisory body. After failing to evolve a consensus, the government and the opposition had forwarded 12 names each to the parliamentary panel.

Justice (retd) Altaf Ibrahim Qureshi was appointed the member from Punjab; Justice (retd) Irshad Qaiser from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa; former federal secretary Abdul Ghaffar Soomro from Sindh; and Justice (retd) Shakeel Ahmed Baloch from Balochistan.

The names were officially announced in a notification, following their endorsement by the parliamentary panel. But the PTI and ANP termed the selection a 'muk maka' (underhand deal) between the PML-N and the PPP.

During the meeting that lasted about one hour, the ANP abstained from voting on all four appointments while the Imran Khan-led PTI refused to vote on the choice of members from Punjab and K-P. The party had suggested the name of former bureaucrat Tariq Khosa for ECP member from Punjab.

While talking to The Express Tribune, Dr Shireen Mazari said it was unfortunate to see the name of Khosa excluded from the list of nominees forwarded by the opposition.

The PTI had recommended Justice (ret'd) Mian Fasihul Mulk for the ECP member slot from K-P, where the party has its own government. His name was also ignored by the parliamentary committee, though it was among the 12 nominees of the opposition.

Mazari claimed the PTI had been ignored while selecting the members from Punjab and K-P, leading to her decision to abstain from voting. She represented the PTI in place of Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who did not attend the meeting for unspecified reasons.

However, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar rejected Mazari's claims, saying the PTI should blame the PPP if it had any grievances.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, he said the leader of the house and the opposition leader made the nominations after consulting their respective sides.

PTI chief Imran Khan also expressed his reservations over the whole process of appointments. "After the controversial 2013 general elections and the negative remarks of the judicial commission on election commissioners about the recently retired ECP member for Punjab, one was hoping for better changes," he said in a statement.

ANP senator Daud Khan Achakzai, who represented his party on the parliamentary panel, claimed neither the opposition nor the government had taken his party into confidence at any level during the process.

The top poll body had been inoperative since June 12 when its four members retired. The Constitution provides for appointment of their successors within 45 days of their retirement. The constitutional timeframe of 45 days expired on July 25.

The newly constituted ECP would have to deal with tricky political matters. A number of opposition parties, including the PPP and the PTI, have filed separate petitions with the poll body, seeking disqualification of the prime minister over the Panama leaks.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1149308/first-woman-makes-ecp/>

PARENTS BOOKED FOR KILLING BRITISH DAUGHTER FOR HONOUR

Dawn, July 27th, 2016

Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: The parents of a British woman of Pakistani origin along with her former husband and two others have been booked for killing their own daughter in a village near Mangla in Jhelum district, police said on Tuesday.

Syed Mukhtar Kazim, the husband of 28-year-old Samia Shahid, alleged that his wife was killed by her family in the name of so-called honour as she married him against the will of her parents.

He lodged an FIR on July 23 against Samia's father Chaudhary Shahid, mother Imtiaz Bibi, sister Madiha Shahid, cousin Mobeen and the deceased woman's former husband Chaudhary Shakil under Sections 302 (premeditated murder), 34 (common intention) and 109 (abetment) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

The death of Samia was reported by her father to Mangla police on July 20.

The suspects, who belong to Dhok Pandori village, have denied the charges and insist that Samia had died of cardiac arrest.

Police briefly detained the father of the woman but set him free after an initial inquiry.

An official of the Mangla police said body samples of the deceased had been sent to the forensic laboratory in Lahore and the result was awaited.

A beauty therapist from Bradford, Samia had previously been married to her cousin Shakil but the couple reportedly parted ways after divorce in May 2014. The woman then married Mr Kazim of Taxila in September 2014 and both started living in Dubai.

Mr Kazim claimed in the FIR that Samia had been killed by her relatives who had refused to accept their relationship because he did not belong to their community.

He said his mother-in-law phoned Samia on July 11 and asked her to come to Pakistan to see her ailing father.

She arrived in the country on July 14.

She told him by phone that her father was alright and now she was feeling insecure and threatened.

Mr Kazim said on July 20 his wife's phone was switched off and he contacted Mobeen, her cousin, who told him that Samia had suffered a heart attack.

Mr Kazim reached Pakistan on July 21.

According to a report in The Guardian, the deceased woman's family strongly denied Mr Kazim's claims. Her father was quoted as saying that the allegations made by Mr Kazim were "lies and allegations" against him. "An investigation is under way and if I am found guilty I am ready for every kind of punishment," he said.

"My daughter was living a very peaceful and happy life. She had come to Pakistan on her own and was not under any pressure from her family."

Naz Shah, a member of British parliament from Bradford, had asked the prime minister of Pakistan to intervene, the report said.

In a letter written on Sunday to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Ms Shah wrote: "Should this be [an honour killing] case then we must ensure justice is done for Samia and we must ensure this never happens again."

The British High Commission in Islamabad is in contact with the local authorities in Jhelum as well as the family of the deceased regarding the developments in the case.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1273496>

PUNJAB GOVT LAUNCHES SCHEMES WITH A VIEW TO EMPOWERING WOMEN
Business Recorder, 30 July 2016

Muhammad Saleem

LAHORE: Punjab government has started several new schemes aimed at empowering women and accelerating the social inclusion of marginalised groups.

Under Skills Development Programme, Department for International Development UK will provide £38.4 million for five years while share of the Punjab government will be £89.1 million. Under this programme, technical & vocational skills training will be provided to 330,000 poor and vulnerable people including 40 percent women across all districts of Punjab to enhance their employment prospects and incomes.

The programme also aims to support institutional development of the Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF), policy, regulatory and institutional reforms in the skills sector in Punjab to improve the quality and market relevance of skills, sources said.

The sources claimed that the government is establishing four women universities at Sialkot, Multan, Bahawalpur and Faisalabad in FY 2016-17. Punjab Health department is also paying special attention to improve health and quality of life of all, particularly women and children, through access to essential health services.

Rs 629 million had been earmarked in the development programme 2016-17 for women development sector. Major part of the proposed allocation for 2016-17 will be utilized to increase awareness among women in Punjab about their rights and available opportunities announced by the Punjab government under Women Empowerment Initiatives of 2012, 2014 and 2016, sources said.

“A dedicated domestic worker training programme will also be undertaken during 2016-17 with the aim to provide better employment opportunities to the home based workers and to meet the needs of working women in the form of trained domestic workers,” sources added.

Moreover, an amount of Rs 295 million has been earmarked under women development fund for provision of women specific facilities like washrooms, waiting areas, etc at public places and government offices envisaged under Women Empowerment Initiatives, 2016.

In ADP, 2016-17, an amount of Rs 100 million is earmarked for development programme of Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW).

The new initiatives which will be implemented during 2016-17 are development of model for sustainable development of working women hostels, rehabilitation of existing working women hostels, domestic workers’ training programme, support for working women hostels.

In the meeting of departmental development sub-committee, approval has been accorded for repair and rehabilitation of hostels at Gulshan-e-Ravi and Model Town Lahore, Gujranwala, Shamsabad and Khana Road Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Multan, Sargodha, Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan.

Punjab Minister for Women Development Hameeda Waheed-ud-Din reviewed the ongoing public awareness campaign regarding women rights and action under Women Package 2014.

She stated that an amount of Rs 49.58 million has been earmarked under various heads for the campaign and departmental committee has given approval in this regard. She said that a seminar is being arranged in Faisalabad next month on honour killing which will be attended by people of different walks of life.

The minister said that with the purpose of economic empowerment of educated housewives, a training programme has been started and 1000 women have been imparted training so far. She said that the programme will be reviewed during current fiscal year and training will be imparted to more women.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/30/8-page/781358-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 18TH TO JULY 24TH 2016

THE REAL SHAME

Dawn, July 18th, 2016

Huma Yusuf

When the rock band Bumbu Sauce wrote an anthem to Qandeel Baloch, its members probably did not think it would soon be a lament. In a recent interview with the BBC, band frontman Masterjee Bumbu explained the Qandeel Baloch phenomenon, saying that she's a "badly behaved woman" who uses the internet to communicate; "those are two things Pakistan does not deal well with as a society: the internet and badly behaved women". His words were prescient. Pakistan's inability to deal with Qandeel Baloch's behaviour drove, allegedly, her brothers to murder her last week.

Owing to her brothers' involvement, Qandeel Baloch's murder has been termed an 'honour' killing. Framed as such, people feel comfortable pointing to her 'bayghairat' behaviour to justify her brothers' heinous action. Many tweeted in support of her killing, describing her as a disgrace to Pakistan. She had received death threats during her lifetime, and comments under her social media posts frequently called for her murder. Three weeks ago, she contacted the authorities to ask for security.

Few will be surprised, then, that her death has not met with the universal outpouring of shock and horror that we saw a few weeks ago for Amjad Sabri, who was shot dead for essentially the same reason — a perceived transgression. The fact is, we rarely see any public dismay each time a woman is killed for allegedly speaking to the wrong man, choosing who to marry or otherwise acting against her family's wishes. How could we? There are around a thousand such murders reported in Pakistan each year, and our society is already too brutalised to mourn each one. Moreover, because such murders are categorised as 'honour' killings, there is a sense that the tragedy is somehow different, explicable and thus palatable.

At the time of writing on Saturday evening, Nawaz Sharif had not reacted to news of Qandeel Baloch's murder. I looked for his public statement because in February he announced that his government would amend laws that allow murderers who kill in the name of honour to escape punishment. No fresh legislation has been passed since then.

In June, Zeenat Bibi from Lahore was burned alive by her mother for marrying a man of her choice. After her death, Sharif ordered an investigation into her killing, describing it as 'un-Islamic'. The prime minister was happy to speak in defence of Zeenat Bibi, whose anonymity and circumstances together evoked a perception of vulnerability and oppression. It would indicate an admirable level of consistency if Sharif rose to the defence of Qandeel Baloch, who was provocative, sensual, and responsible for taking selfies damning enough to get Mufti Abdul Qavi suspended from the Ruet-i-Hilal Committee. After all, isn't her murder equally un-Islamic?

More importantly, why must we deploy a religious lens to comment on such killings? Qandeel Baloch and Zeenat Bibi were murdered. We should term and condemn their killings as such and punish the perpetrators accordingly.

Sadly, when women are murdered, the authorities and public at large tend to make sense of the violence — and thus mitigate its horror — by pointing to some aspect of the women's behaviour that warranted attack. Qandeel flouted social mores and took suggestive selfies; Sabeen Mahmud organised events on Balochistan and promoted tolerance; Perween Rahman asked too many questions about land ownership in Karachi. With these caveats, we imply that there are certain things women should not do, certain boundaries beyond which they should not transgress.

With each murder, new parameters are defined, and the space for women shrinks. Much worse, cold-blooded is recast as a punitive act, making it acceptable when it should, instead, be deemed far more offensive to human decency and our values than anything the women could have done in the first place.

Qandeel Baloch's murder is the latest reminder that we live in an era of selective feminism. When it is convenient, people are happy to promote women's rights: female entrepreneurship, which contributes to the economy; girls'

education, which keeps international aid money flowing to state coffers; the election of female parliamentarians, who toe the party line and help boost Pakistan in gender equality indexes.

But there is little progress on issues that pertain to the security and sanctity of women themselves, from domestic violence to reproductive rights. Why hasn't the government kept its promise of reviewing legislation that lets murderers who invoke 'honour' go free? Why did it take a documentary that won international acclaim to prod the prime minister's conscience on this matter? Aren't the hundreds of corpses each year enough?

Qandeel Baloch's father has mourned the loss of his 'brave' daughter and named his sons, who may not go scot-free, in the FIR. One hopes we all realise that the son's violent act — and not the daughter's suggestive selfies — is Pakistan's true shame.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271421>

CIVIL SOCIETY COMES OUT AGAINST QANDEEL'S MURDER

Dawn, July 19th, 2016

ISLAMABAD: A large number of people on Monday gathered in front of the National Press Club (NPC) to protest social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch's murder, who was killed for 'honour' by her brother in Multan last week.

Participants of the protest, which was organised by the Awami Workers Party (AWP), said only a few cases of 'honour' killings in the country were reported and that not even a complaint is registered with the police in the majority of such murders.

"Qandeel Baloch's murder was not motivated by honour, but by the fragile ego and insecurities of men who fear women and refuse to listen to the women who demand to be seen and heard," said journalist Mahvish Ahmad.

Also part of the protest were members of the Women's Action Forum and Insaani Huqooq Ittehad, some of whom said that even in most reported cases, the culprits were not punished as they are forgiven by the victim's family members, who are usually the complainants in the case.

Talking to Dawn, one of the participants Advocate Latif Hamdani said such cases should be considered crimes against the state.

"According to Qisas and Diyat laws, the wali has the right to forgive the culprit. This practice needs to be ended. Our patriarchal society gives men the right to do whatever they like," he said.

"It is unfortunate that some people, especially some social media users, are saying there was a reason behind what happened. The state has to devise a clear policy regarding gender based crimes. A woman should first be regarded a human and a sister, daughter and mother second," he said.

AWP Punjab President Aasim Sajjad Akhtar said the problem with Pakistani society was that men think they have a right to decide on the fate of a woman.

"I think some men should rebel against this thinking and raise a voice for women's rights. The government has to stop [supporting] conservative groups. The local police and administration should take up these cases and ensure that the culprits are punished," he said.

AWP member Ismat Shah Jahan said it was sad that some people celebrate when a woman is killed and that the state, on the other hand, does not take any legal action.

“The state is not interested in addressing women’s issues. We still have feudal and tribal systems which are creating problems for women and the state has brought religion into the mix, making life for women all the more difficult,” he said.

A participant of the protest, Madiha Tahir said that though it was a good thing that some men were raising a voice for women’s rights, women should come forward to claim their rights for themselves.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271730/civil-society-comes-out-against-qandeels-murder>

UPTICK IN HONOUR KILLINGS FAILS TO MOVE GOVT

The Express Tribune, July 19th, 2016.

Qadeer Tanoli / Hasnaat Malik / Riazul Haq

ISLAMABAD: Even after more than 4,000 women have been murdered in the name of honour since 2008, the government continues to drag its feet on introducing law to effectively criminalise and stop this heinous crime.

In recent years, the clamour for introducing effective laws to discourage such killings has grown – both inside and outside parliament. Yet lawmakers have been slow to act on pending legislation, ignoring the high incidence of the crime.

Aurat Foundation, a nongovernmental organisation campaigning for women’s rights, says some 4,317 women have been murdered in the name of honour between 2008 and 2015. A breakup of this data shows that 2014 was the bloodiest year when 713 women were killed.

Data for 2015, when 344 women were killed, shows that Punjab reported the highest incidence of such killings with 170 reported cases. Faisalabad 24, Rahim Yar Khan 16 and Kasur 13 reported the most cases of honour killings in the province. The metropolitan city of Lahore reported 12 cases.

Sindh was a distant second where 116 cases of honour killings were reported in 2015. Jaccobabad reported the most number of cases of honour killings from any single district in the country with 30 cases. It was followed by Shikarpur with 21 cases and Kashmore with 10 cases. The metropolitan city of Karachi reported four cases.

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa accounted for 30 cases of honour killing with Swat reporting six and four each from Peshawar, Mardan and Upper Dir.

Balochistan reported the fewest number of honour killing cases at 24. Most of the cases, nine to be precise, were reported from Jafarabad while Naseerabad reported eight cases. Jhal Magsi reported three cases. The capital, Islamabad, too, had its share of honour killings, with four cases reported during the year.

Mehnaz Rehman, resident director of Aurat Foundation, claimed that seven women are killed for honour or commit suicide every day in Sindh. At least five women are kidnapped or abducted per day, while three women are raped or gang raped daily.

She explained that honour killings are generally committed when a woman marries out of her free will, challenging the feudal mindset. She added that in such instances the man usually escapes any punishment and it is usually the woman who has to pay the ultimate penalty.

Moreover, she said the killers escape punishment by abusing the Qisas (retribution) and Diyat (blood money) laws.

Despite widespread demand from the public, civil society and even some legislators, the government has dragged its feet on anti-honour killing legislation.

Two laws proposed on anti-honour killings– Criminal Laws Amendment Bill, 2015, and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2015 – had been passed by the Senate in January 2014 but could not be passed by the National Assembly within the stipulated time of 90 days.

Furthermore, opposition from religious parties including the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) meant that the bills could not be presented before the joint sitting of parliament in April earlier this year.

However, Prime Minister’s Special Assistant on Law and Justice Zafrullah Khan argues that the government wants to build consensus of all stakeholders on the bills.

But after dragging it behind closed doors for months, the government seems to have woken up to the urgency of the bill after a string of high profile cases.

It has constituted a 10-member committee of the joint sittings, headed by Minister for Law and Justice Zahid Hamid, to expedite the bills.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1144630/uptick-honour-killings-fails-move-govt/>

IN QUETTA, A STAR IN THE MAKING
Mohammad Zafar

QUETTA: Defying the stereotypical conservative society of Balochistan, a 17-year-old female astronomy enthusiast is ready to take on the world. Norina Shah has attracted the attention of the United Nations chief for her raw talent and extraordinary skills in the world of amateur astronomy.

The teenager is a second-year Intermediate student at Quetta’s Islamia Girls College. Her interest in astronomy has gained her in-depth knowledge, which she shared on social media especially the microblogging website Twitter. Her posts attracted the attention of the international media, leading to appreciation from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Her Twitter handle is @aneyeofsky.

“I felt really proud when the UN appreciated my work,” Norina said while talking with The Express Tribune.

The stargazer grew passionate about outer space when she was in the 8th grade. Soon she started finding out new ways to capture pictures of planets, stars and the moon in the night sky.

“I used Twitter to connect with the world and told people across the globe what I could do,” she says.

Soon enough, the young girl was interviewed by the UK-based Eduzine Global magazine, which is run by a company dedicated to “empowering, promoting, showcasing and celebrating young people, according to its website. What is truly different about this company is that it is run by disadvantaged and disabled teenagers and young adults across the globe.

Norina is Eduzine’s Global Young Ambassador for South Asia and is mentioned on its webpage as the “brightest star”. “Norina’s passion for astronomy and her incredible desire to support and promote other young people is admirable, especially when you realise that her hometown is a place where women and girls are regularly targeted by extremists, simply for wanting to learn,” her Eduzine profile reads.

She was also the first runner-up in the inaugural Eduzine Global ACE Young Achiever Awards in 2014.

In recognition of her talent, Norina was awarded a certificate and a telescope apart from a feature article published in the magazine.

“I was so happy and realised that I have got something bigger to do and tell the world that girls only need an opportunity and a platform to excel,” she said, visibly excited. “They gave me the telescope for my research and have been supporting me to come forward.”

Eduzine also invited her to go to the US for attending a conference on astronomical studies. She had to turn down the offer back then because of her studies. She has again been invited to a week-long conference in the US in 2017 which she is likely to attend.

After the publication of the Eduzine article, Norina says the UN social media team wrote her an email, saying the agency’s head had appreciated her talent and interests. “On October 18 last year, UN chief Ban Ki-moon appreciated my efforts,” she says with a gleaming smile.

In a society like Balochistan with conservative perspectives, Norina’s father Hafeezullah is still optimistic about his daughter’s dreams. Hafeez, a store keeper at Civil Hospital Quetta, has always encouraged his daughter while living in a society considered oppressive towards girls. “I will not worry if my daughter goes abroad for studies as women have more protection there,” he said. “She will be safer than she is in Pakistan.”

According to a survey by not-for-profit Alif Alaam, over 75% of girls in Balochistan are out of schools.

“My family has never stopped me from anything and have always supported me in pursuing any career I want to,” Norina says.

“Astronomy is given no attention at the school level,” she said. The internet was her only stage for studying and searching content about astronomy. “If there were no social media, I would have faced hardships too.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1144159/quetta-star-making-2/>

NO COUNTRY FOR POOR WOMEN

The Express Tribune, July 19th, 2016.

Muhammad Hamid Zaman

There is no honour in murder. There is no dignity in violence. Period.

Personally, I strongly dislike to put honour and killing together. It should be called by what it is, a cold blooded murder. A murder can, and should never be, associated with any honour.

Most of us do not remember the names Zeenat Bibi or Ambreen. They are just two victims, among many other nameless ones, who, in just the last few weeks, have paid the ultimate price, in the most barbaric and gruesome ways imaginable, for a choice that is automatically afforded to all males in society. Qandeel is one more name in the long list of our collective shame. It’s anyone’s guess, how long will that stay in our memory before we move on to the next one. Such is our rot.

It is not about some elusive honour that these women of lower socio-economic standing are put to death. It is about a choice. The choice to marry the person they love, the choice to go to school, the choice to help a friend, and ultimately, the choice to live a life. Men in our society do not consider these options as choices, they consider them as their birthrights, and exercise them as such. Many women in upper social class and economic echelons also have the good fortune of making some choices, though not nearly as many as men, but still far more than the poor women of the nation. If you are a poor woman, you have no rights, no choices, no options. Should you seek one, you become another statistic.

We brag about two fundamental tenets of our “strong” social fabric when compared against the “immorality” of rest of the world. The home, a safe haven for women, and family, that is the bedrock of everything decent, kind and beautiful

in this world. Well guess what? If you are a poor woman, and dare to choose, your home is where you are killed, and at the hands of your own family.

Some of us were taught that our society is like a family, the country a big welcoming home. We were not taught to look at the fine print that says that it is true, if you are of means and social status, and true only if you are a male. The bigger social home is no different from the smaller brick and mortar one that these women inhabit, live and die in. In our larger home, people, in the media and on the pulpit, on twitter and in talk shows, justify the actions of killers, condone the murder of women and remind the poor women that dreaming is dangerous and choices have costs. Deadly costs. And they have a pretty stellar record to prove that.

Even the head of our household, the President of the country, tells the world that women get raped to get “visas to Canada or become millionaires”. Yes — that is exactly what Mr Musharraf told The Washington Post on September 13, 2005. I wish we could say that we have come a long way in the last decade, but it would not be true. In just the last few months, a government body said that it is fine to beat wives and a member of the same fraternity says on TV that Qandeel’s “end” should be a reminder never to malign the fraternity.

If we are worried about shame, we just need to look in the mirror. There is no better picture of vulgarity, no better demonstration of immorality, no clearer sign of our deep moral failure, than the reaction of puritans condoning or even applauding at the murder of Qandeel.

Perhaps I have gotten it all wrong. Perhaps, it is part of our own collective plan for development. To improve the standing of women in society, to reduce poverty, and to give women more opportunities to make better life decisions, there are two choices. Either eliminate poverty or eliminate the poor.

We have chosen the second one.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1144522/no-country-poor-women/>

DEAD BUT NOT DEFEATED

Dawn, July 20th, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

ONCE upon a time in Pakistan, all women were thought to be liars. On the occasion of contested, differing accounts — where it was a man’s word against a woman’s — the former always prevailed. Truth did not, could not, belong to women. Men owned and made it up; if one could not decide what that was, they conferred with other men. Together, all the men kept the ‘truth’ in check, made sure it served their purposes, ensured their supremacy. If half the country was left out, peeved, discredited and demeaned, it was not their problem.

Luckily, nothing lasts forever, and even the fortunes of Pakistani men were subject to this ruthless premise allotted by destiny. Change arrived in the discovery of a new virtual realm, where interaction was no longer physical and hence control no longer entirely possible. Entry to this virtual realm could not be limited to men and was easily and cheaply available. Like all that is new, the possibilities and promise of this new realm sparkled and shone; everyone wanted them and men took them.

On the screens and through the cameras of their mobile phones they could gaze and glare at even more women, glamorous and faraway. It felt not like an abridgement of their control, but an imaginary extension of it. They thought they would continue to exert their exclusive hold over the truth.

They were wrong. Little by little, access to the virtual realm expanded and women snuck in, and so began a battle that rages today. Truth — which belonged exclusively to Pakistani men — stands contested by Pakistani women and it is a conflict that is exacting casualties. The death of Qandeel Baloch is just one among them.

Avowedly self-made and outspoken, Qandeel Baloch represented the Pakistani woman of the post-internet age; her boldness a provocation to the premise that what is right, true and real can belong only to men. Unafraid and unabashed, she challenged notions that a woman's 'belonging' to a man is crucial or necessary, that a divorcee must be degraded into non-existence, that female sexuality is locked away for lack of male ownership.

Qandeel Baloch did not belong to a man; in being a free agent — unafraid of controversy and unthreatened by the usual inflictions of shame — she was a challenge to the male dominion over truth. Her battlefield was the virtual realm, where she put up real truths against shaky presumptions.

Openly, visibly and often humorously, she mocked men, their glib supremacy, and their necrotic hypocrisy. The most recent incident involved a religious cleric, Mufti Abdul Qavi, who appears, lascivious and hatless, in selfies posted by Qandeel on social media. Here is a man of faith without his mask of piety; eager to embrace the sexuality considered so sinful and derided with such fervour in public. But one instance with one woman can be discarded as a small, easily forgotten scandal. One bad cleric, it may be said, must not discredit the many millions who hold moral dominion over the country.

In Pakistan, however, the collection of widely proliferated images meant more than that. Here was a lecherous cleric, a visible flirtation, his cap on her head, their pictures everywhere and for everyone to see.

This was not simply a scandal; it was a displacement, an exposition of the private perversions of a man made suddenly visible by a woman. Truth, moulded and distorted, which once belonged only to men for their purposes, was now in the hands of a woman — a woman named Qandeel Baloch.

The visible lasciviousness of one man, some could conclude, stood for the secret truths of so many men: the bosses behind doors, the colleagues behind shop counters, the uncles who visit, the cousins who covet.

All of these men, whose secret sins have never been considered truths, were threatened by the possibility of exposure. How many more women would take cameras to the men that torment them, the men that control the truth, the men who think women cannot, will not, must not tell?

It was more than the men of Pakistan could take; one shamed man was one too many for the millions of men that now stood to be exposed by women armed with selfies, recordings and screen-grabs. In the boiling summer months, the bogus beatitudes that masked the lechery of our 'holy' men fell away. Unsurprisingly, Qandeel began to receive death threats not long after the incident. In reports that have been released after her death, she asked the government for security against these threats. She did not receive it.

Qandeel actual killer was her brother. The reason he gave was 'dishonour', accrued to the family owing to Qandeel's risqué and bold social media posts, particularly those with Mufti Qavi. In reality, however, Qandeel Baloch has millions of killers: they are the men, and at times the women, who cannot stand the possibility of truth, and hence power, being displaced from the realm of men into the hands of women.

These millions are everywhere, continuing to exact and enact the shaming that has already killed the thousands of other women, but whose appetite remains insatiable and eager for more deaths. Their war is not only against Qandeel Baloch, it is against the possibility that, in the virtual world, at least, women can and are starting to exert the sort of independence and equality that is denied to them in the real and actual Pakistan.

"We are enraged," said a post by the Digital Rights Foundation, which champions the rights of Pakistani women in the digital realm, following Qandeel's murder. It is an apt summary; the Pakistani woman's battle over truth and power in the virtual world is real, and Qandeel Baloch may be dead but she is most certainly not defeated.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271888>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: PROSPECTS BRIGHTEN FOR PRO-WOMEN BILLS

The Express Tribune, July 21st, 2016.

Riazul Haq

ISLAMABAD: In an apparent bid to curb the rising tide of crimes against women, the government is all set to pass in the coming weeks an anti-honour killing bill and an anti-rape bill during the joint sitting of parliament.

The prime minister's daughter, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, on Wednesday told Reuters that the two pro-women bills will be discussed in a special parliamentary committee meeting, whose first meeting is going to be held today (Thursday).

Earlier, the proposed laws – Criminal Laws Amendment Bill, 2015, and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2015 – had lapsed as they could not be passed by the National Assembly within the stipulated timeframe of 90 days.

The bills were originally laid in the Senate in January 2014 by a former senator Sughra Imam as a private members bill. However, they could not make their way in the joint sitting of Parliament in April this year, mainly due to opposition from the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F).

However, the government last week constituted a special body –Committee of Joint Sittings Bills – to expedite legislation on the long-delayed process.

Now a 10-member committee, headed by Minister for Law and Justice Zahid Hamid, will discuss the bills in presence of the JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who is also member of the body.. Senator Farhatullah Babar will also be attending the meeting as mover of the bill.

After the joint session, Cabinet Committee on Law Reforms discussed the bills with lawmakers of JUI-F and also invited Imam for her comments as well.

A consensus has already developed between the government and the opposition over the anti-rape bill while the agreement on the anti-honour killing bill is likely to be reached in a few weeks.

Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Law and Justice Zafarullah Khan told The Express Tribune that the final draft would be presented before the committee on Thursday for final approval.

“Hopefully the process will be completed very soon,” he said; however, he avoided giving any definitive date for the passage of bills from parliament.

In the Criminal Laws Amendment Bill, amendments have been proposed in sections 302, 309, 310, 338-E of PPC and Section 345 CrPC to do away with the waiver of Qisas by a wali (guardian) and include the offence committed in the name or on the pretext of honour.

Similarly, existing provisions of sections 336-A and 336-B of PPC have also been proposed by the Cabinet Committee on Law Reforms for amendments.

About the delay Senator Babar observed that “after Panama leaks the government has become vulnerable and it is pandering to the demands of religious parties which is the prime reason for delay.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1146132/violence-women-prospects-brighten-pro-women-bills/>

FORCED MARRIAGE: POLICE BUST ALLEGED SALE OF GIRLS

The Express Tribune, July 21st, 2016.

HYDERABAD: Nawabshah police claimed on Tuesday to have thwarted the alleged sale in marriage of two girls to men in Balochistan.

Sisters, 19-year-old Naghma Mastoi and 17-year-old Fauzia Mastoi, were allegedly being sold by their mother and step-father in connivance with a local policeman for the second time. "They were selling me for Rs400,000 and my sister for Rs300,000 to two men in Balochistan," Naghma told the media at A-Section police station after they were recovered by the police in a raid. A few years ago, they were traded in marriage for Rs150,000 each and a piece of land to two Kambar-Shahdadt-based men identified as Khair Mohammed Rind and Sardar Lashari.

Our nikkah with our husbands is still intact but we are being forced to enter into another marriage, the sisters claimed, adding that they already want divorce from their existing husbands as they were forced.

Crime Investigation Agency inspector Mobin Parehar said the police received a call for help from the sisters. Three suspects, including the girls' mother Najma, step-father Muhammad Deen Lashari and police constable Hidayat Ali Mastoi were arrested. An FIR under Section 365 (kidnapping and compelling for marriage) of the Pakistan Penal Code has been registered against the three suspects on Naghma's complaint. The girls are presently at their mother's home, while the three suspects have been sent to jail.

Nawabshah SSP Tanveer Ahmed Tunio said that the accused police constable has been suspended while the raiding team has been rewarded. According to him, the suspects have denied the charges but an investigation is under way.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1145925/forced-marriage-police-bust-alleged-sale-girls/>

ULEMA CONDEMN HONOUR KILLINGS

Business Recorder, 21 July 2016

ISLAMABAD: Religious scholars of different schools of thoughts while condemning honor killings said that Islam does not allow any sort of extrajudicial killing on account of religion, honor and prejudice.

Speaking at an "Ulema and Mashaikh Convention" organised here by Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC), scholars said that Ulemas and religious leaders in Pakistan should unite to eliminate extremist thinking, adding that extremist and radical mindset is problematic for the entire world and Pakistan.

Speakers said that extremist organisations like Daesh (ISIS) were being created and strengthened to defame Muslims and Islam across the world. They said that religious sections of society in Turkey played frontline role in foiling attempted coup against the democratic government.

PUC Chairman Tahir Ashrafi urged the Ulema and Mashaikh of Pakistan to come forward to educate youths of the country against extremist ideologies and fundamentalist thinking.

He said that India was among those major countries which were providing arms and ammunition to Daesh and warlords of Daesh were attacking all those countries which were against the regime of Bashar-ul-Asad and supporting people of Syria.

President PUC Islamabad Maulana Abdul Hameed Sabri,

Vice President Punjab Maulana Nauman Hashir, General Secretary Tahir Aqeel Awan and others also spoke.

Meanwhile, Sheikh-ul-Hadish Maulana Ahmed addressing the convention said many conspiracies were being hatched across Muslim World with an aim to weaken the Ummah. Amid the prevailing situation, Muslim leadership needed to pursue way of their ancestors and seek guidance from Quran and Sunnah. Later, talking to media persons, Maulana Ashrafi said that killing of Qandeel Baloch was sorrowful and investigations relating to her killing should be held on merit.

Ulema and Mashaikh Convention also approved a resolution condemning killing of Mufti Habib-ur-Rehman and demanded of the Sindh Government to arrest killers of Mufti Habib-ur-Rehman.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/21/22-page/778337-news.html>

PML-N GOVT TO PASS LAW AGAINST HONOUR KILLINGS 'WITHIN WEEKS': MARYAM
Business Recorder, 21 July 2016

ISLAMABAD: PML-N govt plans to pass long-delayed legislation against honour killings "within weeks" in the wake of the high-profile murder of an outspoken social media star, the daughter of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on Wednesday.

The bill will go before a parliamentary committee as early as Thursday, said Maryam Nawaz Sharif, who is an increasingly influential member of her father's ruling party.

The government has faced mounting pressure to pass the law against murders carried out by people professing to be acting in defence of the honour of their family.

The law would remove a loophole that allows other family members to pardon a killer.

The brother of social media star Qandeel Baloch, often described as Pakistan's Kim Kardashian, has been arrested in connection with her strangling death and told a news conference he was incensed by her often posts on social media.

Some 500 women are killed each year in Pakistan at the hands of family members over perceived damage to "honour" that can involve eloping, fraternising with men or any other infraction against conservative values that govern women's modesty.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif said the government wanted to pass the law unanimously and had been negotiating with religious parties in parliament.

"We have finalised the draft law in the light of negotiations," she told Reuters in an interview. "The final draft will be presented to a committee of joint session of parliament on July 21 for consideration and approval."

Maryam said once the parliamentary committee approved the bill, it would be presented for a vote in a "couple of weeks" before a joint session of parliament.

A spokesman for Jamaat-e-Islami, one of the two major religious parties in parliament, said his party would not oppose the bill.

Other main religious political party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, could not be reached for comment but it has only a small number of seats in parliament.

Both religious parties have traditionally opposed legislation empowering women.

The upper house of parliament passed the bill in 2014 but it lapsed after the government failed to put it up for a vote in the lower house because it was preoccupied with legislation aimed at tackling security problems and economic reforms.

A senior government official told Reuters all major parties were now backing the bill and it was likely to be passed in a few weeks by a joint session of parliament.

“The prime minister is taking personal interest,” added a second official and close aide to Sharif. “You will see in coming days more will be done, big changes will be announced.”

In a rare move, this week the government became a complainant in the police case against Baloch’s brother accused of her murder, designating it a crime against the state and thereby blocking her family from forgiving their son.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/07/21/13-page/778261-news.html>

TABOOS AND ICONS

Dawn, July 23rd, 2016

Irfan Husain

QANDEEL Baloch was just a name that popped up with irritating frequency on my Twitter feed. I had a vague idea that she was posting irreverent images of herself online, and that a cleric had been publicly embarrassed for appearing with her in a video that went viral.

Good for her, I thought to myself, not paying much attention to her or her online antics. But when news of her murder by her brother reached me, I went through some of her material on the Internet, and was gobsmacked by a sexy dance she performed on her bed.

And I was just one of over half a million people who had clicked on that particular link. Many of the comments that had been posted ranged from the sanctimonious to the bitchy. Some, mercifully, expressed their sorrow at the model’s death, and their anger at her brother.

The alleged murderer, Waseem Azeem, said later that his family’s ‘honour’ had been so tarnished that he had to kill himself or his sister. So why didn’t he just kill himself? Obviously, the way to protect the family’s honour is to strangle a vulnerable woman, just as so many hundreds are murdered every year.

Pakistanis — and Muslims — don’t have a monopoly on this vile practice. But statistically, more Muslim women are killed by male family members for marrying of their own free will, or for other transgressions of a savage social code, than any others. In many cases, the killers are aided and abetted by close female relatives.

Perhaps the most sickening aspect of this warped desire to enforce obedience from women is that it is widely accepted and even condoned and defended. Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy’s Oscar-winning documentary *The Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* makes this chillingly clear. The father of the eponymous girl he almost managed to kill boasted that as a result of his attempted murder, his status in the community had gone up, and his other daughter had received several marriage proposals.

In the documentary, the victim, Saba, is pressured to ‘forgive’ her father in a court. She explains in an interview that she has to live in the community, and if her father were sent to jail, her family and neighbours would make things intolerable for her.

And so it goes. In Qandeel Baloch’s case, the state has become a party in the case of murder in the expectation that this would preclude the possibility of the killer being let off the hook by offering his parents blood money. However, legal experts are divided on the issue. But even if the self-confessed murderer is convicted for his crime, he will be an exception because, in most such cases, men are usually set free.

Clearly, family ‘honour’ provides men with a powerful motive to kill. But what is it exactly? Why can men behave in the most obnoxious way and not be accused of tarnishing this so-called family honour? They can rape, steal and kill without arousing family members to seek retribution.

So how come women are the sole custodians of this precious commodity? Why does this burden not fall equally on men? It would appear that the whole concept is a primitive tribal construct designed to control women. Virginity is highly prized in backward societies, and if there is any doubt about the matter, marriage becomes virtually impossible.

Property rights are another aspect of family honour: if a girl marries a man the family has not selected, he can later claim a share of his wife's inheritance. Also, a father or a brother lose face in their community if it appears they cannot force a daughter or a sister to obey them.

Among Hindus, it is anathema for an upper-caste man or woman to marry somebody of a lower caste. Hundreds are killed for this 'offence', and killers are seldom punished. Other backward societies maintain similar taboos and enforce them with lethal force.

But why do democracies permit this murderous practice to continue, thereby allowing the subjugation of half their population? In many of our courts, reference to family 'honour' attracts the judge's sympathy. The law of the land and the rights of the victim are set aside while the murderer, usually a man, is given every latitude.

As long as judges, police and the wider society continue slut-shaming victims, this vicious tradition will continue. And as we saw in the online and televised comments following Qandeel Baloch's murder, a number of people take the view that her brother should not be blamed. For them, the model's social media displays invited retribution.

It is this hypocritical attitude that creates an environment of sympathy and support for those who kill in the name of 'honour'. For the sake of tradition and religion, we permit — even encourage — the oppression of women.

But in death Qandeel has achieved an iconic status, while her many critics will soon be forgotten.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272643/taboo-and-icons>

LOOPHOLES PERSIST IN 'HONOUR KILLING' BILL

Dawn, July 24th, 2016

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The proposed legislation on honour killings has introduced strict punishment for the convicts making it tougher than the ordinary murder cases.

However, legal experts are of the view that after killing a relative in the name of honour, a person may declare it a simple murder to avoid the punishment.

Under the existing law, a murderer can be released after the legal heirs pardon him. But the proposed legislation on honour killings recommends 25 years' imprisonment even if the heirs of the victim pardon the convict. Under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), the convict in a simple murder case may get the life imprisonment of 14 years or a maximum of the death penalty.

Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, a criminal law expert and the president of the Islamabad High Court Bar Association, said the legislation on honour killings would not achieve the desired results as the accused may claim that he had committed the murder for other reasons such as a dispute over property etc. Hence, he may be charged with Section 302 of the PPC and the family members may pardon him under Section 309 of the PPC.

Moreover, in honour killing cases the police as well as the courts follow the same procedure and rely on the same evidence as they would require in ordinary murder cases.

The collection of evidence in honour killing cases is very difficult and this is the reason a person after killing his daughter, sister or mother cannot be convicted, he said.

He suggested that the lawmakers should amend Qanoon-i-Shahadat (the law of evidence) for honour killing cases and the standard of evidence should be relaxed which would increase the possibility of conviction.

Instead of direct evidence – testimonies of the witnesses – reliance should be made on the circumstantial evidence which may be the electronic evidence or other related facts.

The Anti-Honour Killings Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill 2015 and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill 2015, initially moved by former senator of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Sughra Imam as private members' bills, were passed by the Senate two years ago.

But the government failed to get the bills passed by the National Assembly within the stipulated 90 days and later had to include them on the agenda of a joint sitting of parliament, which had actually been convened to get the PIA conversion bill passed.

The honour killings bill aims at preventing killing of women in the name of honour by making the crime a non-compoundable offence.

When contacted, Senator Saeed Ghani, who was a member of the committee which cleared the bill, told Dawn that honour killings had certain distinctions. He explained that in a simple murder case the deceased may not be a family member.

The investigation officer may ascertain whether the murder was honour killing or otherwise, he said.

Barrister Zafarullah Khan, the special assistant to the prime minister who headed the government legal team which drafted the law, said it was the responsibility of the court to make a distinction between a simple murder and an honour killing.

He said: "The judge will decide whether it is a simple murder or a murder in the name of honour."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1272833/loopholes-persist-in-honour-killing-bill>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 11TH TO JULY 17TH 2016

MAN HELD FOR TORTURING PREGNANT WIFE TO DEATH

Dawn, July 11th, 2016

SIALKOT: A man was arrested on Sunday for torturing to death his pregnant wife over some domestic dispute in Bheelowal village two days back.

Police said accused Shahid brutally tortured his pregnant wife Tahira when she desired to go to her parents' house.

Consequently, his wife and the seven-month unborn baby died on the spot. The deceased woman was the mother of five sons and two daughters.

The Cantonment police have registered a case against accused Shahid on the report of victim's bother Shuja Ahmed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1270037>

MINOR GIRL GANG-RAPED IN KARACHI

The Express Tribune, July 12th, 2016.

KARACHI: Three suspects, including two brothers, are on the run in Karachi after raping a 13-year-old girl.

Police said Waseem Karam Ali, his brother Ismail and their cousin Afnan Zaman lured the teenager, a resident of Machhar Colony, to an abandoned residential plot and then raped her.

The rape survivor told police she was playing outside her house when the three men approached her and gave her Rs50 to buy sweets for herself. "They took me to an abandoned place where they assaulted me," she said in her statement recorded with police. "They fled when I raised hue and cry."

Doctors at Civil Hospital Karachi, where the girl was taken for an examination, have reserved the medical report. Samples have also been sent for laboratory tests.

The family claimed the girl – a student of Class III – was assaulted three days ago and police had failed to arrest the alleged rapists. The girl's mother demanded the suspects be hanged to set an example. "We want justice. The culprits must be arrested and hanged till death publicly to teach a lesson to others," she said. "The authorities should take necessary action and force police to work with sincerity."

Docks SHO Amin Marri said police had registered an FIR on the complaint of the family and started investigations. The girl's father works at a private firm.

Investigation Officer Ameer Buksh said the suspects nominated in the FIR were relatives of the girl's family and lived in the same neighbourhood.

He added police were waiting for the medical confirmation whether or not the girl had been raped as the FIR was registered on the claim of the family.

Police have also taken the suspects' fathers into custody to pressure them into surrendering.

Several cases of gang-rapes of minors in Pakistan, particularly Karachi, have been reported over the years where usually the suspects are neighbours or relatives of the victims, who are often killed.

On June 8, another minor girl was assaulted in Hyderabad by her 16-year-old relative, who was arrested after the victim's parents reported the incident to police. The boy had lured the minor to the rooftop of a house and assaulted her.

On May 28, a girl was killed in mysterious circumstances after she allegedly fell off a roof in Sohrab Goth. A hospital official had voiced concerns the girl had been raped and an inquiry was ordered to confirm the assault.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1139806/crime-humanity-minor-girl-gang-raped-karachi/>

ENTRENCHED INEQUALITIES

Dawn, July 15th, 2016

Faisal Bari

DO a girl born in a poor household in rural Balochistan and a boy born in a rich household in Karachi have the same or even a similar set of opportunities in life? Are their chances of acquiring an education similar? Do they have access to comparable healthcare services and facilities? Do they have equal opportunities for access to physical infrastructure and the freedom of movement and association?

The girl from the poor household in rural Balochistan has a significant probability of not surviving infancy. If she does, it is unlikely she will go to school. The chances of her making it to matriculation are almost negligible. She will be malnourished as a child and anaemic as an adult (the oft-heard refrain that at the very least nobody goes to sleep hungry in Pakistan is a blatant lie and a powerful means of self-deception).

If she survives and makes it to adulthood, it is unlikely that marriage will change her economic/social status by much. Childbearing-related health risks and exposure to environmental hazards will make it likely that she will have a less than average lifespan.

Distribution of opportunities is highly unequal in Pakistan, and the differences are of many dimensions: income, wealth, gender, caste, ethnicity, sect, religion, rural/urban and provincial. But, more importantly, these inequalities are very deeply entrenched in our social, political and economic fabric. Our institutions, organisations and ways of doing things are structured to perpetuate this inequality and deepen it across generations. A poor child is likely to remain poor in his/her lifetime and his/her children are likely to remain poor too.

Socio-economic inequalities, and their entrenched and self-perpetuating nature, are the biggest challenge we face in shaping a future for Pakistan. It is easy to find challenges that Pakistan faces: there are plenty of good candidates. The fundamental one is inequality and what perpetuates it. But, and here is the perplexing part, despite its fundamental nature, it is one issue that is not even on the agenda for discussion or on the reform agenda.

People have been concerned about terrorism and extremism. Right or wrong, the government, with most stakeholders in agreement, came up with Operation Zarb-i-Azb and the National Action Plan to deal with it. We have been concerned about stabilisation and, right or wrong, we have been shoving stabilisation policies, under the guidance of the IMF, down everyone's throat. We have become concerned about growth and, right or wrong, we have responded with investments in energy, infrastructure and now through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project.

But where is the response to the highly unequal access to opportunities in the country? Where is the outrage against this blatant neglect of the rights and needs of the majority? The politicians are not interested in the issue. There is no debate on the issue in legislatures, there are no policy options on the table, and there is not even an articulated demand or ideological approach by any political party on this larger question.

There does not seem to be any articulated demand from the public for addressing this issue either. Elections are not lost or won on the issue of addressing equality of opportunity: the provision of quality education/skills training, basic health, access to good social/physical infrastructure, and employment and growth opportunities.

Though we often talk of both the free, highly vocal and developed mass media in the country and the free and independent judiciary, they have not been instrumental in raising fundamental issues of rights and opportunities. The media produces more heat than light through the debates that incessantly go on. The judiciary has not taken up any of the fundamental issues — be it the right to education, healthcare or employment or questions of access to resources through land reform — at all. Cases filed on these matters with the higher courts have been languishing for years.

Is it not a fact that the hold the upper classes have on society is very strong, not only in terms of managing access to resources but even over the power to start and sustain debate? The upper classes, the top five to seven per cent, the main beneficiaries of the current system, do not have an interest in starting a debate on rights and equality of opportunities: they stand to lose the most. But, in addition, it seems that the people who rise to middle-class level (the professionals), the subsidiary beneficiaries of the current system, also see their benefit in perpetuating the system rather than in challenging it. They are co-opted.

But if we feel we can address terrorism, extremism, ethnic strife, sustainable development, high growth, and income and employment generation without addressing the issue of opportunities for all, we live in la-la land. If we believe we do not have the resources to provide a basic level of services to all, we are wrong again. Kerala, an Indian state that boasts developed society level statistics on education, health and well-being, provided basic health and education services to all when it was a relatively poor state.

Many people also feel that there is a trade-off in growth and expenditure on basic services. They are wrong. Human development theories have shown that. Empirical evidence is also there. Kerala was not the fastest-growing state in India when it extended basic services to all, and many critics thought this extension would limit Kerala's growth prospects even further. Today, Kerala stands at the top of the list of Indian states in growth and income terms.

If a poor girl from rural Balochistan does not get almost the same opportunities as a boy from the middle or upper class from Karachi, our dreams for a better Pakistan will remain just that: dreams. And, in reality, we will continue to live the nightmare that we currently face.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1270841>

WOMAN APPROACHES JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE OVER CHILD MARRIAGE

The Express Tribune, July 16th, 2016.

Zulfiqar Ali

DI KHAN: A woman has approached the judicial magistrate after her 53-year-old husband married a 12-year-old girl in Ratha Kulachi village in DI Khan

According to a police official, Manzora Bibi complained that her husband Safdar Baloch contracted his second marriage without her consent and did not even seek the village council's approval. She demanded her husband should be punished under Section 6 of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961.

Baloch works as a field assistant in the agriculture department and married Manzora Bibi 28 years ago. He has three sons from his first marriage. Two of his sons are married while the third one is unmarried.

Manzora Bibi has also sent a complaint copy to K-P chief minister and agriculture department.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1142695/woman-approaches-judicial-magistrate-child-marriage/>

HACKED TO DEATH: MAN HELD FOR KILLING WIFE

The Express Tribune, July 16th, 2016

Hyderabad: A woman died of serious injuries in a hospital after her husband allegedly attacked her with a hammer and a brick in Tando Muhammad Khan's Peoples Colony on Friday. The alleged killer has been apprehended by the police.

The police, quoting relatives of the deceased, said that 35-year-old Shrimati Kanwal Meghwadh and her husband Mannu Meghwadh used to quarrel often. A relative, quoted by the police, also alleged that Mannu would frequently beat up his wife, with whom he had four children, over minor disagreements.

The police said that Mannu, who escaped after leaving his wife fatally injured on Friday morning following an alleged argument-turned-thrashing, has been arrested.

An FIR of the incident has not been registered by the police yet as they are waiting for the aggrieved family to come forward with a formal complaint, said a police official.

The body has been handed over to the family after a postmortem was performed.

Tando Muhammad Khan SSP told the local media that the police will register the case itself if the deceased's family does not show up to file a complaint..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1142625/hacked-death-man-held-killing-wife/>

PRENATAL PROBLEMS: AT PIMS, NO PLACE FOR LATE-STAGE PREGNANCIES

The Express Tribune, July 17th, 2016.

Asma Ghani

ISLAMABAD: The policy of a major government hospital to not take up treatment of women coming in with late-stage pregnancies leaves many with no option but to go to private facilities or use traditional birth attendants.

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) centre of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) has been refusing to take on women in their third trimester of pregnancy as new patients due to lack of capacity and to avoid complications during births as the women did not receive antenatal care at the centre.

The centre only accepts women who registered themselves with the centre near the start of the pregnancy and got antenatal care there.

Those who have some connections, however, can influence the policy and get maternal care even if they come at later stages of pregnancy, complained Khadija who says she was turned away because she went to the centre when she was seven-months pregnant.

Khadija works as a maid in Sihala and said she cannot afford to go to a private hospital. She said she would either borrow some money to go to a small clinic near her home or give birth at home with a traditional midwife.

Many women who are either unaware of the registration rule or shift away from private clinics due to affordability at later stages of pregnancy end up being turned away, admitted a senior doctor who requested not to be named. Although the centre accepts emergency cases, it refuses to take responsibility for any complications in such cases, the doctor added.

“The centre already handles thrice as many births as its stated capacity. We have to accommodate three women per bed already, and this would jump to four women per bed and if we start taking late trimester cases,” remarked another gynaecologist from the centre.

About 30 expecting women are registered and issued cards for antenatal care every day. The centre recently started refusing to cater to women coming from Rawalpindi, arguing that the city has good government hospitals of its own and the patients should be treated there.

Health experts were divided over the policy, with some saying that major public sector hospitals should not refuse poor patients as most of them do not know about the registration rules and are left with no option but to give birth at homes with the help of untrained birth attendants.

Ideally, normal delivery cases should be handled at rural health centres and only complicated cases should be referred to tertiary centres, said White Ribbon National Campaign Manager Dr Asma Badar. “As the health system does not function properly due to inadequate services at the first and second tier, women are often taken to tertiary care hospitals. Hospitals are then overburdened with normal delivery cases and the quality of care is compromised.”

She added that rural women still show a preference for home-based deliveries because they are not aware of birth preparedness, various danger signs during pregnancy, and possible birth complications. She said they are only taken to bigger hospitals in the cities when the traditional attendant is unable to handle the case and may die on the way or at the hospital. “We need to intervene on both, the supply and demand sides to improve our maternal and child health services. Having said that, if a critical patient comes in, it is ethically inappropriate to send her back just because she was not registered at a particular health facility.”

Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Javed Akram also asserted that healthcare facilities in the surrounding areas are not catering to the needs of area residents, forcing them to go to hospitals, which conversely are overloaded.

The centre has the capacity to deliver 30 babies, while the daily average varies between 80 and 100.

“Expansion of the centre is on the cards, he said, adding that the expansion would double capacity.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1143225/prenatal-problems-pims-no-place-late-stage-pregnancies/>

SAFEGUARDING WOMEN’S RIGHTS

The Express Tribune, July 17th, 2016.

Anjum Niaz

This is what you call an oxymoron: two Oscars and one Nobel do not a woman’s empowerment make. Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy’s two Oscars and Malala Yusufzai’s Nobel Prize as the youngest-ever laureate should have catapulted Pakistan as the guardian of women’s rights. Instead, the world laughs when the old warhorse Maulana Sheerani and his dwarfed 10-member band of religious dogmatists at the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) declare that it’s okay for husbands to beat up their wives “lightly.” Why? If their dress is un-Islamic (whatever that means) or refuse their husbands conjugal rights? What happens in the bedroom is none of CII’s business; what women wear is not their concern.

Choking women’s freedom is a trespass on human rights! So, will Nawaz Sharif government have the moral courage to rid us of these meddling CII clerics as recommended by the Senate’s Committee on Human Rights? Or will it just be another deformed joke like the anti-honour killing bill, pending since April? The bill is aimed at banning use of Qisas and Diyat in honour killing cases.

Nawaz Sharif celebrated Sharmeen Obaid’s victory by holding a grand viewing of her Oscar-winning documentary *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness* at the PM House. He vowed to eradicate the “evil” of honour killings in Pakistan. But unless his government makes honour killing a first degree murder, the punishment for which is death by hanging, the killers who kill their mothers, sisters, nieces and female relatives in the name of honour will continue to roam scot-free due to the presence of Qisas and Diyat. Removing these two blood-money laws from the anti-honour killing bill is un-Islamic, insists Maulana Fazlur Rehman’s JUI-F.

Remember Maulana Fazlur Rehman taunting the Punjab legislators as ‘zun murid’ when the Punjab Assembly passed a women’s protection bill. He termed the pro-women bill to be anti-constitution and anti-Shariah. He described it as an NGO-driven legislation, saying “NGOs follow the West for their pecuniary interests.” The law, in his blinkered view, was against the male rights: “Husband and wife are considered partners in the West, but it is not the case in Pakistan... this law makes a man insecure.” His party man Maulana Sheerani followed his leader by declaring the law anti-Islamic. The Punjab government has timidly put the bill on the back burner.

The religious right is winning its war against women by upending the two bills floated by the government escalating incidences of honour killings and domestic violence in recent months. The CII in its 55 years of existence has made the most ludicrous recommendations in the name of Islam. For example, banning women from receptions for foreign dignitaries; prohibiting female nurses from attending to male patients; lowering the marriageable age to 12 and nine for males and females respectively, “provided there are visible signs of puberty”; preventing the amendment to the controversial blasphemy law; and wanting the national flag to carry the letters ‘Allahu Akbar.’

I think, the educated Pakistani woman has entered the 21st century, while the Maulana and the CII still live in the 14th century also known as the ‘Age of Jehalia.’ In today’s world, men and women are equals and it is about time our ultra-religious, semi-literate and hide-bound obscurantists came to grips with reality.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1143173/safeguarding-womens-rights/>

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1143173/safeguarding-womens-rights/>

SOCIAL MEDIA CELEBRITY QANDEEL 'KILLED BY BROTHER'

Dawn, July 17th, 2016

MULTAN: Model, actress and social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch was strangled to death in her house in the Karimabad area in the early hours of Saturday morning. Her father claimed that she was killed by her younger brother, Waseem, in the name of honour.

A late night report said that Waseem had been picked up by the police in Dera Ghazi Khan.

According to an FIR lodged by Qandeel's father Mohammad Azeem, his daughter came to Multan from Karachi to celebrate Eid with the family. He said that Waseem, 25, also came to meet them on July 14.

He said that he along with his wife went to sleep on the rooftop while Qandeel slept in a room where Waseem strangled her to death as he was against her working in showbiz. He alleged that Waseem had taken this extreme step at the behest of his brother Mohammad Aslam Shaheen.

Police and media personnel rushed to the house of Qandeel Baloch after the news of her murder spread.

"Qandeel took the single-storey small house on rent about one and a half years ago," a neighbour told Dawn. He said that earlier she lived in a house in the same locality for more than two years but left it after its owner sold his property. He said Qandeel's parents were living in her hometown of Shah Saddardin in Dera Ghazi Khan district.

"She came to Multan from Karachi rarely for a few days and called her parents to come and live with her," the neighbour said, adding that her parents had been living in Multan for a couple of months because her father had broken his leg in a road accident and they had to stay here for his treatment.

He said the rent of the house and expenditures of her parents were being borne by Qandeel.

A woman neighbour said Qandeel was looking for a bride for Waseem these days. She said she had visited the model last night and her brother was watching television while she was in another room and everything was fine. "It is unbelievable. Qandeel was a very nice girl," she added.

City police chief Azhar Akram told journalists she had probably been strangled to death as there was no sign of bleeding.

Regional police officer Sultan Azam Temouri said it appeared to be an incident of honor killing.

A police team has been sent to Dera Ghazi Khan to arrest Waseem who had been missing after the incident.

Born in March 1990, Qandeel's real name was Fauzia Azeem.

Nishtar Hospital's Medical Superintendent Dr Ashiq Malik said that samples, including stomach with contents, intestine and liver, had been taken and sent to the Punjab Forensic Science Agency for a chemical examination.

"Initially, it seems that she was strangled to death, but the actual cause of death will be determined in the light of forensic reports," he added.

At a press conference on June 28 in Lahore, Qandeel had said she had been receiving threats from unknown people and demanded security. She said she had also written to the interior ministry, informing it about the threats.

Qandeel's controversial selfie with Mufti Abdul Qavi hit the headlines last month. She had thousands of followers on social media.

Recently, a man from Kot Adu claimed that Qandeel was his wife and they had a son.

Arrangements were being made to send Qandeel's body to her hometown of Shah Saddardin in Dera Ghazi Khan for burial when this report was filed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1271357>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 3RD TO JULY 10TH 2016

WOMAN HACKED TO DEATH BY HUSBAND

Dawn, July 4th, 2016

Okara: A woman was axed to death by her husband over some domestic dispute on Sunday.

Nasreen Akhtar and Muhammad Ashraf of village L-Plot had sour relations. On Sunday, both again exchanged harsh words and Ashraf picked up an axe and inflicted fatal blows on Nasreen, a mother of three.

Ravi police have registered a case.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268924>

MAN, WOMAN SHOT DEAD 'FOR HONOUR'

Dawn, July 4th, 2016

SUKKUR: A man surrendered himself at the Salehpat police station late on Saturday evening claiming that he had gunned down his sister and her friend for honour.

Police booked and arrested Nabi Dino Halipota and collected the bodies of his 30-year-old married sister and a 28-year-old man, Miandad Abupota, from different places within Bargah village. A post-mortem examination was performed at the Rohri Taluka Hospital after which the bodies were handed over to the respective heirs.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1268850/man-woman-shot-dead-for-honour>

HORRIFIC: TWO WOMEN MURDERED BY THEIR HUSBANDS

The Express Tribune, July 12th, 2016.

Shamsul Islam

FAISALABAD: A woman was killed for 'honour' and another was shot dead for refusing to reconcile with her husband in Langrana and Millat Town police precincts on Monday.

A Langrana police spokesperson said Muhammad Mansha, a resident of Chak 237, had murdered his wife after he accused her of having an affair with a man from the same village.

He said Mansha and Kaneez Bibi had married a few years ago and had two children.

Mansha had suspected his wife of cheating on him and had argued with her about this several times. On Monday, he again had an argument with her and accused her of infidelity. He then used a .12 bore shotgun to shoot her several times, the spokesperson said.

Kaneez Bibi died before she could be treated.

Police were informed. They arrived at Mansha's house and arrested him and seized the shotgun.

The police handed over the body to relatives for burial after completing legal formalities.

The spokesperson said the suspect had been sent to a lock up and would be interrogated.

Separately, Nadeem, a resident of Jhang, visited his in-laws' house at Bawa Chowk, Ali Town, on Sargodha Road, on Monday to reconcile differences with his estranged wife, a Millat Town police spokesperson said. He murdered his wife after she refused to return to his house and injured his mother-in-law and a sister-in-law, police said.

He said that Nadeem and Rida had married a few years ago and had two children. They had developed differences a few weeks ago and she had moved in with her parents. Nadeem went to her parents' house in Ali Town on Monday, apparently seeking reconciliation.

However, he got into an argument with his in-laws there and shot them with a pistol. Police said he had shot Rida several times and she had died before she could be treated. Shamim Bibi, Rida's mother, and Kainat, Rida's sister, had also been hit. They were taken to Allied Hospital for treatment. Doctors there said they would survive.

The police spokesperson said they had registered an FIR and were investigating the incident.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1139617/horrific-two-women-murdered-husbands/>

PUNJAB ALLOCATES RS 629 MILLION TO WOMEN DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

Business Recorder, July 06, 2016

Punjab government has earmarked Rs 629 million in the Development Programme 2016-17 for women development sector. Major part of the proposed allocation for 2016-17 will be utilized to increase awareness among women in Punjab about their rights and available opportunities announced by the Punjab government under Women Empowerment Initiatives of 2012, 2014 and 2016, to develop a model for sustainable development of Working Women Hostels and rehabilitation of existing Working Women Hostels.

According to the budget documents in the Annual Development Programme 2016-2017 Punjab government has earmarked an amount of Rs 100 million for development programme of Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW).

The new initiatives which will be implemented during 2016-17 are: Development of Model for sustainable development of Working Women Hostels, Rehabilitation of existing Working Women Hostels, Domestic Workers' Training Programme, Support for Working Women Hostels and Women Development Fund.

A dedicated Domestic Worker Training Programme will also be undertaken during 2016-17 with the aim to provide better employment opportunities to the home based workers and to meet the needs of working women in the form of trained domestic workers.

An amount of Rs 295 million has been earmarked under Women Development Fund for provision of women specific facilities like washrooms, waiting areas, etc at public places and government offices envisaged under Women Empowerment Initiatives, 2016.

In ADP 2015-16, an amount of Rs 500 million was allocated for the women development sector and the major achievements of the department during the FY 2015-16 includes Toll Free Women's Helpline, Research Report on Situation Analysis of women employment in private sector, launching of Punjab Women Empowerment Initiatives, 2016 and Gender Parity Report, 2016.

The Women Development Department was established on March 08, 2012 (International Women's Day) to materialize the goal of women's empowerment and to implement the pragmatic vision of Quaid-e-Azam ie "Make female substantive segment of society to play vital role in the economic uplift of the society".

The department not only ensures the practical interpretation of safeguarding women's rights within the constitutional and legal framework, but also promotes gender mainstreaming in all sectors of the economy. Recently, a post of DIG Women Protection has been created to supervise the working of police officers posted at Violence against Women Centres (VAWCs) in Punjab.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/63332/>

WOMEN OR PROPERTY?

Dawn, July 10th, 2016

Mohammad Ali Babakhel

THE tradition of swara is as ancient as Pakhtunwali. Still practised in pockets of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the custom entails handing over a girl in marriage to an aggrieved family as compensation to settle a feud. The nuptials are conducted sans pomp and show. Usually one girl is offered but the number can go up to three.

In Persian, swara means a woman riding a horse. Another source for the word comes from Arabic, in which 'uswara' means bangles, a word that symbolises women. As per Pakhtun culture, swara is a woman on horseback, belonging to the guilty party (either his sister or daughter) who travels to the enemy camp accompanied only by women of her own family, thereby placing herself at the latter's mercy. The gesture is symbolic of asking for a truce.

According to the original Pakhtun tradition, the woman was treated honourably and sent back on the same horse with gifts and a mantle, ie a scarf signifying that her honour remained intact.

The literal meaning of the term swara is significant here, as one who departs riding on a horse would definitely come back. A sojourn or stay was unthinkable: a stay of a few moments was sufficient to fulfil the objectives of swara after which she would return home along with her companions.

Thus from a historical perspective, swara was never meant to suggest that the woman would become a property of the aggrieved party. However, if the relationship between the two belligerent tribes became cordial, the aggrieved party had the first right to ask for the woman's hand. She would be married with due pomp, and the union established a blood relationship between the warring tribes.

In Zafar-ul-Lughat, Bahadur Shah Zafar says: "Swara is the girl given over to the rival for the sake of reconciliation in case of murder or any other 'rivalry'." It is resorted to usually in cases of murder and kidnapping of women. While deciding on the modalities of swara, a number of factors are taken into account, including the number of murders, length of dispute between the two families and balance of power between them.

In 'one-sided swara' the aggressor party gives a woman to the aggrieved party, who then have to give their word to the jirga that there will be no further bloodshed. In 'two-sided swara', both aggressor and aggrieved parties exchange swara in order to end their enmity. In 'three-sided swara', the aggressor party gives one woman as a swara, after which two more swaras, one from each side, are exchanged.

There are geographical and cultural variations in the practice of swara. In certain areas of Afghanistan, four girls are given as compensation. In practice, three girls are given and, in place of the fourth, cash — the amount of which is decided by the jirga — is paid to the victim party. In certain parts of western Afghanistan, 12 girls are given in compensation for one murder; of them, six are given dowry while the remaining are sent without.

Swara has indeed served its purpose as a way to avert tribal war, because enmity between two hostile tribes usually ends with the establishment of a blood relationship between them.

However, from legal and human rights perspectives, there is no justification for swara. The tradition forces innocent girls to bear the brunt of crimes they never committed, but for which they must endure mental torture for the rest of their lives. The worst is when an infant or minor girl is given as swara.

The custom is not only against fundamental human rights, but also against the teachings of Islam, which decrees that the will of both the bride and groom be sought before the marriage is finalised. In fact, present-day swara bears some resemblance to the Arab tradition of sabaiya (captivity).

The custom is also in conflict with international law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2000, while disposing of Bakht Mana's case, the Peshawar High Court ruled against the custom. In 2011, Section 310-A was inserted in the Pakistan Penal Code, stipulating a maximum imprisonment of seven years and fine of Rs500,000 for those guilty of practising swara.

Between 2012-14, as many as 20 cases of swara were registered in seven districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The accused were acquitted in seven cases.

Women protection legislation by itself is not enough to protect women: capacity-building of investigators, prosecutors and judges must form a central part of the strategy. The media must also play its part in mobilising public opinion against such inhuman practices. Free registration of cases and cooperation of witnesses will ensure that the guilty are punished.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1269847/women-or-property>

August 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 29TH TO SEPTEMBER 4TH 2016

KARO-KARI: FATHER KILLS DAUGHTER FOR 'HONOUR'

The Express Tribune, August 29th, 2016.

SUKKUR: A woman was gunned down on Sunday morning by her father in a karo-kari incident in Rahuja village situated within the limits of the SITE police in Sukkur. Jawed Ali Lakhan, a resident of Rahuja village, suspected that his daughter Sumaira, wife of Abid Ali Lakhan, was having illicit relations with another villager. On Sunday, he went to his daughter's house, opened fire and fled. The SITE police have arrested the accused but a case has yet to be registered.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1171519/karo-kari-father-kills-daughter-honour/>

UNDERAGE GIRL CHALLENGES JIRGA'S DECISION IN COURT

The Express Tribune, August 30th, 2016.

HYDERABAD: An underage girl filed a petition on Monday in the Sindh High Court pleading against the decision of a jirga in Tando Allahyar district that gave her in marriage in an alleged matter of honour.

The marriage was to be a penalty for Saima Rind, who claimed to be 14 years old, because her brother allegedly used to talk over the phone to a woman from the to-be-groom's family.

Saima's counsel, Advocate Nazeer Laghari, informed the court that the jirga, held in Chambarh area, held her brother Ghulam Shabir Rind guilty of talking to a woman over the phone. As a punishment the jirga had ordered the Rind family to give their daughter in wedding to Barkat Ali, Laghari added.

Saima appealed to the court to give her protection and to order the police to take action against the influential people who organised the jirga.

The court's Hyderabad Circuit Bench ordered the Tando Allahyar police to provide protection to the girl and her family and to produce the men who held the jirga in court on September 19.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1172123/seeking-protection-underage-girl-challenges-jirgas-decision-court/>

THE 14-SECOND STARE

Dawn, August 31st, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

Rishiraj Singh is the excise commissioner in the Indian state of Kerala. In the most recent photograph of him that I could find, he sports the khaki uniform of his position and a formidable moustache. In the last half of August, however, Rishiraj Singh has become known for something else, an edict against men who stare at women.

While addressing a small group of people in the city of Kochi on women's safety, Singh declared that any man found staring at a woman for more than 14 seconds could be put in jail. Since India is a country of men who like to stare, his statement provoked immediate attention and ire; the Indian newspaper India Express labelled the statement 'absurd' and included an interview with a lawyer who said that there was no such law

Others largely took the same tone: how dare Indian men be threatened with imprisonment for staring at Indian women. In the words of one Indian attorney: "There is no such provision in any law of this country and there cannot be such a mindless provision of law in any other country of the world. Period." The message to women, Indian and otherwise: it's a man's world and staring at women must necessarily be a part of it.

Pakistan is also a country of staring men. Any Pakistani woman, young or old, rich or poor, has her staring stories — tales of men who stare at women in buses, at school, restaurants, banks, work and in parks. All of them will tell you that there is no corner of Pakistan that is not populated by men who stare.

Learning to put up with staring is possibly the first line in the book of male dominance that is the contemporary Pakistani story. Men stare and stare and stare — old men and young men; bearded men and clean-shaven men; the supposedly religious and the avowedly secular. Staring at women is indeed the glue that binds the male species of the subcontinent together. They may disagree on politics, be at each other's throats over religion, stab and shoot at the provocations of sectarianism or the particulars of ethnicity, but they all believe in staring, everywhere and always.

All of these reasons make the statement by the excise commissioner interesting and almost revolutionary. The male of the South Asian species does not generally like to admit his proclivities for visual excess and optic dominance, let alone abridge them. If and when men are confronted about staring, they deny they have partaken of such activity.

Indeed, perhaps because it is so prevalent, engaged in with such zest and regularity, it is possible that the men who do it, like addicts of other kinds, believe their own lies. I never stare, have never stared, will never stare, all rolling off their tongues with the ease granted by practice. And all the while staring continues unabated and everywhere.

In the odd and unlikely case that staring is even admitted to, the perpetrator moves from denial to the shifting of blame, staring pinned on the wayward women, who by their very existence, their insistence on going to work or school or riding a bus or travelling in a car, or paying a bill or buying vegetables, conspire to wheedle men into staring. It is an old trick and all men, young and old, can perform it with the prowess of Olympic athletes.

Interestingly, males of the human species are not alone in the act of staring. Experts point out that prolonged staring among other living creatures signals a challenge and an act of domination. If one among this variety stares at an opponent for more than 14 seconds, it would be because he wants to make a clear statement about who is boss: the starrer and not the stared at.

Beyond animal science, feminist social theorists and philosophers have long pointed out how the ‘male gaze’ serves to intimidate and discipline women. It’s not a revolutionary thesis; its implications in the Pakistani context and in many other parts of the Muslim world have meant a very literal disciplining, shoving women out of the public sphere into the private one, its crude and pathetic logic insisting that if there are no women to stare at, men will not stare.

For all of these reasons, it is not absurd but quite groundbreaking to suggest a law that would punish men for staring at women for longer than 14 seconds. If the men who indulge in it want to understand just how insulting, intrusive and lecherous it is to maintain a largely unwanted eye contact for this period, I suggest they all request another man to stare at them for just that period.

Many revelations are in store for them if and when they do, chief among them how insulting, intrusive and repulsive staring is for the subject of the constant gaze. At the end, they can spare a moment to consider the exponential rate at which these repugnant consequences are multiplied when the arrangement is not an experiment, and the one staring not a friend or colleague.

One is not sure how many men would want to partake of the experiment. After all, who wants to experience something disgusting; the wealthy never wish to pretend to be poor, the powerful never play at being powerless and so why should those who are smug about their staring habits, ever attempt to understand just how coercive and unpleasant this action is for the other half of the population.

Among men of this sort, the commissioner from Kerala is a venerable and hopeful exception, one man who realises that for staring to stop, it must be fined and punished, exposed as perverse and disgusting; it might be okay in the animal kingdom but certainly not for the human species.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1281017>

‘WOMEN CAN DO’ PROJECT ENDS WITH HIGH HOPE

The Express Tribune, September 1st, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Many women across Pakistan want to establish their own businesses, but don’t know where to start, said Durreshawar Mahmood, project manager at ‘Women can do’, during the final conference of the one-year initiative.

Through this project, funded by the US Embassy and carried out by the Shoor Foundation, over 3,000 women have received entrepreneurship training at public universities and Madrassas across Pakistan.

Shoor Foundation staff has also coordinated a series of policy discussions with government officials, educators, business representatives, and others to identify and address the barriers to women’s entrepreneurship in Pakistan.

“While training and inspiring women in universities and madrassas to pursue their goals, we have also worked with officials and others to ensure future generations of Pakistani women have more resources and fewer challenges when seeking to start their own businesses,” said Mahmood.

Supporting women entrepreneurs in Pakistan has a ripple effect on families, villages, and cities across Pakistan, stated Mahmood. “Successful entrepreneurs create jobs for other women and men. They offer innovative solutions to problems. They deliver essential services and support their families.”

American Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale was also present on the occasion. He encouraged public and private sector representatives to continue their efforts to support women's entrepreneurship in Pakistan for promoting economic activities.

The project is one of many entrepreneurship-related initiatives supported by the American Embassy. It sends Pakistani entrepreneurs to the United States on exchange programmes, has supported the establishment of the WECREATE Center for women's entrepreneurship in Islamabad, and sponsored the travel of Pakistani delegates to the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in June.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1173805/women-can-project-ends-high-hope/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 22ND TO AUGUST 28TH 2016

RICKSHAW DRIVER BOOKED FOR STUDENT'S 'RAPE, BLACKMAIL' IN TOBA TEK SINGH

Dawn, August 22nd, 2016

TOBA TEK SINGH: Gojra Sadar police registered on Sunday a case against a rickshaw driver for allegedly raping a college student some two months back, taking her nude pictures and blackmailing her.

The mother of the second-year student in her complaint submitted to the police said her 17-year-old daughter 'K' studied at the Government Women Degree College, Gojra. She had hired a rickshaw to pick and drop her daughter, she added.

She said on the last day before summer vacation started, the suspect rickshaw driver, a resident of the same village, took her daughter to a deserted place on her way back home from college.

She said the suspect not only subjected her daughter to rape but also took her nude photos with his mobile phone camera, threatening her that if she told anyone about the incident he would post the pictures on social media.

The complainant said that after the summer vacation ended her daughter refused to go to college with the suspect and revealed the incident of rape to her.

The police after registration of a case, were looking for the suspect who reportedly fled the village.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1279156>

WOMEN AND THE CHANGING STATE

The Express Tribune, August 25th, 2016.

Afiya Shehrbano Zia

There have been hundreds of (mostly repeat) studies on violence against women conducted by donor agencies and women's rights NGOs in Pakistan. Religious laws and customs/traditions have always been identified as the formal and informal sources that justify male violence and provide impunity. The successful collusion between men and the state to control women through violence has been pointed out. But things have changed considerably.

Pakistani analysts have been split on their understanding of such changes.

One set of thinking stresses that the real turn in tide is coming from the shifts in women's roles in society. This includes women's increasing mobility, economic and educational empowerment, marital choices based on free will, and information and connectivity provided by the media.

Empirical and observational evidence confirms this and testifies to Pakistani women's amazing spirit and determination to climb out of patriarchal cobwebs and pull on the strings of modernity.

The other set of analysts focuses on structural factors and points out that far more critical is the role and responsiveness of the state. These analysts argue that the state is not a monolithic structure but a live actor that can facilitate or impede such progress more effectively than any other player.

Eminent urban planner and analyst Arif Hasan has pointed out the seismic shifts in the gendered sociology of Pakistan along the first set of thinking (Dawn, August 7, 2016). I argue, however, that there are other, more significant changes at state levels and it is these that are going to decide the direction of that change.

I got involved with the women's movement at a time when the Zina laws were sapping nearly all the energies of urban activists who fought against the state, courts and vengeful husbands and fathers who used this lever of control over women for decades.

The reform of 2006 was not just a historic victory for women's rights — it offers a symbolic opportunity towards reclaiming the secular possibilities of gendered relations in the Islamic Republic. Feminists, human rights activists and secularists are not dismissed as 'traitors' by the state like before but are getting co-opted instead.

Second, there has been creeping migration of honour crimes from tribal or rural sites into the urban cities. This has led to police awareness and response in actually treating this as an offence. In other words, the shift in the legal psyche which used to accept the informal law of settlement (faislo, samjhota and so on) is now being taken as a cognisable offence that requires justice.

This is important, inefficiencies and ineffectiveness aside. The vocabulary of law enforcers has changed considerably under pressure by the state.

Third, the role of the BISP in the economic assistance of women of the poorest households has been crucial in boosting other socio-political empowerment. A brainchild of the PPP, it enfranchised thousands of women because of the CNIC requirement.

But it has been Marvi Memon of the PML-N government who has seized its potential and catapulted the programme in a way that has restructured the merit base of beneficiaries through the poverty scorecard and has shown to have positively impacted girls' nutrition. In a major shift from earlier observations, it has shown that economic empowerment of beneficiaries has actually improved their domestic status too.

The programme is constantly being reinvented and may just be a major game changer for poor women in the coming years.

The point is that state structures need feminising. The Election Commission of Pakistan has appointed a gender specialist. Reports suggest that her role has made a critical impact on the pursuit of cases where women were prevented from voting, far more effectively than when activists were lobbying for justice for these voters. Also, women in the ombudsmen's offices are gaining voice in state structures.

Certainly, women will keep paying with their lives for every inch of freedom, mobility and rights that they struggle for. But unless the state decides which side it is on, we will be depending on individual sacrifices and successes and optimistically gathering fragmented evidence to convince ourselves of this change.

When the state reforms the Qisas and Diyat laws because it recognises that these can be discriminatory against women victims of honour crimes, it will have redefined the entire narrative and national consciousness regarding gender justice for women as a collective.

When the state targets women for economic improvement in a holistic manner, it sends the message out to the men in their families that the state sees these women as the de facto heads of households.

When the Sindh government makes the legal age of marriage 18, in defiance of the opinion of the Council of Islamic Ideology, it is a brave move but it is when the state starts arresting the nikahkhwans or when the courts start awarding sentences to domestic violence abusers, that the message of accountability and delivery starts penetrating into the societal collective consciousness.

When Pakistan's officials include domestic violence as an independent chapter in their demographic health surveys, it is a missive that these issues are intrinsically connected concerns.

The Pakistani state has changed. We are so troubled by our static civil-military relations that we refuse to look for other indicators of change.

Yes, child marriages have decreased, girls' school enrolment has increased, male attitudes towards many traditions have changed and the backlash against women as they rupture patriarchal orders will get them killed and punished. But this does not mean that we can wait for such a change that exacts such a tragic price.

If the state can make correctives in laws and prioritise the institutions that are responsive to women, minorities and the marginalised, this will be the most significant change.

If it's a clever state, it will insert mechanisms that will prevent setbacks or reversals, such as de-fanging the religious and conservative sectors that attack any progress for women and regulating a misogynistic media and capitalist economies and informal sectors that exploit women's labour and inflict a different kind of violence against women.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1169353/women-changing-state/>

ALLEGED KIDNAPPING: FOUR GIRLS GO MISSING IN TWO DAYS

The Express Tribune, August 26th, 2016.

Arsalan Altaf

ISLAMABAD: The police are still looking for four girls — three of whom are sisters — who went missing from Islamabad within a span of two days.

On Monday, three sisters* went to school in Humak Model Town but did not come back home. Their father*, who is a prayer leader at a mosque in a nearby village, looked for the girls the entire evening and lodged a complaint with the Sihala police the next day. The girls were all in grade nine and were 16, 17, and 18 years of age, according to the police.

In his application, the girls' father said that her daughters had been kidnapped by unidentified persons. He feared that they could be abused or killed by the kidnappers.

The police have registered a kidnapping case against unidentified persons but have made no recoveries or arrests yet.

A police officer told The Express Tribune on Thursday that the police had found clues in the case. He claimed that he expected the girls to be recovered and the suspects arrested by Friday (today). The official, who requested anonymity, also claimed that it was not a kidnapping. He said the girls were runaways and had gone off with some men on their own.

Sihala SHO Abdul Ghafoor said the girls would be recovered soon.

Meanwhile, a 17-year-old girl* was allegedly kidnapped from Ghauri Town on Tuesday. The Koral police have registered a kidnapping case against Sheraz Shah and Saleem.

Sub-inspector Muhammad Hanif, the investigation officer for the case, said the suspects lived in the area but shifted to Mardan in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa three to four days ago. He said the girl's family had so far provided no details, such as her mobile phone number, to help the police track her down or investigate call records.

In another case, a man went missing from Sector I-8/1 on August 15. MB* lodged a complaint with the Industrial Area police that unidentified persons had kidnapped her husband AH*. The police have registered a case on Wednesday, nine days after the incident.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1170077/alleged-kidnapping-four-girls-go-missing-two-days/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 15TH TO AUGUST 21ST 2016

APATHY TOWARDS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Express Tribune, August 15th, 2016

In India, the Delhi gang-rape case brought the whole country on the streets against sexual violence, but even the most barbaric cases of sexual abuse, rape and forced pornography of over 200 children in Kasur have not forced either our state or society to work towards preventing such violence.

And not only have we done little to curb this menace, we do not even have systems in place to facilitate the reporting of such cases. In Karachi, the number of reported cases of sexual violence is over 70 per cent less than the number of cases registered at hospitals. This is a startling difference, with the number of cases received at hospitals 516 compared to a mere 122 police reports between January 2015 to June 2016.

These figures were released recently by the NGO War Against Rape. The statistics also reveal an increase of seven per cent in the registration of child sexual abuse cases with an average of 10 children sexually exploited daily in 2015.

While parliament appears to be more than eager to pass legislation that curtails people's rights as is apparent in the case of the new cybercrime law, it delays important legislation such as the rape prevention laws. The anti-rape laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill 2014 was passed by the Senate in March last year. Since then, the National Assembly has failed to pass it. Parliament must move forward with the law to ensure safety and protection to survivors who bravely step forward and report their plight.

It is also essential to better educate our prosecutors, police officers and medical legal officers, and have psychologists and counsellors for individuals who have suffered such trauma. As things stand, children, the most vulnerable group in society, are subjected to violence on a daily basis with little accountability and criminal penalty for perpetrators.

With a negligible number of FIRs filed, sex offenders remain amongst us and around our children. Our institutions need to start taking the plight of those at the receiving end of such heinous crimes seriously. Their apathy is inexcusable.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1162451/apathy-towards-sexual-violence/>

SHC SEEKS DETAILS OF WOMEN DEVELOPMENT DEPT'S PROGRAMMES

The Express Tribune, August 17th, 2016.

The Sindh High Court (SHC) directed on Monday the advocate-general to submit a report regarding allocation of budget and programmes launched by the women development department.

A single bench, headed by Justice Salahuddin Panhwar, sought these details while hearing a petition against harassment. The petitioner, Nighat Dakhan, had sought protection against harassment.

The court had issued a show-cause notice to the provincial chief secretary, directing him to explain what measures were being adopted for protection of women rights and ending harassment.

On Monday, chief secretary Muhammad Siddique Memon submitted through advocate-general Zamir Ghumro that within three months, the women development department is going to set up a powerful commission under the Status of Women Act, 2015.

He said that the nominations have also been invited through media for the posts of chairperson and 21 members of the women rights body. The relevant deputy commissioners will head these centres, Ghumro said, adding that the government has provided funds to the authorities for the establishment of these centres.

The provincial law officer undertook before the judges that serious action will be taken against honour killing.

Taking Memon's statement on record, the bench vacated the show-cause notice issued to him. Fixing the matter after 15 days, the bench exempted the secretary, the commissioners and deputy commissioners from personal appearance till further orders.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1163999/shc-seeks-details-women-development-depts-programmes/>

ORANGI RAPE CASE: SHODDY INVESTIGATION DELAYS QUEST FOR JUSTICE

The Express Tribune, August 17th, 2016.

KARACHI: Faiz Rehman's eyes were soaked with tears. With his trembling hands he pointed towards the pictures of her deceased daughter, framed on the walls of his house situated in one of the relatively better settlements of Orangi Town.

"She is gone. Nothing can bring her back. But as a father is it unfair for me to ask for swift justice against those who mercilessly raped and killed my six-year-old daughter," he questioned.

On January 25, Rehman and his family were attending a wedding at the Shehnai Marriage Hall in Orangi Town when their daughter went missing. The family registered a missing person's complaint the next day, contacted the nearby mosques to regularly make announcements, but all their efforts went in vain.

On January 31, their daughter's body was found floating in the underground water tank of the wedding hall. Initial medical examination of the body revealed that the child had been tortured and raped.

Even after the tragic loss of their daughter, the test for the Faiz family is not over as even after seven months, not a single charge has been framed against the 19 employees of the wedding hall who were put behind bars after the incident made waves on television channels.

"We can't present charges in the court until we receive the DNA reports," said the investigation officer of the case, SP Akhtar Farooq, while talking to The Express Tribune.

"It takes about two weeks to obtain the DNA results," said a forensic expert, Dr Umair Haroon, saying there are also precedents where DNA tests are obtained in a matter of days if the case is deemed 'important'.

An investigation into the case reveals a series of lapses on part of the investigators.

In a meeting on March 18, headed by Crime Investigation Agency DIG, the victim's parents were informed that the chemical examination of their child's clothes sent to a private laboratory in Lahore found no evidence of rape – the observation completely contradicted the first chemical tests held in Karachi's Sindh Government Services Hospital.

A six-member medical board was then formed to look into the contrasting chemical reports. According to its findings, which were relayed to Faiz, the victim's piece of clothing which had blood marks was at the services hospital – the police had sent the wrong piece of clothing for examination.

On April 27, in a letter to the investigation officer, the medical board recommended the authorities to revisit the chemical examination on the original fabric at a forensic lab in Islamabad.

Ironically, the mismanagement was not only limited to the chemical examinations, as on August 11 this year, the investigation officer informed the city court that one of the tubes with blood samples of the accused was found broken by laboratory staffers in Islamabad and the DNA test cannot be completed until the cross-matching of the samples take place, for which all the samples must be present.

“We are now going to send a letter to the additional district judge (West), asking permission for the medical examination of one of the accused in a week,” informed SP Farooq.

According to Rehman, he has been approached by the wedding hall staffers for an out-of-court settlement.

“They know that I am poor and they want to take advantage of it but as long as I have my wife with me, I will fight for justice for my daughter till my last breath,” he said, adding that, “My biggest fear is that due to the incompetence of state institutions, the accused may go scot-free.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1164005/orangi-rape-case-shoddy-investigation-delays-quest-justice/>

MAN DROWNS MINOR DAUGHTER TO GET ‘COMPENSATION’

Dawn, August 18th, 2016

GUJRAT: A man allegedly killed his four-year-old daughter by drowning her in Upper Jhelum Canal to get financial “compensation” from the provincial government.

After throwing minor girl Sabiha into canal, suspect Shahbaz lodged a false complaint with Kakrali police on Tuesday that his daughter had been kidnapped while going to school at Jakhar village near Kotla.

Later, Dinga police found the girl’s body floating in the canal near Randheer village which was later identified as Sabiha.

District Police Officer Sohail Zafar Chattha told reporters at a news conference on Wednesday that after fishing out the girl’s body from canal, the police grilled Shahbaz who confessed to have killed his daughter, hoping he would get Rs0.5 million in compensation from the Punjab government.

The suspect told investigators that he was under a Rs0.7 million debt and he needed the amount to pay it off.

The heartless father told police that on Wednesday he picked Sabiha from his house on the pretext of dropping her at school, but instead took her to the canal bank and threw her into deep waters.

The handcuffed suspect was also produced at the press conference.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278282>

CABINET BODY APPROVES AUTHORITY FOR ENFORCING WOMEN PROTECTION ACT

Dawn, August 18th, 2016

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The Punjab cabinet committee on law and order on Wednesday approved the establishment of an authority for the enforcement of the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016.

The authority would again be established under a law, initially an ordinance, which would define its functions and powers, official sources informed Dawn.

The authority was proposed by the Chief Minister's Special Monitory Unit on Law and Order which had also created the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016 after much opposition from legislators and religious circles.

This law provides for establishment of women protection centres, the first of which is expected to start functioning in Multan in November this year.

Official sources said the approved authority would establish and run the centres. It had already been approved by the chief minister who had referred it to the cabinet committee for its nod, finalization of its structure and checking of its proposed law.

The cabinet committee which is headed by Law Minister Rana Sanaullah approved the authority at a meeting held here at the Civil Secretariat. It was attended by Chief Minister's Adviser Rana Maqbool and secretaries of the home and prosecution departments and the IGP.

Officials said the authority would be headed by a director general whose directorate would have finance, administration, procurement, architecture, engineering, enforcement, monitoring and evaluation wings to oversee all the operations of the centers and enforcement of the Women Protection Act 2016.

A post of additional inspector general (AIG) women protection would be a part of the enforcement division and would oversee all the female SPs in all violence against women centres.

The enforcement division would also be in charge of district women protection officers and district women protection committees to be formed in every district, and would thrash out their working and monitor and evaluate their performances on a monthly basis.

The human resource division would be in charge of all hiring at the violence against women centres.

The authority's director general would be appointed by the chief minister. He would be the in-charge of all operations of the authority, enjoying full powers to deal with the heads of all relevant departments having a stake at violence against women centers to counter the issues and formulate strategies for all centres across the province.

The cabinet committee also decided to make new facilities for the centres in Gujranwala and Faisalabad and satellite units of the centres in the rest of districts.

The committee proposed to include women parliamentarians and lawyers, and NGOs as honorary members of the authority to ensure its functioning at the desired level.

Rana Sanaullah proposed that Senior Member SMU Salman Sufi, who gave the briefing on the authority, should be given additional charge of the authority's director general so as to establish and run it as per the vision of the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278284>

SUSPECTED KNIFE ATTACKER CONFESSES TO STABBING EIGHT WOMEN

Dawn, August 18th, 2016

Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: A suspect in the recent spate of knife attacks on women has confessed to attacking eight women, one of whom died on the spot.

He said he was using a kitchen knife to attack the victims, which he then put back with the rest of his utensils for daily use upon returning home.

Mohammad Ali, said to be in his 20s, confessed to attacking women with a kitchen knife in seven incidents. In one case, Anum Naz, 26, died on the night of August 7, while her colleague was severely injured.

Mr Ali was living close to where several of the attacks took place. He said he would leave his home on Bilal Street in Morgah at around 8pm, and would return after two hours, after stabbing his victims. He claimed he did not want to kill anyone.

Quoting the confessional statement, Deputy Superintendent of Police Farhan Aslam said the suspect said he felt satisfaction after stabbing women because he “hated” them. Mr Aslam said the suspect claimed that his mother was mistreated by her in-laws before she died of cancer when he was a year old.

He said Mr Ali said that his father remarried, and his stepmother did not treat him well, due to which he moved in with his grandfather and his aunt in Morgah.

His arrest came about after the police sought the assistance of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and intelligence agencies, who used a sketch to pick up suspects in the area.

A CTD team led by inspector Abdul Sattar Khan spotted Mr Ali at a tandoor in Morgah during a search operation on August 12.

He was taken into custody by the CTD and later handed over to the local police.

Two of the victims – Naz, 26, and Irum Shahzad, 24 – were nurses associated with the Fauji Foundation Hospital. They were returning to the hospital after going shopping in Saddar when they were attacked by an unidentified individual near the hospital gates on August 7.

Naz died on the spot after she was stabbed repeatedly in the chest, and the attacker was overpowered by Ms Shahzad. DSP Aslam said the suspect did not intend to kill Naz, but when he saw that he had no chance of escaping after being caught by the other woman he stabbed her repeatedly and killed her.

He said Mr Ali confessed to being involved in seven similar attacks, including one reported to the Morgah police by a woman who did not wish to be named. She was returning home when she was attacked near the Farooq-i-Azam mosque earlier this year.

He also confessed to attacking Riffat Bibi as she was taking out the garbage at 10pm on February 21. He told the police he stabbed Quratulain while she was with her mother and brother at around 8:45pm on July 24.

The suspect also confessed to attacking two other women in July – one was attacked in Morgah while the other was stabbed near the Al-Shifa hospital. He also attacked Samar Razaq on August 7, the same day the two nurses were attacked.

A Morgah resident, Malik Omer Irfan, said: “No one from his home realised Ali was involved in such a heinous crime that sparked panic in the Morgah area. A large number of schoolgirls and women were feeling insecure even inside their homes.” Mr Irfan was also attempting to trace the attacker on his own.

The suspect was formally handed over to the Morgah police on Tuesday and produced before the parents of three victims, Naz, Ms Quratulain and Ms Riffat. They confirmed that their daughters – other than Naz – had identified the attacker.

Police claimed Mr Ali confessed to being involved in four of the cases registered with the police so far this year. Mr Ali was produced before the court for remand on Wednesday.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278314>

CII LISTS REASONS FOR REJECTING K-P DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILL

The Express Tribune, August 20th, 2016.

Obaid Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: Nearly six months after rejecting the domestic violence bill drafted by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) formally handed over its detailed response to the proposed piece of legislation.

CII chief researcher Dr Inamullah told The Express Tribune that the bill contradicted both the Shariah, as well as the Constitution. In its 72-page response, the council explained that it usually took time to prepare a detailed response as “valid reasons” have to be presented.

According to him, every member of the council had given his or her input in the detailed reply with reasons for rejecting the draft. Subsequently, the document had been handed over to the provincial government.

He also pointed out that the provincial officials had been pleading for an early response so that the draft of a fresh law could be prepared.

According to the CII, 33 clauses in the bill and a few penalties already existed in federal laws and there was no need for drafting a new bill.

The council also declared that some provisions contained in the bill were against the Constitution. The proposed law was tabled in the K-P Assembly during the previous government’s tenure, but the PML-N and other parties had resisted its passage.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1166229/cii-lists-reasons-rejecting-k-p-domestic-violence-bill/>

WOMEN SAVED FROM MOB ATTACKS AFTER KIDNAP ALLEGATIONS

Dawn, August 21st, 2016

Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: As fears mounted over reports of widespread kidnapping, half a dozen women came under mob attacks in different parts of the city where people suspected them to be kidnapers of children, officials confirmed to Dawn on Saturday.

In a separate incident, a suspected kidnapper was taken into custody after he failed to prove his identity in Orangi Town, police said.

The police claimed to have saved four women from an angry crowd in Gulistan-i-Jauhar. They had arrived to meet their sister who lived in Shumail Arcade when some young men ‘teased’ one of the women late Friday night. After having an exchange of words, she slapped the man who raised a hue and cry by levelling the baseless charge of abduction against her.

Within no time, the women were surrounded by area people and an altercation ensued. Meanwhile, the police reached the troubled spot and saved the women from the wrath of the angry crowd, said Sharea Faisal SHO Raja Tariq. The police managed to pacify the situation after necessary investigation. He said the women did not want to lodge the case and left.

The officer said the young men were ostensibly under the influence of some contraband when one of them allegedly tried to tease the woman. He said the suspected men managed to escape from the scene.

In Shireen Jinnah Colony, the Boat Basin and Clifton police saved two women said to be beggars from the wrath of an angry mob.

SSP-South Saqib Ismail Memon told Dawn that the two women were passing through the area when someone shouted that they were 'kidnappers'. Shortly afterwards around 500 people gathered there and tried to harm the women, the officer said.

However, he said, the Boat Basin and Clifton police led by their respective SHOs rushed to the spot and controlled the situation. The women were rescued and the angry crowd was dispersed, he added.

In another incident, a man was allegedly thrashed by a mob in the Pirabad area of Orangi Town before being handed over to police on Saturday.

The police said Nadeem was passing through Mianwali Colony when someone asked him about the money he was carrying. He ostensibly became nervous, attracting attention of the area people who suspected him to be a 'kidnapper'. As they started beating him, the police reached the spot and detained him, the officials said.

"The police were still treating Nadeem as suspect, because he could not satisfy police about the purpose of his visit to the area," said Karachi-East SSP Pir Mohammed Shah.

The officer said Nadeem, a resident of Korangi, initially claimed to be an employee of the city government health department but he did not furnish any proof to corroborate his claim.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1278841/women-saved-from-mob-attacks-after-kidnap-allegations>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 8TH TO AUGUST 14TH 2016

COUPLE KILLED FOR 'HONOUR'

Dawn, August 11th, 2016

Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: The family of a man who was killed along with his wife in the name of 'honour' placed the bodies of both victims on a main road linking Rawalakot with Muzaffarabad throughout Wednesday, demanding that the main suspect be arrested.

The bodies were removed at about 6pm after a committee of locals was constituted to serve as guarantors by the Poonch divisional commissioner that the suspect, who is also wanted in another case, will be apprehended within 48 hours.

Owais Riaz, 30, and his 18-year-old wife Aliza were found dead in an isolated house in Danna Kotehra on Tuesday, four days after they had married in a court.

Riaz had married another girl for love two years ago and had to run away with her as well.

The couple were allowed to come back to the village after a jirga decided on the matter. After he had a daughter with his first wife, he had moved to Saudi Arabia for work.

According to Inayat Hussein, an official in the City Police Station, Rawalakot, Riaz came back to Pakistan on July 29 and married Aliza in front of a judicial magistrate on Aug 5.

A local, Shoaib Arif, told the couple to stay in his house so that they would be safe from the girl's family.

On Tuesday evening, Mr Arif told police that he had come home from work to find both of them shot dead.

Police handed over the bodies to Riaz's family after autopsies were conducted in the early hours of Wednesday.

In the FIR, Riaz's father alleged that the couple were killed by Aliza's paternal uncle Niaz Ahmed who was wanted by police in another case as well.

Niaz was booked under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code and the girl's father Nisar Ahmed, his relatives Khadim and Zahid and the owner of the house in which the couple had taken refuge were arrested and booked for abetment in the crime, Mr Hussein said.

Riaz's family placed the bodies on the road and demanded that the main suspect also be arrested. Divisional Commissioner Zafar Mehmood assured them that the suspect would be apprehended within two days and formed a council of elders to serve as guarantors of his assurance.

Later, Aliza's body was handed over to her family.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276836>

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE: 'CHANGE IS GRADUAL BUT IT IS HAPPENING'

Dawn, August 11th, 2016

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: The issues of women's access to justice and effective implementation of pro-women laws were discussed at a regional dialogue organised by the Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO) in collaboration with Centre for Peace and Justice Pakistan at a hotel here on Wednesday.

After the representatives of departments such as the Social Welfare Department and Women's Development Department had spoken about their work for women, MPA Mehtab Akbar Rashdi remarked that all such departments looked good on paper but they were faced with a lot of challenges.

"Starting from lack of funding, the CSS officers appointed secretaries soon get tired of getting through to the bureaucracy and lose interest in their work. No funding, no offices, no intent in government departments and hence no empowerment of women," she said.

About the laws made to provide justice to women and the issues coming in the way of their implementation, she said there was a need for sensitising of the police officer, who first received a woman's complaint and up to the judge who heard her case. "No, you are not to dismiss her by calling an act of violence against her, her personal matter. What if your sister or daughter finds herself in such a difficult situation?"

"Here if the assembly says that DNA evidence is accepted in sexual assault cases, or if it increases the age of marriage and in the case of a second marriage makes the first wife's consent mandatory, we have our religious scholars bringing in the Shariat to veto everything. How can they bring up Shariat while forgetting about the status given to women in Islam?" she said.

“There are numerous examples of giving respect to women and supporting their rights by the Prophet Muhammad [peace be upon him], which they must not forget. Throughout history, there are so many other examples, too, of strong Muslim women standing up for their rights. The problem with us womenfolk now is that we are asking for justice in this unjust society.”

Anis Haroon, convener of the Women Action Forum representing Sindh in the National Human Rights Commission, said that still one should remain positive as there had been some work done that had helped women. “So many women used to be imprisoned under the Zina Ordinance but after it was taken to the penal court there is not a single woman in jail today under the Zina Ordinance. The developing of the Domestic Violence Act, now, will also lead to good things,” she said.

Retired Justice Majida Rizvi, chairperson of the Sindh Human Rights Commission, also said that she preferred looking at the brighter side. “The passing of these laws have made some difference. So many childhood marriages have been stopped and people have been sent to jail for it. I know the change is gradual but it is happening,” she said.

Uzma Noorani, managing trustee of the Panah shelter, said that a woman who stood up for her rights was not viewed as decent so there was a huge need to change the attitudes and mindsets. She also requested relevant people to not call murders of women in the name of honour ‘honour killings’. “They are murders, plain and simple! There is no need to associate ‘honour’ with such murders,” she said.

Former president of the Karachi Press Club Imtiaz Faran also suggested the term ‘honour killing’ be changed to ‘terror killing’.

Supreme Court Advocate Ghulam Mustafa Lakho lamented that women’s testimony in courts was still considered as half proof. “The laws are there but they will remain useless if you don’t know how to put them to use,” he said.

Shahida Mangi of Centre for Peace and Justice Pakistan, Zenia Shaukat of Sindh Human Rights Commission, Mussarat Jabeen of Women Development Dept, Riaz Fatima of Social Welfare Dept, Mahpara Shakeel Ghouri of Capacity Building-GEP, Shazia Shaheen and Naseer Memon of the SPO and former senator Javed Jabbar also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1276778>

13 ARRESTED IN SWARA CASE

Dawn, August 12th, 2016

MINGORA: Police on Thursday arrested 13 members of a jirga for giving an eight-year-old girl in swara to resolve a family dispute at Gornai area of Bahrain tehsil of Swat district.

According to Mohammad Tariq, an official of Bahrain police station, the jirga members gathered at Gornai village of Bahrain tehsil and decided to give an eight-year-old girl to a minor boy of the same age to settle their longstanding family dispute.

Following a tip-off the police reached the spot of the jirga and arrested all the 13 people who mutually agreed to give the girl ‘in marriage’ to a male member of the rival family.

“The jirga members include elders from both the families and the nikahkhawn. We have registered an FIR against all the 13 people,” said Mr Tariq.

According to local sources the dispute started between the two families since a daughter of one Darya Khan eloped with Abdullah ,who is the girl’s brother. “On the request of both the families, the jirga decided to settle their dispute so Abdullah’s sister was given in marriage to the rival family,” said Inamullah, a local resident of Gurnai.

The custom of swara is practiced in the remote areas of upper Swat where majority of people are unaware of the laws against it.

Tabassum Adnan, a women rights activist, said that there was a need for creating awareness among the people to stop the practice of swara.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1277107>

FATHER, EX-HUSBAND OF BRITISH WOMAN KILLED FOR 'HONOUR' REMANDED

Waseem Ashraf Butt

Dawn, August 14th, 2016

GUJRAT: Police on Saturday arrested the father and former husband of Samia Shahid, the British woman of Pakistani origin who was found dead in mysterious circumstance while visiting her family in a village near Jhelum, and got their remand for interrogation.

Samia's former husband Chaudhry Shakil and father Chaudhry Shahid were produced before Civil Judge/Judicial Magistrate Mehreen Seemab Abbasi.

The court remanded them in police custody for four days.

Earlier in the day, Jhelum Additional District and Session Judge Mohammad Sajjad Afzal cancelled the interim bail of Shakil, who had once again failed to appear in court. He did not appear before the judge also on the previous hearing on Aug 6.

Another suspect in the case, Samia's first cousin Chaudhry Mobeen, was not produced in court on Saturday. His family claimed that Mobeen was in the custody of police. However, the police informed the court that Mobeen was not arrested.

Investigators claimed that Shakil also disclosed to his involvement in the murder of his ex-wife.

Police sources said that the former husband informed the police that he allegedly strangled Samia after intoxicating her by a drug. He, however, said that he had acted alone and that Samia's father and other members of the family had nothing to do with the murder.

Samia, 28, was found dead in her family's home on July 20. Her family first claimed that she had suffered a heart attack. But later it changed its statement claiming that she had committed suicide.

Syed Mukhtar Kazim, Samia's second husband, lodged a murder case with the Mangla police station in Jhelum on July 23, claiming that his wife was killed by members of her family in the name of honour.

Post-mortem and forensic reports have confirmed that Samia did not die of natural causes.

Last week, the Jhelum police sought the extradition of two female suspects in the case, Samia's mother Imtiaz Bibi and sister Madiha Shahid, from the United Kingdom through Interpol.

In a letter to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, member of British parliament from Bradford Naz Shah sought justice for Samia.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1277453>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 7TH 2016 NP TO ESTABLISH WOMEN TRAINING CENTRES IN SLUMS

Dawn, August 1st, 2016

ISLAMABAD: After complaints of women who work as domestic help being involved in theft cases, the National Party (NP) has decided to establish vocational training centres in slums to train women and given them an opportunity to work for themselves.

The decision was made in a meeting of the party on Sunday, which was attended by representatives of the 20 union councils in the federal capital.

An NP member Tahir Naqibi said that till poor people become financially stable, they will continue to be “slaves” of the privileged class.

“Measures should be taken for providing people in slums with the opportunity to work for themselves. Therefore, vocational training centres will be opened in various slums,” he said.

Talking to Dawn, NP Punjab President Ayub Malik said that the majority of women residing in slums work as domestic help.

“It has become common for people to blame the servants in the house when they misplace something. We have started providing free of cost legal help to these women through lawyers who are members of our party,” he said.

He said this was an ongoing process and that there was therefore a need for an alternative strategy for ending the victimization of domestic help.

This was why the establishment of the training centres was decided on, he said.

“The first training centre will be established in Mehrabadi in G-12 and the second in France Colony, F-7. Other centres will be established in the slums across the city,” Mr Ayub said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274588/np-to-establish-women-training-centres-in-slums>

HONOUR KILLING CASES: CHANGES TO CRIMINAL LAW SOUGHT

Dawn, August 2nd, 2016

LAHORE: Legal experts, rights activists and members of civil society at a discussion on Monday called for amendments in criminal law to strictly deal with cases of ‘honour’ killings of women.

The participants in the dialogue hosted by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPP) also stressed upon the need to run awareness campaign to sensitise public and the law-enforcement agencies as well.

The proposed “Honour offences Amendment Bill 2016” was the main concern at the discussion that envisages amendments in sections 299, 302-C 310, 311, 338-E of PPC and section 345 of Cr.P.C. These sections carry punishment and pardon in offences affecting human body from hurt to murder.

At the start of the discussion, rights activist Sohail Akbar Warraich pointed out some conflicting judgments of higher courts in cases of ‘honour’ killings. He said unclear and weak criminal laws led to the complexity of judgments. He said amendments introduced in the past proved to be redundant.

However, Pakistan Bar Council member Azam Nazir Tarar was of the view that there was no need to introduce any major amendment in the existing laws but to change mindset of society including those responsible to exercise and enforce the law.

He said section 338-E of PPC, being a controlling provision of law, empowered trial courts to reject or accept pardon given by complainant to suspect(s).

Mr Tarar had the opinion that the role of legal heirs should come after the conclusion of the trial. He said deciding murder cases on the basis of compromises would be an easy way for judges to boost their case-disposal rate.

Discussing weak prosecution of cases, he said, for the sake of argument, if right of 'wali' was confiscated in murder case of social media celebrity Qandeel Baloch, still there would be meager chances of conviction of the suspect(s). LHCBA former president Abid Saqi, former IGP Tehseen Shah, prosecutor Khurram Khan, Ms Khawar Mumtaz, Advocate Sabahat Rizvi and Sarah Sohail were among the other speakers. Advocate Asad Jamal conducted the discussion.

In his concluding note, HRCP Secretary General I.A Rehman said the law alone could not change the situation but without changing law the situation could not be changed.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274817>

‘NIKAHNAMA KEY TO WOMEN’S RIGHTS AFTER MARRIAGE’

The Express Tribune, August 2nd, 2016.

KARACHI: A nikahnama [marriage agreement] plays a pivotal role in upholding or abusing the rights of women after marriage, said Prof Dr Khalid Iraqi, dean faculty of the management and administrative sciences at University of Karachi (KU).

Speaking at a one-day workshop titled ‘Women Reconstruction of Self’, Dr Iraqi was of the view that mental and psychological torture and abuse is the worst form of domestic violence. The workshop was an initiative by Team Break Free – Active Citizens.

Dr Iraqi termed the topic of the talk as an important one which will help create awareness regarding women’s rights among university students.

“Both the bride and groom must be highly vigilant regarding the clauses of the nikahnama,” he cautioned, adding that brides must make their own decisions and also must examine the nikahnama themselves. He said the brides should speak up in order to add any clause they feel is important for their future.

Explaining why the nikahnama must have a clause that ensures future financial protection in the form of haq mehr or dowry, he said, “You have to be brave enough to protect yourself first then others may help you”. In Pakistan, he explained, there is a myth regarding the low divorce rate, that it is due to societal constraints but instead the divorce rate has a strong financial aspect. This is partly why the upper class has a high rate of divorce while living in the same society and culture, he claimed.

During the panel discussion, Barrister Shahida Jamil and Supreme Court advocates Syed Shoaun Nabi and Tahera Hasan termed the word ‘divorce’ a genuine Islamic and legal right of women under khula.

The panelists also agreed upon the notion that domestic violence is illegal and prohibited in Islam. “The police don’t interfere in domestic matters, which is the major cause of domestic violence,” said Jamil.

Former dean of the faculty of management and administrative sciences Prof Dr Abuzar Wajidi termed divorce a major societal issue and called for a joint societal framework to address the issue. “Divorced women should live their lives normally, as life goes on after all tragedies,” he added.

Nabi was of the view that marriage was the very first social contract between men and women and divorce must always be the last option. “Husbands must have a mature mindset and that depends on their upbringing,” he explained.

He also said that lawyers and judges often try to advocate for reconciliation between partners so that a family is not broken and people related to them do not suffer. “One of the main reasons of divorce is the joint family system and, in our society, second marriage is considered a taboo,” Nabi added.

Emphasising on the non-implementation of anti-dowry laws, Hasan said, “There is no lack of laws regarding women’s right to divorce, there is just a lack of will to implement them”.

Psychologist Dr Qudsia Tariq said that divorce becomes necessary and unavoidable when verbal abuse becomes a regular practice. “Not only men are responsible for this, women are also involved in mental and verbal abuse,” she explained.

Other panelists, including Dr Uzma Shujaat, Wali Zahid and Riffat Humayun, termed the issue ‘natural’ as conflicts are bound to happen when human beings are involved with each other.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1153763/forewarned-forearmed-nikahnama-key-womens-rights-marriage/>

OTHER HONOUR KILLINGS

Dawn, August 3rd, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

THE outcry over the death of Qandeel Baloch had just barely died down, the follow-ups to the murder, its special treatment, the arrest of the brother, the statements by solemn-faced politicians just barely wrapped up, when new episodes of horror took their place.

On July 26, news broke that a British member of parliament had written to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif regarding the murder of Samia Shahid, a British woman who had been duped into visiting Pakistan and was now dead.

Her husband, Syed Mukhtar Kazam, who is in Britain, was alleging that Samia had been killed by her family because she had divorced the man whom they had chosen for her and married him instead.

The facts, even as they span two continents and communities seemingly separated by great distances, are not new. Samia Shahid, part of Britain’s Pakistani community, had been engaged when she was young to a relative belonging to the same clan and village.

Despite her own opposition to the marriage, she acquiesced to her family’s wishes and married the man. As she was a British citizen, her husband was able to travel to the UK. Samia eventually filed for divorce from this person.

She was later introduced to her current husband and married him despite her family’s opposition. Efforts at reconciliation, some of them taking place in the presence of a police officer in the United Kingdom, were not successful.

Early last month, Samia received a call from her family saying that her father was ill and at death’s door. Distraught, she decided to travel to Pakistan and be at her father’s bedside, even as her current husband told her that it was likely to be a trick.

In the last week of July, Samia was supposed to travel back to the UK. The text messages she had been sending her husband abruptly ceased and there was no more news of her. When her husband called other relatives, he was told that his 28-year-old wife, who was healthy in every other way, had died of a sudden “heart attack”.

Her father, who was not sick at all, later changed the heart attack story to say that his daughter had committed suicide. An autopsy report revealed ligature marks on Samia's throat, suggesting that she had been strangled. Her body was found lying on the stairway of her cousin's house.

Nor was this the only honour killing to take place last week. On Friday evening, Kausar and Gulzar Bibi, two sisters from Vehari, in Punjab, were murdered by their brother. The two sisters liked the men they were about to marry, both of whom lived in Karachi.

The parents had agreed to the match and the wedding was set for this Saturday past. One of their brothers, Nasir, did not agree with the match and decided, therefore, to kill his sisters, even as they were preparing to become brides. On Friday evening, he gunned them down. A home that was preparing for two weddings was left arranging for two funerals.

There is no surprise in either of these cases. In the first, because of some minimal pressure of international attention, some feeble efforts at investigation were made, an autopsy conducted, arrests made. The second has only received perfunctory coverage; poor women dying poor, hapless deaths at the hands of enraged men.

To the readers of this newspaper, none of this should be shocking. Pakistani society, on a daily basis and with great consistency, refuses to budge from the premise that women's lives belong ultimately and entirely to the men that 'own' them — fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. The theatre of outrage plays out in the aftermath of one or another killing that involves a woman that commands a bit more attention than the nameless ones that are murdered every day.

Everyone, including the living women, the women not yet murdered, the women toeing the line that men have prescribed for them, is inured to the arrangement. Even women's rights activists are in a sense complicit in the situation. After the death of Qandeel Baloch, many wrote analyses and condemnations, yet few (as noted by columnist Zubeida Mustafa) have tried to make the effort to organise and empower women into anything beyond an elitist discourse.

The concern of many seemed to revolve far more around creating limits over who was permitted to speak about and on behalf of Pakistani women to the international media, rather than the core issue of actually developing initiatives that could assist in ending the crimes themselves.

There are Pakistani women alive this week that will be dead next week, killed by men who are their fathers, their brothers, their husbands. Others live half-lives, effectively having extinguished their desires, their hopes, their dreams — their control over their own lives such that they may continue to live in a physical sense.

They withstand slurs and beatings, being locked up and being silenced. Like hardened prisoners used to confinements, many have mastered the rules: the silence, they know, is required for survival. Like birds who do not fly even when the doors of their cages are opened, they seem resigned to their constraints, even angry at rebellious others who would defy them. For their good behaviour, a patriarchal society rewards them, by simply allowing them to live.

The deaths are many and they seem to come week after week. What they do not bring with them, other than the shouts, the momentary outrage, the limpid promises by compromised politicians, is actual moral change.

This elusive moral change — the shift that would mean an end to the killing of women, an end to the attachment of rationalisations as to why, insist on controls over their behaviour, offer judgements over whether they were right or wrong in doing what they want — doesn't seem to be arriving any time soon. So next week, more will die, shot or burned or strangled, and all the rest, unfeeling, uncaring, unmoved, will live on.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274911/other-honour-killings>

Parvez Rahim

THE Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 1968, was promulgated with the purpose of providing for participation of workers in the profits of companies. Under this act, every company is required to establish a workers' participation fund as soon as the accounts for the year in which the scheme becomes applicable to it are finalised, and pay annually to the fund, no later than nine months after the close of that year, five per cent of its net profits during such year.

The fund is managed by a board of trustees comprising two representatives from the company's workers and two persons nominated by management. Initially, the act was applicable to workers drawing a monthly gross salary of Rs500 and employed in the company for no less than six months. The share of eligible workers in annual allocation to the fund was disbursed to them in accordance with a formula prescribed under the act, based on three salary slabs prescribed in ascending order.

The share distribution formula was devised by legislators in a such a manner that only a fraction of the total amount allocated by a company on this account is disbursed to its workers and the remaining bulk amount goes to the government. The latter amount is transferred to the fund constituted under Section 3 of the Workers' Welfare Fund Ordinance, 1971. Companies have to contribute annually an additional two per cent of their total income to this fund.

The total amount — collected under the Companies Profits (Workers Participation) Act, 1968 and the Workers Welfare Fund Ordinance, 1971 — is supposed to be utilised on welfare schemes for workers and some other beneficiaries chosen by the government. Having a common pool of funds, both these laws are interlinked.

The ordinance states that money in the welfare fund shall be applied to the financing of housing projects for workers and other welfare measures including education, trainings, re-skilling and apprenticeships. A dilemma exists here, as the grant of these benefits is restricted to low-paid workers. Employees of companies contributing huge amounts to the welfare fund do not meet the eligibility criteria to apply as they draw competitive salaries.

In the Finance Bill, 2007, the then government made drastic amendments to the Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 1968, with the purpose of not only increasing the workers' share in the distribution of their company's profit but also bringing more workers within the domain of this act.

The wage ceiling of Rs10,000 prescribed for eligibility of workers to receive benefits under the act was removed by changing the definition of 'worker'. Benefits were now extended to all those employees of the company who fell within the definition of 'worker' under the Industrial Relations Ordinance. It implied that all those employees who were not employed in managerial or administrative capacities were covered. The contractors' workers serving in the company were also brought within ambit of the act.

The three wage slabs for eligibility were improved as follows; average monthly wages of workers not exceeding Rs7,500; exceeding Rs7,500 but not exceeding Rs15,000; and exceeding Rs15,000. The maximum allocation of profit sharing for workers was increased from three times the minimum wage to four times. However, due to a procedural lacuna this amendment brought about by the Finance Bill, 2007, was declared ultra vires by a double bench of the Sindh High Court (SHC) — vide its judgement dated Feb 26, 2011. Since then, companies' and contractors' workers have been deprived of the enhanced benefits.

Recently, the Sindh government has promulgated the Sindh Workers Welfare Fund Act, 2014 and the Sindh Companies Profits (Workers' Participation) Act, 2015. Until now, the federal government has been administering both these acts and managing the funds collected from companies all over the country. No such legislation has been made in the other three provinces, and the federal government is displeased over the Sindh government's self-propelled initiative.

In the act of 2015, the provincial government has restored all benefits discontinued on account of the SHC's judgement. However, other provisions of the act have created total confusion among employers and workers of trans-

provincial organisations and the other three provincial governments. The act offers the following definition: “a company whose registered office is situated in the Province of Sindh and has its office, department and branches in Islamabad, the capital territory, or falling in more than one province and has a common balance sheet”.

The majority of companies with huge investments have their registered offices in Karachi and some of them have factories in other provinces. It will be highly unfair if these companies pay the total share of their contribution only to the Sindh government, depriving their workers in other provinces of the benefits of the welfare fund. The federal government should therefore intervene immediately in order to prevent this usurpation of funds by one government.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1274910/workers-welfare>

POLICE BLAMED FOR INACTION ON WOMEN-BURNING CASES

Dawn, August 5th, 2016

Hassan Belal Zaidi

ISLAMABAD: The recent spate of killings of women invoked the ire of the National Assembly on Thursday as lawmakers from both sides of the aisle derided the police department for their failure to properly prevent and investigate such cases.

While the country honoured police officers who laid down their lives in the line of duty on Police Martyrs Day, the atmosphere inside the house was far more charged, with women lawmakers coming down hard on law enforcement's inability to charge suspects who were already in custody, leading to their eventual release.

The discussion began during Question Hour, on a question asked by Jamaat-i-Islami's Aisha Syed, seeking details on the three cases of women being burned to death: Maria Sadaqat in Murree, Ambreen in Abbottabad and Nazia Hameed in Kasur.

“Even though the culprits are caught, no one is [punished or] executed... police is in cahoots with the culprits and are delaying the investigation,” she alleged when the matter was discussed on the floor of the house.

She also took issue with the ministry's undue deference for the prime suspect in the Maria Sadaqat case. “The ministry has addressed the main accused as ‘janab Shaukat sahib’ in their written response before the house. The ministry should consider whether an accused can be addressed in this way.”

PTI's Lal Chand Malhi pointed out that police corruption and complicity was the leading cause of lawlessness in many parts of the country. “We see ads and special days extolling us to respect policemen, but when are we going to have awareness campaigns telling us to respect women,” he asked.

Minister for Human Rights Kamran Michael recalled that the anti-rape and anti-honour killing bills would soon be tabled before the house for approval, which would help to curb atrocities against women.

“[The ministry] has written to the inspectors general of all provinces and is going to hold special training workshops for police officers to teach them how to better deal with the public. Those who successfully complete the course will be awarded special certification,” Mr Michael told the house.

PML-N lawmaker Tahira Aurangzeb pointed out that in all three cases, suspects were in custody. However, the forensic report in Maria Sadaqat's case is still awaited. “How long will we have to wait for that report,” she asked.

However, Mr Michael expressed his powerlessness to expedite the process, saying that all his ministry could do was remind other departments of their commitments and ask them to speed things up.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275511>

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN IN JAILS DECLINED DUE TO REFORMS: ASMA

Business Recorder, August 06, 2016

Sexual exploitation of women in Pakistani jails has significantly declined as compared to past as a result of jail reforms. Asma Jahangir, a human rights activist and former president of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), said this while talking to media persons after a meeting of the National Committee on Jails Reforms on Friday. She said the sexual exploitation of women was high during 70s and 80s in Pakistani jails but now it had been reduced due to Jail Reforms.

“At present, over 3700 women are languishing in different jails of Pakistan but women jails as compared to male jails are not overcrowded, she said adding that concrete endeavours were required to bring down the crime rate down and ensure speedy trial.

While presiding over the Reforms committee meeting, Asma Jahangir proposed that posts of magistrates and law officers be created in jails to monitor the situation there in order to prevent any action contrary to law in relation to prisoners especially the police excesses. She recommended that children and juveniles involved in petty crimes needed not to be sent to jails.

The meeting reviewed the progress on the Committee Report and suggested measures for further improvement in the living conditions of women and children in jails. The committee visited the jails in far-flung areas to examine the issues being faced by the women and children there. The committee suggested short, medium and long-term reforms in its report.

The committee also suggested that the laws relating to criminal justice system and prisons needed to be revisited for better co-ordination among the allied agencies. Further, the committee observed the shortage of staff in jails, overcrowdedness, lack of sanitation and health facilities, torture on prisoners particularly women and children, lack of proper food, external oversight mechanism, non-production of under trial prisoner to courts.

The committee in its report not only highlighted the miserable condition of women and children living with their mothers in jails and mixing of juvenile and under trial prisoners with convicted and hardened criminals but also identified the core issues which were considered to be the main cause of miserable condition of prisoners in jails. The report also highlighted the issue of not producing under trial prisoners before the courts on hearing dates, non-implementation of Pakistan Prison Rules 1978, lack of external oversight mechanism, unsatisfactory service structure of Prison Officers and undue shifting of prisoners to death-cells.

Dr Syed Muhammad Junaid Zaidi, Rector COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) informed the committee members that besides arranging the education for child inmates, COMSATS is also planning to provide education to jail staff for improving their behaviour with the inmates and the overall jail environment. He also offered the services of psychologists who would interact individually with prisoners for their psychological rehabilitation.

A senior official of the federal ombudsman office informed the meeting that federal ombudsman resolved more than 250,000 complaints during last three years, and now decisions were being announced in 45 days in a bid to relieve citizens from tedious proceedings in the government agencies. The meeting was also attended by the educationists, philanthropists, senior police officers and members of the civil society.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172:pakistan/72393:sexual-exploitation-of-women-in-jails-declined-due-to-reforms-asma?date=2016-08-06>

WOMAN ‘BURNT TO DEATH’ BY BROTHER-IN-LAW OVER ‘PROPERTY’

Dawn, August 7th, 2016

LAHORE: A pregnant woman was torched to death allegedly by her brother-in-law over a family dispute in Shadbagh on Saturday.

Police claimed Sidra, 23, belonging to Shakargarh tehsil in Narowal district, was married to her cousin Waqas Ali of Bhagatpura, Shadbagh, two years ago.

On Saturday afternoon, Sidra was sleeping and the other family members were away when her husband's elder brother, Waris Ali, came with a container of petrol. He went to the room where Sidra was sleeping, sprinkled petrol there, set it on fire and fled after locking it from outside.

Police said his sister's six-year-old daughter, who was playing in the street, raised hue and cry after seeing fire in the house. Neighbours tried to extinguish the fire and also alerted police and Rescue 1122.

Firefighters reached the spot and put off the blaze in 30 minutes and recovered the woman's body. Police shifted the body to morgue for autopsy.

Shadbagh police registered a murder case against Waris and his other family members on the complaint of victim's father Liaquat Ali.

Station House Officer Mudassirullah Khan said they were alerted by neighbours about a fire but it was revealed that a woman had been torched to death by her brother-in-law over a property dispute. He said raids were being conducted to arrest the suspect.

City Division Superintendent of Police (SP) Operations Muhammad Naveed told Dawn Sidra was burnt to death by her brother-in-law over a property dispute. She was previously engaged to Waris, but when he went abroad his family married her off to his younger brother.

He said Waris worked in Saudi Arabia and learnt about the marriage only when he returned. The suspect had developed a grudge against his brother and his former fiancée over the marriage as well as a property dispute and according to locals they often quarrelled over the issue.

The SP claimed the suspect was demanding his share in the family business and after failing to get it he killed his brother's wife. He said two teams had been constituted to conduct raids to arrest the suspect, adding some family members were also taken into custody for interrogation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1275942/>

'HONOUR' KILLINGS

Dawn, August 7th, 2016

Arif Hasan

BY all accounts, over the last two decades 'honour' killings have increased manifold; they are going to increase even more in the foreseeable future. This is because a gender-segregated patriarchal society, which has traditionally used violence for settling even petty disputes, is finding it difficult to come to terms with new realities.

These include working women, adult female students, 'free-will' marriages, women in sports, a media landscape that is both loved and hated, emancipated role models, and aspirations for greater freedoms. Observations, surveys and available statistics all show that Pakistani society is changing rapidly and that these changes cannot be digested by a conservative establishment and its support groups.

I started working in Karachi's informal settlements in the mid-1970s and since 1981 with the Orangi Pilot Project in katchi abadis (slum areas). In Karachi at that time, katchi abadis were purely working-class settlements in which women did not work outside their homes.

Today, Suzuki-loads of women are taken to garment, packaging and pharmaceutical factories, to return late in the evening. Thousands more take the long bus ride to affluent areas of the city to work as domestic staff; they are forced to deal with men during the journey and at their workplaces. Over the last decade, they have become well groomed and many today are indistinguishable from their female employers. Without their income, the kitchen at home could not function.

Meanwhile, most of the older settlements are now multiclass as an increasing number of their residents, both male and female, have white-collar jobs in which women work alongside men. Also, private schools used to be rare in these settlements and there were no beauty parlours. Now almost every neighbourhood in the older settlements has at least one of each and the vast majority of teachers, and sometimes education and other entrepreneurs, are local women.

Marriage halls also exist in these settlements today and over the years, the strict gender segregation at marriage ceremonies has relaxed considerably. All this is in spite of the fact that these changes have been opposed, often with violence, by the more conservative residents and activists of militant groups created as a result of the Zia era and our involvement in the Afghan war.

Census statistics tell us that other changes at the overall city level are also taking place. The most important age group in any census is between 15 and 24 years. This is because it is both the present and the future.

In Karachi in 1961, 66.71 per cent women and 23.38pc men were married in this age group. If we extrapolate the statistics of the 1998 census to 2016 (keeping all things constant) then the percentage of married women in this age group today is 17 and married men 7pc. So, for the first time in Karachi, we have an overwhelming majority of unmarried adolescents which any sociologist knows is enough to change gender relations and family structures.

Surveys conducted for the Karachi Strategic Development Plan 2020 tell us that 82pc of Karachi families are nuclear. This is an over 80pc increase from some area-specific surveys of the 1990s. Though no reliable data for free-will marriages is available, lawyers dealing with court marriages say that they have increased in geometric progression over the last decade and half.

These changes are taking place all over Pakistan. The figures for even small Punjab towns such as Chiniot and Kasur, for the age group of 14 to 24 years, are similar to those of Karachi. (In the rest of Sindh apart from Karachi, the trends are similar but somewhat slower than those in Punjab.)

Women dominate universities in Karachi and many other cities in Pakistan, and their presence is increasing. Critics point out that once educated, women do not work. However, alumna and university reports suggest that this is changing rapidly. What policymakers should be made to look at are societal trends, and not simply existing conditions.

The trends discussed are nothing short of a revolution for a country like Pakistan. They will change Pakistan in the coming decade, whether the country becomes a 'secular' democracy or not. However, addressing or even recognising these trends in clear terms does not figure in the state's development policies. Meanwhile, civil society is waging a battle against oppressive tradition and the ugly incidents it creates, and for appropriate legislation.

Still, there is a dire need to understand the changes taking place, their causes and repercussions, and to see how new societal values can be built and promoted around them. For this the most important role is that of the media and the more liberal right-wing groups in society. In the absence of these values, change will only consolidate itself through a long process of which pain and frustration, mainly for women, will be an integral part.

September 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 26TH TO OCTOBER 2ND 2016

WOMEN & FATA REFORMS

Dawn September 29th, 2016

AS a significant feature of the Fata reform package, an all-male, six-member government committee has recommended that the 115-year-old FCR law be replaced with the proposed riwaj act for the tribal areas. This would include retaining the jirga system for civil and criminal matters, with the court appointing a council of elders to adjudicate in accordance with tribal customs.

Such a move would deal a huge blow to women's rights given the jirga system's penchant for issuing decrees that legitimise anti-women practices under the guise of tradition. Emulating current laws under the FCR — laws that have over the decades blatantly discriminated against women — implies that the proposed act will give jirgas the licence to inflict violence on women.

This makes no sense — if indeed the government is aware that according legal legitimacy to jirgas would compromise the already vulnerable status of Fata's women. Because jirgas are based on local traditions and patriarchy, of which honour is a critical component, it is imperative the government encourage mechanisms to do away with anti-women institutions. Take the 2014 jirga decision that ruled 11-year-old Amna be married to a man three times her age as compensation for her uncle having raped a girl.

Amna was married off to the brother of the girl who had been raped. Disturbingly, under the proposed package, practices such as swara and ghag — a man's claim he is betrothed to a woman of his choice (without her consent) — will only gain increased immunity from punishment.

For the sake of human rights and justice, the jirga system must be replaced with a judicial process consistent with legal practices elsewhere in the country; and the Code of Criminal Procedure must be applied to the tribal areas. If such measures are implemented, they will help women seek justice.

However, even so, women in Fata suffer not only from a lack of legal protection, they have also borne the brunt of militancy and security operations. Taqrha Qabaili Khwenday, a tribal sisterhood, for example, has repeatedly expressed concern regarding the legalisation of jirgas and how that will impact women's lives.

Such voices must be heard. Tribal women who want to make their own choices must be given representation on reform committees. Without such participation, it will prove impossible to mainstream tribal communities, or to institute reforms in a historically neglected part of the country.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1286695/women-fata-reforms>

AROUND A THIRD OF MARRIED WOMEN USE CONTRACEPTIVES IN PAKISTAN

The Express Tribune, October 1st, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Only around a third of married women use contraceptives in the country but the large gap is in part due to a lack of supply of contraceptives at both public and private health facilities and pharmacies, a new study on family planning in Pakistan revealed.

The “Landscape Analysis of Family Planning Situation in Pakistan” launched in Islamabad on Thursday showed that of an estimated 31 million married women of reproductive age (15-49 years) in Pakistan, only 8.1 million currently use modern contraceptives.

However, if potential users with unmet needs are encouraged to use modern contraceptives, the study estimates this figure could double to 17.2 million, raising Pakistan’s modern contraceptive prevalence rate (mCPR) from 26.1 per cent currently to 55.5 per cent.

The study, conducted by the Population Council with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, noted that while 55 per cent of married women of reproductive age have tried at least one contraceptive method at some point in their lives, only 35 per cent are currently using any method.

Moreover, fewer than 26 per cent use modern contraceptive methods, the study says. Worryingly, discontinuation rates are especially high for the intrauterine device (IUD), while use of hormonal methods is either stagnant or declining.

Dr Zeba Sathar, the country director for Population Council, disclosed that owing to the lack of contraceptive use, as many as 4 million unplanned pregnancies occur in Pakistan every year and consequently there are around 2.2 million abortions.

Pointing to the gap in contraceptive usage, she said that an estimated 9 million potential users cannot use family planning due to lack of awareness, communication, information, and service provision. She emphasised that better quality services are necessary to manage side effects of contraceptives which compel many users to give up family planning prematurely.

The signs among men were encouraging with almost three million additional current contraceptive users from 2007 to 2013. However, Pakistan still faces a number of challenges to increase modern contraceptive use and achieve FP2020 goals.

Apart from the lack of awareness for the public to use contraceptives, there is a daunting gap in the supply of these instruments in the public and private sector.

Among the key issues hampering supply and service is a semi-functional public health sector which is not fully responsible for family planning in its service package, along with sub-optimal provision of family planning in the private sector said MNA Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho.

She supported the report’s recommendation to rapidly expand available channels of service delivery.

Dr Wyn Bubnash, of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation pledged to continued support to family planning in Pakistan.

For the first time, the study broke the norms and focused on unmarried adolescents between the ages of 16-20. For this purpose the study interviewed young boys and girls both in and out of school about family planning.

In their responses, boys and girls held very positive view about family planning and were willing to adopt it regardless of gender, schooling status, and rural/urban residence. They considered family planning important and necessary for maternal and child health, better care of children, better schooling opportunities for children, and to afford expenses more easily.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1191548/family-planning-around-third-married-women-use-contraceptives/>

KURRAM TRIBESWOMEN STILL A ‘COMMODITY’

Dawn October 2nd, 2016

Zulfiqar Ali

PESHAWAR: Tribal women continue to be a commodity as, under the age-old tribal customary law enforced in Kurram Agency even today, they are categorised as 'married,' 'virgin,' 'widow,' and 'abducted' with each one of them carrying a different price tag.

The British colonial rulers left the tribal region in 1947 with the creation of Pakistan, but the customary law – Turizona – they put in place in 1944 to govern Kurram Agency is still valid, governing the region with its inhuman and discriminatory clauses even 69 years after the independence.

Under Turizona, every tribal woman carries a price tag defined under 'Rasmana' as the amount of money the heir(s) of a woman are entitled to receive when she gets married. In case a woman is abducted, Rasmana becomes effective. The aggrieved party, the heirs of the abducted woman, is entitled to receive a specific amount of money in an effort to settle the issue.

Turizona, an initiative undertaken in 1931 by Maj Ross Hurst, the then political agent of Kurram Agency, categorises women in multiple sub-categories and each varying category contains a different price tag. For example, a virgin woman was given a separate price tag under 'Rasmana'. Same goes for the married, widows and abducted women.

For example, Rasmana payable in abduction of a married woman was fixed at 2500 Kabuli rupees, abducted virgin 1200 Kabuli rupees, and abducted widow 800 Kabuli rupees. As per the law, if the abducted woman married a man of her choice (from her abductors) the Rasmana was to be paid as per the normal fixed rates.

However, if she was married forcefully, the Rasmana would get doubled as per the law.

As per Rasmana determined back in 1940s (which is applicable even in the 21st century), bridegroom was to give five to seven sheep to the bride's family, 10-13 kilogrammes ghee, a specific quantity of rice, wheat flour, salt, tea, gur, sugar, Kurut (dried yoghurt balls), gate money two Kabuli rupees and few other items to the relatives of bride at the time of marriage.

It does not end here. The bridegroom was also liable to pay a certain amount in cash to the bride's family at the time of their marriage. Called as Mahar, the bridegroom, in the old days, was liable to pay an amount of 12 Kabuli rupees to 100 Kabuli rupees to the bride's family. The Mahar amount (which as per original Islamic tradition is meant for the bride) was determined keeping in view the social and financial status of the bride's family.

Since the law has neither been scrapped nor amended, it holds ground with all its insensitive discriminatory clauses, dealing women as tradable commodity on sale with a shelf price.

Going through Turizona, it appears tribal women of marriageable age hailing from different tribes and clans were considered any other saleable commodity in the old days. The situation has not changed as no one, from among the civil and military governments that ruled the country from 1947, ever bothered to scrap the disgraceful piece of law.

Another discriminatory aspect of the customary law is that if divorced by husband, the woman has not been entitled to claim any amount from her husband by way of compensation or Dover.

Only positive part of this tribal law is that forced marriage has been prohibited and seeking will of before marriage was declared compulsory. But this section of the codified law is largely not followed. Will of the girl is not obtained before marriage. Practice of receiving cash amount in the name of "Mahar" from the bride groom still exists.

For example a father recently demanded car in return of giving hand of his daughter. Some receive cash in the name of Mahar.

Justifying the tradition of Rasmana the law says: “On account of exorbitant prices of girls, persons die issueless and unmarried at an age at which they should have several children. As much as 4000 Kabuli rupees have been demanded and paid for a girl.”

“A standard rate of “Rasmana” was approved to lower the rate and fixing the price of women such times as public opinion would sanction a further lowering of the price.”

The federal government has planned starting documentation of customary laws in other tribes in Fata to repeal the existing Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) with the new Tribal Areas Rewaj Act.

The documentation of Rewaj is part of the government proposed plan for political streamlining of Fata and officials said that it would be a lengthy and complicated exercise.

Turizona comprises three parts – general, criminal and civil. Some portions of India Penal Code were also included in criminal matters in Turizona. It also differentiates between offences committed by day and those committed by night.

Part-I (general) deals largely with issues related to women, minorities, inheritance, marriage, divorce, inheritance rights of unmarried women, rights and duties of Hamsaya (people cultivating lands of owners).

Officials admitted that most of the customs and traditions of tribes had become irrelevant and could not be applied. “50 per cent of the customs have become outdated and can’t be applied in 21 century,” said an official.

“We had approached elders of Kurram many times to bring amendments to Rewaj Kurram, but they ignored,” said another official who had served as assistant political agent in the valley.

“The irony is that respective political agents did not bother to make changes in Riwaj in consonance with the present day’s realities,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1287465>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 19 TO SEPTEMBER 25TH 2016

THE THORNY QUESTION OF QUOTAS

Dawn, September 21st, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

SEVERAL years ago, a female member of the Punjab Assembly shared some troubling details with me. According to her, the majority of women on reserved seats in the assembly did not regularly attend the proceedings of the house. This was not in itself a particularly surprising piece of information; after all, when many male legislators have erratic attendance records, why indeed should women be any different?

It was troubling, however, to learn that even when the women did attend the assembly sessions they rarely paid attention to the business of the day. Instead, many if not most remained preoccupied with chatting and gossiping with each other, treating the proceedings more as a social gathering than a legislative session.

The issue, she emphasised, was not a partisan one involving one or another political party; across the board, most of the women filling the reserved seats were relations of important men, granted the seats on the basis of political favour. This was not an issue particular to Punjab, she insisted; the legislatures of other provinces, to the extent the seats had been filled at all, suffered a similar fate.

The situation at the provincial level is replicated at the national level. According to a report, *Bridging the Fault Lines? Rethinking the Gender Quota Approach in Pakistan*, authored by Dr Farzana Bari, women’s reticence to participate is exacerbated by the discriminatory treatment meted out to them. In the words of Nafisa Shah, a parliamentarian quoted

in the report, women were regularly treated as “extras” and “relegated to the back benches” of parliament, away from the action and out of the conversation..

In the words of Shaista Pervez, who served as secretary of the women’s caucus at the time the report was researched, women parliamentarians also prioritised party identity over gender identity. This prevented them from coming together in a non-partisan way to draft and pass legislation that would improve the lot of women in the country.

Gender quotas, many social scientists have long believed, are instruments via which male dominance over a country’s political system can be challenged and eventually eliminated. In theory, reserved seats for women insert women in a process in which, if society was fair and equal, they would have had half the share of seats, equal roughly to their share of the population.

Pakistan, along with most other countries in the world, is not a gender-equal society, hence the need for quotas, providing opportunities for those who are otherwise denied chances in life — and not owing to lack of ability but because of their gender. Present and visible, the women filling these seats, it is assumed, will pave the way for eventual equal representation, which would be the occasion for abandoning the equalising mechanism of quotas. That, at least, is the theory behind the practice.

The Pakistani reality, however, routinely challenges and eviscerates theoretical truths. The case of quotas is one example and Dr Bari’s report details one compelling reason behind reserved seats filled by unqualified women. Even while the legislatures themselves are democratically elected, few of Pakistan’s political parties actually have elections to select their leaders. The result is the dominance of dynastic politics and the perpetuation of a male-dominated political system that prevents talented and qualified women from rising through the party ranks.

Because political parties rarely keep records of party membership, it is difficult to even know the number of women joining political parties. It is noted that even in cases where women’s political participation is touted as a mark of success, such as PTI’s 2014 dharna, the political stage continues to be dominated by men with few women leaders being given the opportunity to speak to the crowd.

The NGO sector has played its own role in drawing qualified women away from the political realm and into the non-profit one. As the report details, this redirection of female talent has led not only to the depoliticisation of the issue of women’s rights, but also to the belief that it is technical rather than structural solutions that are key to empowerment. In simple terms, the focus is on the provision of goods and services via the non-profit sector rather than changing mindsets and making empowerment and its promise central to the political agenda of one or another party.

The question of women and quotas is made even thornier because criticism of women who fill the reserved seats stands the risk of being incorporated in the general misogynistic tone and tenor of Pakistani politics. Pointing out the fact that the women who fill reserved seats are not qualified or not given capacity building training to fulfil their roles stands the risk of becoming the basis of the elimination of quotas themselves.

This, of course, would be even worse than the present situation, an entirely male-dominated political set-up where women are abstract entities whose lives are legislated and controlled by those who have little idea about them. It is not a consequence particularly difficult to imagine in an ever-conservative Pakistan; after all, as the report documents, over a third of registered female voters in KP were apparently not permitted to vote in the last election.

Two solutions suggested in the report seem to have the potential to rescue gender quotas from their current ineffectual state. First, other sectors including the NGO sector should recognise and promote the necessity of political participation and a crucial part of empowerment.

More controversially, political parties that do not hold elections within their own structures, and consequently do not elevate women to powerful positions within the party, should not be allowed to fill reserved seats. This last measure would ensure that the women who fill the reserved seat quotas have some experience of political processes and can fulfil the serious responsibilities with which they are entrusted on behalf of Pakistan’s women.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285038>

‘55% WOMEN IN KARACHI FACE HARASSMENT’

The Express Tribune, September 22nd, 2016

KARACHI: In a megacity like Karachi, 55% of female commuters who use public transport face sexual harassment, said University of Karachi (KU) public administration department Professor Syeda Hoorul Ain on Wednesday.

She was presenting figures and findings of her research ‘An empirical review of Karachi’s transportation predicament: from personal attitudes to public opinion’ at the second day of the international conference ‘Managing Megacities 2016’ at HEJ Auditorium in KU.

The research was conducted under ‘Karachi Megacity’ project, by the public administration department in collaboration and George Mason University, United States. The conference was organised by KU’s public administration department, Shar School of Public Policy and Government, George Mason University.

Referring to the issue of sexual harassment that women face, Ain said there used to be a similar situation in Columbian capital Bogota. According to her, the mayor of Bogota, Enrique Penalosa, addressed the situation by deploying undercover police force to arrest such harassers.

Ain believes that in our society, women are unable to report such cases due to the poor justice system. She said women cannot go and file an FIR against such incidents at police stations. “In reality it [sexual harassment in public vehicles] has become an ordeal our women face daily,” she said.

Speaking about the road accidents, KU geography department’s Dr Salman Zubair said that according to a survey, 35,671 residents of Karachi were injured in accidents in 2012, of which there were 1,179 fatalities, 7,292 severe injuries and 27,195 minor injuries. Based on the reported data the port city has lost \$488.7 million due to Road Traffic Accidents (RTA) in the year 2012 and nearly 65% of the RTA victims belong to a young age-group, he said.

Zubair further said that recent road geometrical change has made the traffic flow uninterrupted up to some extent. He believes that proper placement and designing of U-turns can reduce the rate of increasing road accidents.

Meanwhile, Professor Mir Shabbar Ali from NED University of Engineering and Technology said that traffic congestion is a result of not just too many cars on the road but also the financial policies that encourage vehicle ownership. The inability of civic agencies to channel road tax into road improvement is one such cause, along with improper enforcement of heavy-vehicle restriction in urban roads during busy hours.

While speaking to the audience, Karachi deputy mayor Arshad Vohra said that the basic issues of all megacities are almost the same. “Karachi is the seventh biggest megacity of the world,” he said.

According to Vohra, Karachi produces 12,000 tonnes of garbage every day, whereas their municipalities have the capacity to lift trash at 4,000 tonnes per day. For this purpose the provincial government will have to release special funds to lift all the garbage, Vohra said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1185970/public-transportation-55-women-karachi-face-harassment/>

BARRIERS TO WOMEN’S ECONOMIC INPUT

The Express Tribune, September 23rd, 2016

Despite forming half the population of the world, women in both developed and developing countries lag behind their male counterparts when it comes to participation in the workforce and economy. The pay gap between genders has hardly shrunk even in some of the world’s most advanced economies and there exist several legal and social barriers

which prevent women from maximising their work potential either at salaried positions or through independent ventures.

In developing countries these issues are exacerbated by laws and unwritten rules of behaviour that are still biased against women's economic independence. In Pakistan for example, although there are some examples of extremely successful female professionals and business owners, women are largely absent from discourse pertaining to economic activities.

Underrepresented both in legislative bodies and the management level of the corporate sector, new female entrants to the workforce find their paths blocked by policies that have been devised without keeping their needs or thought processes in mind.

In Pakistan, women's primary role is still considered to be that of a caregiver. Although many now find their way to university, there is a tacit understanding that a choice will inevitably have to be made between building a family or building a career and that these are two incompatible goals.

Under such pressures and confronted with such realities as their diminished status in matters of inheritance, lower pay, lesser chances of promotion and workplaces that do not accommodate working mothers all contribute to their giving up.

Women who decide to set up their own businesses must contend with laws which do not consider them to be an independent individual but rather the dependent family members of their father, guardian or husband.

As a consequence, women find it difficult to have their business ideas taken seriously and also to secure the necessary funding. It is also an uphill battle to develop extensive networks required for a successful business. Needless to say, there is much more that needs to be done by government bodies to support women who wish to join the workforce.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1186648/barriers-womens-economic-input/>

BROKEN PROMISES: WHY WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE DENIED RIGHTS

Dawn, September 24th, 2016

Zohra Yusuf

Pakistan ratified CEDAW in 1996: two decades later, it is far from implementation

Women's low status deprives the state of realising the full productive potential of half the population

The Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan 2nd from the bottom among 145 countries

The writer is the chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. She can be reached at yusuf.zohra@gmail.com

Promises! Promises! Promises! Promises are meant to be broken, especially when they are made in the context of women's rights and status. This is the sad reality of Pakistan's leadership backing off from meeting its commitments to the international community and, more importantly, to its own citizens. In the past few decades, Pakistan has signed and ratified many significant UN conventions and covenants, only to fall far short when it comes to implementation or amending local laws to bring them in conformity with international standards.

Pakistan has also committed itself to meeting the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the objective of building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While all 17 have an impact on women since they form 50pc of the world's population, SDGs 5 specifically covers gender equality and women's empowerment. In fact, at a

meeting of world leaders in New York on September 27, 2015, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was among those who were vociferous in making firm commitments to meet the goal of gender equality.

Anniversaries are a time for taking stock. Pakistan has had to contend with many such occasions and has, on each occasion, tried to put up a good face before interlocutors from the international community.

This process has unfolded before each Universal Periodic Review conducted by the Human Rights Council at the United Nations, where Pakistan's representatives try and put up a brave front in defending the country's human rights record. Meanwhile, the Gender Gap Index 2015 ranked Pakistan second from the last among 145 countries in terms of the prevalence of gender-based disparities.

The broad areas of the SDGs are fighting poverty, inequality and injustice, and handling the fallout from climate change. These socio-economic issues have a direct bearing on women's lives and, while a year may not be enough to assess the fulfillment of commitments, the stark reality of women's status does not give reasons for optimism.

The past year, if anything, has seen a rise in violence against women. Many cases, particularly of honour killings, have hit the headlines due to either the level of brutality or the identity of the victim. Till the writing of this article, the much publicised law against honour killings promising to make the crime non-compoundable has not been presented in the National Assembly.

Provincial assemblies, meanwhile, have made some strides in bringing about legislation ensuring justice for women — including the Sindh Early Marriage Restraint Act, 2013 and the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act, 2016. In fact, apart from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, which chose to send its draft bill on domestic violence to the Council of Islamic Ideology for approval, other provinces have legislated to make domestic violence a crime.

Despite achievements, the goal of ending discrimination against women and girls — one of the objectives of the SDGs — remains remote and is likely to remain so in 2030.—White Star

Violence against women, because of the nature of violation, continues to be the most reported issue when it comes to media coverage of women. However, little attention is given to the other insurmountable challenges women face in their daily lives.

Rooted mostly in poverty and poor infrastructural development, women battle economic obstacles — including inadequate nutrition, water shortages, and poor sanitation — effecting the survival of families. Under these conditions the goal of ending discrimination against women and girls and of empowering them — one of the objectives of the SDGs — remains remote and is likely to remain so in 2030, the year designated for the achievement of goals

Additionally, given that the right to life is the most basic and fundamental human right, a high number of mothers continue to be denied this right as maternal mortality rates showed an increase in 2015 from 2014.

Globally, Pakistan's ranking in the Mother Mortality Ratio (MMR) slipped to 149 from 147 — just ahead of Afghanistan — according to the State of the World's Mothers 2015 report by Save the Children. The MMR has remained on the higher end at 170/1000 deaths, far from the MDG 2 target of 140/1000 deaths.

Illiteracy, food insecurity, inadequate nutrition, low financial allocations, rising security expenditures have been cited as impediments when meeting MDG targets. However, the repercussions of denying women the right over their body or reproductive rights are not even being considered.

Poverty, poor health and illiteracy make almost 50pc of the country's population who are not full participants in the realm of socio-economic development. The low status of women, in fact, deprives the state of realising the full productive potential of half the population. While literacy remains an insurmountable challenge, with few improvements recorded since devolution to the provinces, female illiteracy in rural areas has a further impact on the low status of women — making them even more vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

When Pakistan finally ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1996, there was sufficient optimism. Women's rights activists saw the development as a significant victory for women. However, two decades later, the articles of CEDAW are far from being implemented.

Political participation, for example, is one area where, apart from poor progress, impediments are actually placed to prevent women from playing an active role in the democratic process. And that is, in fact, the starting point for the achievement of many rights women are guaranteed but denied access to.

Will the SDGs be a game-changer? Don't hold your breath — unless the provinces take on their responsibility to accord women their rights ensuring legal, economic and political changes by addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality and violence against women.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1285636/broken-promises-why-women-and-girls-are-denied-right>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 11TH TO SEPTEMBER 18TH 2016

WOMAN, FRIEND HANGED FOR 'AFFAIR'

Dawn, September 16th, 2016

MULTAN: A mother-of-three and the man she was allegedly having an affair with were hanged from a tree on Thursday, with police blaming her husband, brother and father for carrying out the killings.

The grisly murders occurred in the village of Chak 56, around 55 kilometres northeast of Multan.

"A woman and her alleged boyfriend were hanged to death by the woman's father, brother and husband after the woman was caught with her boyfriend in the backyard of her house," Sardar Afzal Dogar, SHO of the local police station, said.

The victims were named as Khalida Bibi, who was in her late twenties, and Mukhtiar Mohammad, who was around 19.

The SHO said all three suspected murderers had been arrested and had confessed to their crimes, adding the woman's husband had brought the alleged affair to the attention of the others. The incident was confirmed by other officials at the police station.

"They were beaten up before being strung up in the tree and hanged," said another official.

Hundreds of the so-called "honour killings", in which the victim, normally a woman, is killed by a male relative or relatives for bringing "shame" to the family are carried out in Pakistan every year.

The law minister in July announced that bills aimed at tackling "honour killings" and boosting rape convictions would soon be voted on by the parliament, following a slew of high-profile cases, including the killing of social media starlet Qandeel Baloch allegedly by her brother.

The perpetrators of honour killings often walk free because they can seek forgiveness for the crime from another family member.

The new law, which aims to do away with the clemency option, has not been made available to the public and no firm date has been set on when it will be tabled.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284050>

HONOUR KILLINGS: MURDERS ON RISE AS GOVT SITS ON PRO-WOMEN BILLS

The Express Tribune, September 16th, 2016.

Qadeer Tanoli

ISLAMABAD: As the government continues to drag its feet on two crucial women's protection bills, previously unpublished data has revealed that an overwhelming majority of those killing women in Punjab are husbands, brothers or fathers.

According to data compiled by the NGO Aurat Foundation, of the 724 women murdered in the province last year, 190 were killed by their husbands, 50 by their brothers and 24 by their fathers. The pattern was prevalent especially in honour killing cases, where 75 out of 170 women were killed by their brothers, 36 by their husbands and 20 by their fathers.

Despite calls for the swift passage of the anti-honour killing and anti-rape bills, the government has appeared unwilling to expedite the legislations even as incidents of violence against women increase across the country. Deepening political turmoil in the shape of anti-government protests by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and other parties has effectively kept the two pro-women bills on the backburner.

Talking to The Express Tribune last week, Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Farhatullah Babar accused the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government of not being serious about legislating on important issues. "After the Panama leaks, the government has become vulnerable and is pandering to the demands of religious parties," he suggested.

Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Law and Justice Zafarullah Khan, however, disagreed with the notion of delay and said instead the reason was building consensus of all the stakeholders.

The two bills were originally presented in Senate in January 2014 by former senator Sughra Imam. However, they could not be presented during a joint sitting of parliament in April this year, in the face of opposition from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F).

A special parliamentary panel finally passed the bills unanimously on July 21, paving the way for them to be adopted during a joint parliamentary session in August. But the joint sitting was delayed amid political bickering between the government and opposition.

The two bills have proposed amendments in sections 302, 309, 310, 338-E of PPC and Section 345 CrPC to do away with the waiver of Qisas by a wali and include the offence committed in the name or on the pretext of honour. Similarly, existing provisions of sections 336-A and 336-B of PPC have also been proposed by the Cabinet Committee on Law Reforms for amendments.

Violence against women remains a serious issue in Pakistan and Punjab seems to be leading in this heinous practice. As many as 5,827 cases were reported in 2015 and Faisalabad topped the list with 1,158 cases. According to the data, Rahimyar Khan trailed behind Faisalabad with 439 cases. Rawalpindi and Lahore reported 321 cases each while Sahiwal reported 254 cases.

Violence against women included incidents of kidnappings, acid-throwing, burning, torture, Vani, Watta-Satta, murders, honour killings, rapes/gang rapes, Karo-Kari, early and forced marriages.

Beating women appeared to be the preferred mode of maiming and murdering women and 832 cases were reported in this connection while use of gun was reported in 725 cases. The use of poison stood at third position with 623 cases while there were 612 cases of kidnapping at gunpoint.

Coercion, harassment, threats and deception were also used in violence against women.

Acid was used in 84 attacks, knives in 120 incidents. Axe and other sharp implements were used on 90 occasions, while there were 99 cases of strangulation.

The data also showed that involvement of husbands in cases of crimes against women remained the highest with 384 cases, fathers were involved in 80 such cases, 170 by brothers, 51 by parents, 43 by in-laws, 50 by former husbands, nine by step-fathers, five by step-brothers, 35 by sons, 10 by step-sons, 676 local residents, 148 neighbours, 435 by strangers, 100 by relatives, 36 by police, 19 by Pirs, 156 by influential persons.

Director Advocacy, Aurat Foundation, Rabeea Hadi said that in urban areas, specifically in industrial cities, more cases of violence against women were reported because of easy media access.

She said the factor of poverty also played an important role in these crimes.

“Women are not allowed to do things of their free will and men want to control their lives. This control mechanism generally generates domestic violence against women irrespective of the victim’s relation: she may be a wife, daughter, mother, sister or any other relative,” she maintained.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1182416/honour-killings-murders-rise-govt-sits-pro-women-bills/>

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: ‘SUCCESS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS MEANS ENLISTING MEN’

The Express Tribune, September 18th, 2016.

San Francisco:

Efforts to help women build small businesses in developing countries risk failure unless husbands, fathers and other men are convinced to be supportive and involved, said activists.

Without the backing of men, women entrepreneurs are likely to quit, receive threats and even suffer violence, groups working in Asia, Africa and Central America, they said Wednesday at SOCAP, an annual conference of social entrepreneurs and investors.

The groups included the British-based Value for Women, which promotes women’s economic participation, and Oxfam America, which launched an initiative called Women in Small Enterprise (WISE) to support women entrepreneurs.

“Without men’s involvement, you definitely see a lot higher dropout rates,” said Alicia Robinson, chief investment officer for WISE, based in Guatemala.

Women entrepreneurs there often need their husband’s permission to launch a business, Robinson said.

“Men need to feel like they are deriving some kind of benefit from it.”

Value for Women appeals to men’s attitude of “what’s in it for me?” said Rebecca Fries, the group’s global managing director.

“Our programs are more effective and the impact is more effective if I’m engaging male family members,” she said.

Women entrepreneurs need to be trained not only in solid business skills but also soft skills of communication and negotiation, the activists said.

The soft skills help women navigate resistance by husbands or fathers as they defy traditional roles or become breadwinners, they said.

The need for those soft skills became apparent when Agora Partnerships, which supports entrepreneurs in Latin America, started making plans to distribute \$1 million among women running businesses, some with their husbands, said Maria Denise Duarte, program development manager.

As women in Guatemala challenge the traditions of a patriarchal society, “it’s really important that we understand the environments that they’re operating in,” Robinson said.

Girls in East Africa and South Asia who benefit from Spring Accelerator, a project aimed at improving the lives of girls in developing countries, can find themselves facing trouble from men, said Spring investment director Suzanne Biegel.

Spring is funded by Britain’s Department for International Development (DFID), the Nike Foundation and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

SOCAP’s annual conference is aimed at bringing together investors and entrepreneurs to address issues such as poverty, climate change, job creation and food supplies. Some 2,500 people attended SOCAP that ran this week in San Francisco.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1183525/developing-countries-success-women-entrepreneurs-means-enlisting-men/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 5TH TO SEPTEMBER 10TH 2016

WOMEN WORKERS

Dawn, September 5th, 2016.

IT might be good to hear that the government wants to devise a ‘road map’ to narrow the gender wage gap to 10pc in the next three years, but it is hard to see how any road map to close the gender wage gap can be effective in the absence of the right to form associations and engage in collective bargaining.

If they are serious in their intention, then we should see wide legislative steps that try to eliminate discrimination in various forms, as well as resurrect the right to form associations and engage in collective bargaining.

Despite having ratified the relevant UN and ILO conventions more than a decade ago, the gender wage gap has only increased, and according to research done by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, now stands at almost 40pc in the garment industry that is a large employer of women. Moreover, it seems that only one-tenth of the country’s labour force enjoys access to rights of association and collective bargaining.

Beyond the gender wage gap, there is a host of other issues that also need to be addressed to make the labour laws of the country more just towards the rights of women workers. Already the vast majority of the country’s workforce is hired on a contract basis so the rights enjoyed by permanent workers need to be extended in order to be effective.

There is no concept of maternity leave or other benefits, an absence that hits women workers harder than others. At the moment, the government appears to be reacting to pressure from the European Union which is demanding greater emphasis on women’s labour in order to renew the GSP-Plus preferential trading scheme for Pakistan. In this situation, the will to actually move beyond meetings, discussions and drafts of legislative proposals is absent.

The Justice Shafiur Rehman Commission report makes for a good platform to develop such a road map. But the report has been lying dormant for over a decade now and there is little reason to suppose that the present effort to lift it out of obscurity will have any credibility. If the attorney general is serious, he should also lay stress on the rights of association and collective bargaining in developing this road map. Otherwise, it will be obvious they are working on a road map to eyewash and nothing more.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1282079>

JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION: POLITICAL LOGJAM DELAYS PASSAGE OF PRO-WOMEN BILLS

The Express Tribune, September 5th, 2016.

Riazul Haq

ISLAMABAD: Deepening political turmoil has effectively kept two pro-women bills on the backburner.

A special parliamentary panel unanimously passed the anti-honour killing and anti-rape bills on July 21, paving the way for the proposed legislation to be adopted during the joint session. Law and Justice Minister Zahid Hamid told media persons that both bills were scheduled to be presented in the joint sitting of parliament in the first week of August. But the political logjam over the Panama Papers seems to have overshadowed everything else.

The prime minister's daughter, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, had also tweeted back then that the two pro-women bills would soon be passed by parliament.

Earlier, the proposed laws – Criminal Laws Amendment Bill, 2015, and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill, 2015 – had lapsed as they could not be passed by the National Assembly within the stipulated timeframe of 90 days.

About the undue delay in calling the joint session of parliament, Senator Farhatullah Babar told The Express Tribune: “The government is not serious about legislating on important issues.”

Babar maintained that it was a matter of deep concern that the government is obsessed with protecting the prime minister from the fallout of the Panama Leaks and it is ignoring its basic responsibility.”

These two bills had been originally presented in the Senate in January 2014 by a former senator Sughra Imam as a private member bills. However, they could not be presented during the joint sitting of parliament in April this year, in the face of opposition from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F).

However, the government constituted a special body –Committee of Joint Sitzings Bills – to speed up legislation on the long-delayed process.

After the anti-honour killing bill becomes an act of the parliament, relatives of the victim would only be able to pardon the killer of capital punishment, but killers would still face a mandatory life sentence of 14 years. In the anti-rape bill, a provision to conduct DNA tests on both the alleged victim and perpetrator was added for the first time. For the accused, the tests would be mandatory.

Under the bill, rape of minors, as well as the mentally and physically ill, would become punishable by death. The fate of another bill, Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Bill, 2016 also hinges on the joint session of parliament as the bill has been passed by the National Assembly but not by the Senate within 90 days.

An official of the ministry of parliamentary affairs expressed hope that the prospects of the passage of these bills would be brighter during the current month (September) as sessions of the both houses of parliament would be under way. “It is hoped that the joint session may be called as lawmakers of both houses will be available.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1176118/joint-parliamentary-session-political-logjam-delays-passage-pro-women-bills/>

CLUSTER OF COTTAGE INDUSTRIES DEMANDED ALONG CPEC ROUTE

The Express Tribune, September 6th, 2016

MULTAN: The business community of southern Punjab has demanded that the Punjab government establish a cluster of cottage industries in different cities of the province for taking more benefits from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

“The Punjab government should execute its project of cottage village in Multan and establish a cluster of cottage industries in Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Muzaffargarh, Rahimyar Khan, Bahawalpur and other areas along the CPEC route in southern Punjab,” said Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Fareed Mughis Sheikh in a statement on Monday. He suggested that the cottage industry should be set up along the CPEC route after every 150 to 200 kilometres in order to give a boost to the economy. Apart from this, he said, additional steps should be taken for the promotion of such industries in an effort to reduce poverty and steer the country out of economic problems, particularly the ones faced by the southern region.

“The government should establish small and medium-scale enterprises to facilitate the women working at home. These women knit carpets and stitch beautiful clothes laced with embroidery, so the government must promote such women and provide them a platform to earn a better living,” Sheikh said.

Sheikh said about 70% of businesses fell in the category of cottage industry and small and medium units but the sector was totally neglected.

“How can Pakistan become a success story when its cottage industry, small traders and women feel sidelined?” he asked. “The government has to revisit some of its policies.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1176776/along-cpec-route-cluster-cottage-industries-demanded/>

LOWER COURTS DISPOSED OF 79 RAPE CASES IN FIVE YEARS

The Express Tribune, September 8th, 2016.

Riazul Haq

Islamabad: The two sessions courts in Islamabad have disposed of 79 rape cases over the last five years, while three are pending, Minister for Law and Justice Zahid Hamid told the National Assembly on Wednesday.

He was replying to a question from MNA Shaista Pervaiz.

Pervaiz, who is secretary of the women’s parliament caucus in the NA, asked about steps taken by the government for the expeditious disposal of cases relating to crimes against women and children in Islamabad.

She also asked the minister about the total number of cases relating to racist crimes, hate crimes, rape, and sexual harassment which are pending in various courts in Islamabad.

The minister replied that about 79 rape cases had been disposed of during the last five years in sessions courts east and west. The minister also stated that information regarding cases of racist, hate, and sexual harassment crimes is nil.

Hamid added that presently three pending rape cases — two in sessions court west, and one in sessions court east.

About the steps taken by the government to improve prosecution of such crimes, the minister said that bills relating to honour killings and rape were pending consideration from a joint sitting of parliament.

The two pro-women bills were passed by a joint parliamentary body in July, but the government still has to convene a joint-sitting of parliament to pass the long overdue bills.

The minister said that offences against women on the pretext of honour, even if waived or compounded, would be punishable with life imprisonment.

“Presently, under PPC Section 182, the offence of false information with intent to cause a public servant to use his lawful power to the injury of another person is punishable with up to six months imprisonment,” he stated. Besides,

he maintained that sentences of up to three years have now been proposed for police officials found guilty of submitting incomplete or defective investigations, and charge sheets.

He said the government, had also launched the 109 Helpline to provide free legal advice on human rights violations and to also assist with referral services to address grievances of any victims.

He added that from March 2015 to date, 36,431 people approached the helpline. Of these, 2,972 eligible callers were provided legal advice and referral services.

Besides, the minister stated that a action plan for human rights approved by the prime minister on February 13, 2016 was also being implemented, adding that it has an initial endowment of Rs100 million. The plan ensures policy, legal reforms and access of justice for the victims of human rights violations, he maintained.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1178196/crime-capital-lower-courts-disposed-79-rape-cases-five-years/>

LIBERATED MEN

Dawn, September 9th, 2016

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar

THE world is dominated by men. It has not always been this way — throughout recorded history there have been societies in which women have exercised significant power over both their own lives and those of men. In the modern world, however, patriarchy is very much the rule. While it is possible to identify pockets in which men and women are relatively more equal, they remain the exceptions which make the rule.

As male domination goes, Pakistan is up there with the worst. A casual perusal of daily newspapers, TV bulletins and social media sites confirms this; not a day goes by without report of abuse against women, including murder, rape and disfigurement. Meanwhile, the systematic discrimination against women in public and private spheres is so taken for granted that it is virtually invisible.

The fact that more and more is said about the status of women and girls in this country speaks for some kind of change, however nominal. Public discussions about male domination are the first step towards addressing what is a deep, structural problem. Having said this, the ‘debate’ is limited to a very small cross section of society. It often feels like those talking about patriarchy and the need to challenge it are speaking amongst themselves.

Certainly, it would be impossible to suddenly involve those who are deeply hostile to even the idea that women and men are equally human. The sway exercised by mullahs and so-called ‘tradition’ over a large majority of people in this society means that many of us actually believe that women are born inferior to men and that they are fated to have certain social roles — indeed, reactions to women who transgress established boundaries suggest that we also feel entitled to undertake punitive actions in the name of maintaining moral order.

It is indicative of just how deeply patriarchal norms are internalised within us that many women are active agents of male domination both vis-à-vis their understanding of the world and their actions within it. This deep internalisation is reflected in how women interact with one another as well as in their deference to men, and this is why those who challenge patriarchy assert the need to ‘liberate’ women from their mental chains, so as to be able to stand up to the everyday oppression that they encounter.

Those who are suspicious of the feminist cause — men and women alike — tend to see it as an attempt to turn all women against men, a characterisation which is both ridiculous and inaccurate. It is precisely the fact that we are all products of patriarchal structures that there is no question of propagating a simple, no-holds-barred war between men and women. It is the task of conscious men and women both to understand and challenge the structure — which, in turn, is upheld by men and women both.

Yet there is little question that the primary beneficiaries and defenders of male domination are men. And this is why men are likely to react negatively to the cause of women's liberation, to one extent or the other. After all, relinquishing a position of privilege — especially that which is seen as ordained — is far from easy.

There are, of course, some men who consider themselves enlightened, who take up the cause of women (sometimes despite their suspicions of 'feminism'). Many husbands and fathers accord relative freedom to women and girls in the home which then translates into longer-term gains. At a more general level, progressive men are active participants in various political and social movements challenging patriarchy.

I would count myself as one of the latter. But I still feel hesitant in calling myself a 'liberated man'. Having been politically active for many years, I can safely say that my understanding of and commitment to the feminist cause has evolved considerably over time, and is likely to do so further. I am increasingly aware of just how deeply I have internalised patriarchal ways of being. To be 'liberated' is not a discrete event, but a process that unfolds over an extended period of time.

Indeed, there is a danger that men who see themselves as liberated can overlook the most obvious transgressions. Unfortunately many progressives can talk, think, and act in ways that are not always consistent with their overt commitments. We may believe that we are enlightened because we don't engage in the barbaric practices of unbridled misogynists; that we fight for women's causes in public; that we sensitise other men to the feminist cause. But the fight does not end there. In fact the most important part of the fight is in our daily engagements, in our everyday conversations, in reining in our convictions that our opinions matter more.

Since the 'debate' is still largely amongst ourselves, it is worth remembering that patriarchy begins at home, and liberation does too.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1282961/liberated-men>

October 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 24TH TO OCTOBER 30TH 2016

A SHAMEFUL INCIDENT

Dawn, October 24th, 2016

THE resort to violence by a law enforcer against a journalist outside a Nadra office in Karachi is indeed condemnable, and a stern warning is in order. The footage of the incident is appalling — and has been played over and over again by the channels; it must be a source of shame for all those who have power and authority but do not guard against their misuse.

According to many observers, the offence is all the more deplorable since the recipient of the security man's wrath was a woman. Indeed, there are no easy answers to the question raised: would the security man have acted in a different manner had the 'provocateur' been a man able to match his angry action?

No new evidence is needed to confirm just how vulnerable Pakistani women are to verbal and physical attacks, but maybe the issue here relates more to journalism than to their protection and rights. This was certainly a case of an overly assertive woman who wanted information for the people at large; the journalist's own approach to telling the story must also be examined.

Among the many points the incident has raised is an old one about respect for the uniform. And, also, to what extent should a journalist be allowed to go in his or her search for a story. The unfortunate incident, which has now been viewed by the whole country and by people living beyond, must now act as a catalyst for the rule books.

There are surely some guidelines to be set for those who represent the government. All officials, beginning with those who are involved in public dealing, must be sensitised to their roles in accordance with changing public demands

which are often reflected in the additional effort put in by restless journalists. Likewise, there has to be some kind of a realisation on the part of journalists about the need to keep their operations free of violence and unnecessary confrontation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1291836>

FAMILY MEMBERS HELD OVER KILLING OF THREE WOMEN

Dawn October 26th, 2016

PESHAWAR: The local police on Tuesday announced they had arrested two family members over the killing of three women.

Three badly burned bodies were recovered from Chandmari area of Tehkal on Oct 17. The deceased were later identified as women.

Accompanied by SP cantonment circle Imran Ahmad Malik, city police chief Mohammad Tahir Khan told reporters at the Malik Saad Police Lines here that the local police were tipped off about the presence of charred bodies in Chandmari area before they collected them and began investigation to trace culprits.

He said after murder, the women were burned with the help of petrol to eliminate signs revealing their identities.

“It was no less than a huge challenge for us to identify women and arrest those behind their murder,” he said.

Mr. Tahir said following the leads provided by informers and cellphone records, the police arrested two of the five suspects, including Azizullah and Pir Mohammad.

He said during initial investigation, the suspects had confessed to involvement in the killing.

The police chief said the investigation identified the women as Peshawar’s Husn Bano, wife of Afghan national Ghulam Mohammad, and her daughters, including Ayesha and Shireena.

He said Ghulam Mohammad had moved to Kabul few months ago along with wife and daughters and lived there in a rented house.

Mr. Tahir said the women were not happy living in Kabul so they Family members held over three women’s killing returned to Peshawar without informing Ghulam Mohammad.

He claimed Husn Bano was involved in drug smuggling and that a first information report was registered against her.

The police chief said Ghulam Mohammad, the prime suspect in the case, was not happy with wife and daughters for secretly leaving Afghanistan and therefore, he’d planned their killing.

He said the main suspect along with brothers Pir Mohammad and Azizullah strangulated the three women in their Chandmari house on Oct 17, took the bodies to a nearby open place in a private car and set them on fire with the help of four liters petrol purchased from a local filling station.

The police chief said the car used to transport bodies had been seized.

He said the main suspect Ghulam Mohammad later fled to Afghanistan via Torkham border but the police managed to arrest his brothers and accomplices, Pir Mohammad and Azizullah.

Mr. Tahir said the police were going all-out for the arrest of three other suspects.

He said the police had planned to take up the matter of the arrest and extradition of the main suspect in the case with the Afghan authorities.

The police chief said for the confirmation of Husn Bano's identity, the police would match her DNA with her brothers'.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1292313>

WB-FUNDED WOMEN-X BEING LAUNCHED IN FAISALABAD SOON

Business Recorder, 25 October 2016

FAISALABAD: World Bank funded programme Women-X is being launched in Faisalabad very soon to enhance the professional skills and capabilities of female entrepreneurs, said Gerrit Ribbink technical team leader (Entrepreneurship) of "Enclude".

In a meeting with Engineer Ahmed Hassan vice president Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) here on Monday, he said that initially this project was launched in Karachi and Islamabad with the technical support of the Centre for entrepreneurial development (CED) at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) and Minding HER Business (MHB).

This programme was launched in 2013-14 and during its first phase training was imparted to more than 300 female entrepreneurs. This phase was restricted to the lectures in classrooms while in its second phase industrial support was provided and in its third phase, the participants were asked to prepare business plans independently.

Gerrit Ribbink said that this programme would be concluded during this year. Now we are planning to launch this programme in Lahore, Faisalabad and Sialkot. During this programme, training will be imparted to another 400 existing female entrepreneurs of these cities including 120 from Faisalabad.

Engineer Ahmed Hassan welcomed this project and assured that FCCI will cooperate with World Bank, concerned micro finance bank and NGO involved in this process. He said that Faisalabad is one of the most thriving business centers of Pakistan. It has more than 5000 members with its fold. He said the total numbers of female members are only 83. Out of these, 68 belong to associate and 15 to the corporate class.

He said that the GDP growth has necessitated the increase in female participation in local businesses. He further said that at present thousands of young girls are graduating from local universities and they should start their own business instead of wandering for the petty jobs after completing their education.

He termed Women-X as an innovative idea which will encourage women entrepreneurs to enter the field of business in a large number. He further said although the number of female entrepreneurs related with the FCCI are very few but there are many other women who are running their small businesses at their houses or online. He also proposed to involve these women entrepreneurs in this programme.

Former president Engineer Rizwan Ashraf said that FCCI has a very energetic FCCI standing committee on women entrepreneurs and it should also be consulted before launching Women-X programme in Faisalabad. The function was also attended by Engineer Shahid Gill of Faisalabad Development authority, Habib Ahmed Ghujjar former chairman APTMA and Mujtaba Hassan and others.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/25/20-page/807574-news.html>

BREAST CANCER: RAISING AWARENESS

The Express Tribune, October 27th, 2016

Nadia Agha

Recently I visited an institute of radiotherapy in northern Sindh for organising an awareness-raising seminar on breast cancer. I was overwhelmed to see the place specifically made for cancer related issues where a large number of women were making their way for breast cancer detection and diagnosis, but at the same time seeing these rural women in miserable condition was an agonising experience.

On one hand, there were the women suffering from breast cancer. On the other hand, there were the men, belonging to low socioeconomic status, begging the staff for the financial support for their wives' treatment.

Every year October is observed as the month of raising awareness against breast cancer around the world. Since the month is here, a number of activities are taking place for raising breast cancer awareness. Yet, the number of the women who lose the battle against breast cancer has increased alarmingly in Pakistan.

Generally speaking, cancer causes a great deal of stress around the patients and their families, but it becomes a fraught issue when it has to do with women and their sexuality. Pakistan is said to have the highest incidence of breast cancer occurrence in Asia. It has been stated that one in nine women is likely to suffer from it, every year about 90,000 new cases of breast cancer are reported and 40,000 women die from it.

New research studies reveal that Pakistani women are more prone to having breast cancer at a younger age as compared to their counterparts in western countries. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on how women suffering from breast cancer cope with socio-psychological effects and deal with the people who look down upon them.

The alarming statistics on breast cancer make it essential for the state to introduce well-integrated and improved programmes for raising awareness as well as countering stigma against breast cancer. Currently, there is a strong rural-urban divide when it comes to raising awareness against breast cancer; knowledge about this fatal disease is highly deficient in rural areas.

Most of the activities that raise awareness are concentrated in cities or towns targeting youth in educational institutions whereas those who belong to rural areas are unaware about prevention and cure of the disease.

Sadly, there is a great deal of stigma associated with breast cancer. Women in our parts of the world feel ashamed of seeking help unless it gets compulsory. This stigma may often lead to denial from the diagnosis as well.

Lack of awareness and low socioeconomic status add more to the problem. Such problems worsen in rural areas where people have low levels of literacy, less exposure to media and lack of access to modern facilities to treat the disease.

Also, rural Pakistani households are extremely patriarchal where all decisions of women's lives are taken by men. Even when women want to see doctors, their access to the specialist is conditional upon the wish of their men in the family. It is unfortunate to say that the appearance of any lump is often ignored and women are only taken to the hospitals when it is too late to cure the cancer.

Pakistani women can be empowered to control their health issues if they receive timely support, but unfortunately there is no awareness at family or community level in rural areas. If a woman is diagnosed with cancer, she not only has to fight against cancer but also against social attitudes around it let alone seeking psychological support on trauma of losing one or both breasts.

It has become imperative for Pakistan to develop effective practices to combat the disease. In this context, the problem of the prevalence of breast cancer needs to be dealt with taking local culture and social attitudes in consideration.

Therefore, all strategies must also target rural and remote areas and involve wider audience. Breast cancer is curable with early detection which is only possible when awareness raising activities and healthcare facilities are extended to every nook and corner and involve families, in particular men.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1211205/breast-cancer-raising-awareness/>

UNHCR DISTANCES ITSELF FROM 'AFGHAN MONA LISA'

The Express Tribune, October 28th, 2016.

Mureeb Mohmand

SHABQADAR: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Thursday distanced itself from Sharbat Gula, the 'Afghan Mona Lisa', who has been arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency for holding illegal Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC).

Speaking to The Express Tribune, UNHCR spokesperson Dunya Aslam Khan said that Gula is an undocumented Afghan refugee and the UNHCR can only help documented refugees.

A special team of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) arrested Gula from Nauthia, the old quarters of Peshawar, following a two-year investigation on her and her husband, who has absconded.

The team also recovered a fraudulently acquired Pakistani CNIC and an Afghan identity card from her possession. Investigators, who have uncovered thousands of fraud cases over the last decade, launched a probe into her application shortly after she procured the CNIC.

Following reports of Gula's arrest, the Afghan government and Awami National Party vowed to secure her release.

ANP's national youth organisation chairman Mohsin Dawar said the party planned on filing a bail application for her release in the court on Thursday. Dawar believed that since Gula's case was only based on a fake ID it would be very difficult to get her bail.

Meanwhile, Afghan Ambassador in Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal vowed to secure Gula's release. "I have received information through the media that the Pakistani police have arrested the most famous face in Afghanistan that attracted the attention of the international community," Zakhilwal said.

"I am confident that she would not only be released as soon as possible but would be repatriated to the country with her family with honour and dignity," Zakhilwal said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1212679/unhcr-distances-afghan-mona-lisa/>

MAN SHOOTS WIFE FOR RESISTING HIS SECOND MARRIAGE

Dawn, October 29th, 2016

SUKKUR: A man was arrested after he allegedly shot and critically wounded his wife for resisting his intention to contract a second marriage. A passer-by was also wounded in the incident.

According to police, the suspect, Waseem Sanjrani, shot Seema Sanjrani, with whom he had contracted a freewill marriage in Karachi only 45 days ago, at the Jacobabad Civil Hospital, where the couple had come for the woman's treatment for abdominal pain on Friday.

The woman was rushed to a Larkana hospital in a critical condition.

The other victim, Abdul Khaliq Buledi, was admitted to the Jacobabad hospital.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1292881/man-shoots-wife-for-resisting-his-second-marriage>

AFGHAN GIRL'S ARREST

Dawn, October 30th, 2016

Bina Shah

WHEN Steve McCurry took that iconic photograph of the 'Afghan girl' back in 1985, he never imagined that the girl with the haunting green eyes would become a worldwide symbol of the disruption and displacement that millions of refugees suffered in the aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan war.

McCurry's photograph did little to change the life of Sharbat Gula, who last week was arrested in Peshawar by Pakistani authorities on charges of fraudulently obtaining a Pakistani residence card, or CNIC. Authorities plan to prosecute her and the two men claiming to be her sons for falsifying their personal details to obtain CNICs instead of the refugee registration cards that protect 1.5 million Afghans here from being deported.

According to Gerry Simpson of Human Rights Watch, a million more Afghans who failed to get the registration card are in danger of being deported. Sharbat Gula was one of those one million; she is charged with bribing government officials to falsify her documents to be able to remain in Pakistan. She will be jailed and fined if proven guilty, and on her release, deported back to an Afghanistan still ravaged by conflict, and home to one million internal refugees.

The UNHCR lists Pakistan as the second highest refugee hosting country in the world, second only to Turkey's 2.5m Syrians fleeing the Syrian civil war. Pakistanis tout this honourable position quite proudly, using it as proof of the nation's generosity and compassion. A developing nation with limited resources playing host to 1.5m refugees is something to be proud about. At the same time, Pakistan needs to remain vigilant about those who abuse the system, especially those who obtain Pakistani documents illegally as a cover for any type of criminal activity.

Yet public attitudes towards the refugees have swung the other way in the wake of the government crackdown against Afghans, in which 350,000 refugees have already returned to Afghanistan this year alone. Previously, they were seen as Muslim brothers and sisters, and a vital part of the country's economy, especially in the construction industry. Now, Afghans are being blamed for all crime and terrorism in Pakistan, and news of Sharbat Gula's arrest is being met with a mix of rancour and vehemence by Pakistanis who have tired of playing host to a seemingly ungrateful and treacherous population.

The case of Sharbat Gula, and many other non-criminal refugees desperate to find a way to stay on, whether legally or illegally, is not a sign of the maliciousness of an individual, or even the ingratitude of a parasitical community. Rather it is proof that the system is overwhelmed, and that Pakistan's mass refugee return policy has flaws which are creating more insecurity and turmoil than it was designed to prevent.

More than this, Sharbat Gula's complicity in identity fraud is illustrative of what happens to vulnerable female refugees, especially women who may be illiterate and unable to read what they sign, or are unaware or unclear of the legal ramifications of their actions.

To a penniless Afghan woman who has lived all her life only thinking about survival, forging identity papers for money may have seemed like a good idea at the time. And pressure from others to go along with the plan, as well as being told that 'everyone does it', and 'they won't punish a woman', may have been all it took for Sharbat Gula to put her thumbprint on a piece of paper in order to earn some breathing space in an increasingly hostile environment.

Life as a refugee is terrible, but for women refugees, it's a particular kind of hell that most of us can't even imagine. Women refugees are extremely vulnerable to sexual assault and exploitation; they have to deal with being groped or assaulted by smugglers, security staff and even other refugees. They struggle with finding adequate food or healthcare for their children, and become the heads of vulnerable households where male family members are missing or dead. Access to adequate reproductive healthcare is minimal, especially in war zones: being pregnant or having to give birth as a refugee is a thousand times more difficult than it is for a normal citizen.

People often remark that Sharbat Gula as an adult woman looks very different from her photograph as a 12-year-old. The journey she has undertaken and the life she has led as a refugee has left its mark on her face, its weather-beaten skin and jutting bones testament to her suffering.

This is no excuse for breaking the law in Pakistan, but perhaps it can help us understand why she was so desperate to stay here that she would do so. If you can imagine yourself as a refugee for just one moment, you might realise that you would probably consider doing it too.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293074/afghan-girls-arrest>

ARMED MEN BURN DOWN GIRLS SCHOOL IN AFGHANISTAN

Dawn October 30th, 2016

MAZAR-I-SHARIF: Armed men have burned down a girls' school in northern Afghanistan, officials said on Saturday, with police blaming the Taliban for the assault as the militants expand their foothold across the country.

The attackers burst into the school in northern Jawzjan province on Friday night, beat up the security guards and set the building on fire, a local government official told AFP.

"The armed men entered the school at around 10pm, beat the guards and set chairs, books and classes ablaze," said the provincial governor's spokesman, Reza Ghafoori.

"They also warned that the girls should not be allowed in the school again," he said, adding that around 500 girls were attending the school.

Local police said the Taliban were behind the attack, adding that an investigation was underway to find the perpetrators.

"They were Taliban, they have burnt schools in this area in the past," said the provincial deputy police chief, Abdul Hafiz Khasheh.

More than 300 schools have been destroyed in the last two months, largely at the hands of the Taliban as fighting intensifies across the country, according to a government spokesman.

No one has claimed responsibility for Friday's attack so far.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293136>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 17TH TO OCTOBER 23RD 2016 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAUSED THREE SCHOOLGIRLS TO FLEE HOMES: CIA Dawn October 18th, 2016

Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: The three schoolgirls recovered on Sunday from a house in Liaquatabad in a joint raid by Anti-Violent Crime Cell (AVCC) of police and the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee had been suffering from domestic violence, said CIA DIG Dr Jamil Ahmed on Monday.

One of the girls told the police that her parents did not trust her and gave her a beating whenever she received SMS from boys, said the DIG while speaking at a press conference.

Flanked by CPLC chief Zubair Habib and AVCC SSP Tariq Dharejo, the CIA chief said they had been a victim of undesirable behaviour of their parents.

He said another girl told the police her parents often quarrelled with each other and her mother used to subject her to mental torture. The third girl complained that she hated her father as he had married another woman yet her real mother wanted her to live with him, he told the media.

The CIA chief advised all parents to treat children with love and kindness instead of subjecting them to mental or physical torture. He said the recovered girls were shifted to Darul Aman on a court directive. Giving details of the Friday episode, he said instead of going to school, the girls ran away from their homes in Saudabad. "They attempted to travel to Balochistan via Hub River Road but returned half way from Mowach Goth fearing street harassment," he said.

He added that the girls then decided to reach the Karachi Cantt railway station but they didn't find any train to board. Someone there suggested the girls to rent a room in a hotel near the Jinnah hospital. They told the police that they travelled to the hospital, where a patient's attendant, identified as Aijaz, gave them his mobile phone number on a chit and left. One of the girls approached him on his cell phone and the man assured them of his cooperation while asking them to accompany him.

Meanwhile, he said, Aijaz called his friend, Danish and they both took the girls to the latter's home in Liaquatabad-10. Danish told the girls that they should stay at his home and should not fear anything. The police with the help of modern technology traced the girls and apprehended Aijaz from Baldia Town, while efforts were under way to arrest Danish, DIG Ahmed told the media.

The officer quoted the girls as telling the police investigators that they remained safe from any kind of harassment during their stay there.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290611>

TRIPLE TALAQ, POLYGAMY VIOLATE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF INDIAN MUSLIM WOMEN

Dawn October 19th, 2016

The distinction between sanity and insanity was blurred in the minds of otherwise normal individuals of which there was ample evidence in the way the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) had defended the practice of triple talaq in an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court last month, by stating that women were lesser mortals than men. In response to a petition challenging polygamy and triple talaq by a Muslim woman named Shayara Bano and by some Muslim women's organisations urging the apex court to declare triple talaq and polygamy unconstitutional, they came up with this gem, "Sharia grants right to divorce to husbands because men have greater power of decision making. They are more likely to control emotions and not take hasty decisions."

The complete abandonment of reason by these powerful men who constitute the AIMPLB did not cease here. While asserting that the practice of triple talaq as part of Islam was protected by the fundamental right to religion that was beyond the adjudication of the Supreme Court, the AIMPLB also vigorously defended polygamy, which allows a Muslim man to have four wives, as being necessary to 'curb illicit sex' and to 'protect women'.

These learned gentlemen, who reek of a misogynist medieval mindset need to be shown their place in secular and democratic India ruled by the Constitution. I am not sure if in echoing these sentiments they are truthfully reflecting the position of their scripture either. As Karen Armstrong says in her authoritative *Islam — A Short History*, "The Quran gave women rights of inheritance and divorce centuries before Western women were accorded this status."

The Muslim Personal Law (Sharia) Application Act, 1937, allows Indian Muslims to be governed by the Sharia. The absence of codification has legally allowed community leaders to hold the practices as sacrosanct, thereby subjecting Muslim women in India to arbitrary triple talaqs. Similarly the argument of AIMPLB that the purpose of polygamy is to prevent women from leading a spinster's life is bizarre, given the sex ratio of 951 females per 1,000 males among Indian Muslims.

Personal laws of Muslims, like the Hindus, flowed from patriarchy, misogyny and subordination of the marginalised sections of society. These were put in place to protect entrenched interests when religion lost its vitality and intellectual appeal and gave way to meaningless rituals. These laws have to be reformed to meet the changing dynamics of an evolving and vibrant society. Triple talaq and polygamy has been banned in many Muslim countries. The ethos of a democratic society is clearly against theocratic practices the AIMPLB would like to enforce for the Indian Muslims.

Unfortunately not many prominent Muslim voices have been heard against these abhorrent practices in India, the reasons for which can only be the fear of retaliation — which does not exclude physical violence — by violent orthodox elements within the community. That clergy, lacking in modern liberal education, derives their power from the poverty, ignorance, and the economic and educational backwardness of large sections of the community. Governments in the past had always shied away from taking on this clergy, for fear of losing Muslim votes. The fact that some Muslim women have now approached the judiciary proves a weakening of their overwhelming hold, which is why they are reacting so loudly.

In the Shah Bano case (1985), when the Supreme Court had ruled that a divorced Muslim woman was entitled to fair maintenance far above what was granted under the Muslim Personal Law, the same AIMPLB and the mullahs had threatened that the judgement was tantamount to interference in their religion and blackmailed the Rajiv Gandhi government into capitulation. They forced it to enact the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986, that annulled the judgement. An opportunity that could have been a milestone in the Muslim women's search for justice was thus surrendered for petty vote-bank considerations.

This time, however, the government has put up a spirited defence, and dissociated the issue from that of the Uniform Civil Code. In its response to the affidavit, it clearly stated its position that “gender equality and the dignity of women are not negotiable”. If Islamic states could reform Muslim personal laws, these certainly could not be considered an integral part of the practice of Islam. Arguing that “No undesirable practice can be elevated to the status of an essential religious practice,” it said, “any practice that leaves women socially, financially or emotionally vulnerable or subject to the whims and caprice of menfolk is incompatible with the letter and spirit of Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution”.

But the fundamental question is whether in a secular democracy, religion alone can be a reason to deny the equal status and dignity available to women under the Constitution. A secular nation is under no obligation to respect the norms or commandments of any religion, just as it does not have the liberty to violate such norms without reason. Article 13 stipulates that any law that impinges upon fundamental rights shall be void, and the practices of triple talaq and polygamy should therefore be declared illegal, since they violate the fundamental right to equality.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290751>

HOME-BASED WOMEN WORKERS SEEK POLICY

Dawn, October 20th, 2016

HYDERABAD: The Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) on Wednesday called for the implementation of the policy drafted by it in consultation with other relevant organisations for due rights of home-based workers.

Speaking at a press conference in the local press club on Wednesday, the federation's general secretary Zehra Khan announced that her organisation would observe 'South Asian Home-Based Workers Day' on Thursday by raising its voice for the rights of this neglected segment of society.

She said the federation had submitted the draft policy to the government but it was yet to be implemented.

Stressing that the home-based workers act must be finalised for the welfare of workers, she said that more than five million people in Sindh alone would benefit from the policy.

HBWWF information secretary Shakeela Khan, Home-based Women Bangle Workers Union general secretary Jameela Abdul Lateef and others were present at the press conference.

Presenting a charter of demands, they said that home-based workers should be given social cover; the federal and provincial governments should employ a tripartite mechanism for resolving of their issues.

The government should ratify the ILO convention C177, signed in 1996, and should make laws in the light of it.

They said that all political parties should put workers welfare and struggle for labour rights on their agenda and workers should be defined in the book of law accordingly to the production system in the current scenario.

They also demanded for establishment of training centers for home-based women workers and facilities to provide them special access to markets for showcasing their products.

Speaking about the day, Zehra Khan explained that Oct 20 was a historic day for home-based workers because in Katmandu Declaration in 2000, labour unions and other organisations had decided to commemorate this day as 'South Asian Home-Based Workers Day' and pledged a struggle for the rights, social security and identity of more than 50 million home-based workers in South Asia, of them 80 per cent were women.

She said the HBWWF would organise a rally in Karachi and a workers' convention in Sanghar on Thursday.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290953/home-based-women-workers-seek-policy>

KOHISTAN HONOUR KILLING: SC GIVES K-P GOVT TWO WEEKS TO WRAP UP PROBE

The Express Tribune, October 19th, 2016.

Hasnaat Malik

Islamabad: The apex court has set a two-week deadline for the completion of an inquiry into the alleged killing of five girls at a wedding party.

The deadline was given to the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) government and Kohistan's district police officer.

The case grabbed headlines four years ago after a shaky footage emerged of a group of young women clapping and singing as two men danced during a wedding ceremony in the far-flung Kohistan district.

According to Afzal Kohistani, on whose application the then chief justice took suo motu notice, the four women as well as a minor girl were later killed on May 30, 2012 after a Jirga allegedly ordered their execution. However, the bodies of the girls were never recovered.

The Supreme Court on June 20, 2012 disposed of the case after a delegation comprising Civil Judge Munira Abbasi, MNA Bushra Gohar and rights activists – Dr Farzana Bari and Dr Fauzia Saeed –visited the village where the incident allegedly took place and submitted its report.

The case was reopened in August when Afzal filed a fresh plea, urging the court that he had new evidence the girls as well as three of his brothers were killed.

During the hearing on Wednesday, the K-P's Advocate General Latif Yousafzai told the SC's three-judge bench, headed by Justice Ejaz Afzal, that police had gone to the area of the incident and further inquired about the girls' deaths.

He said the police had recorded statement of 11 persons –including two individuals whose statements were recorded under section 164 CrPc. He said the police were still investigating the matter.

Meanwhile, rights activist Farzana Bari told the bench that she had very strong evidence that the five girls had been murdered. The bench asked her to submit the statement in writing within three days.

However, Bari said she might not be available at the next date of the hearing as she had been receiving threats. “If something happens to me or if I am not alive [by the next hearing] then the case should be registered against male family members of the murdered girls,” she said.

Bari said in June 2012 when the case was disposed of, the then chief justice had stated that: “If later on she [Bari] has overwhelming evidence that the incident took place then she should send that information to the judges in the chambers for perusal.”

The bench directed Bari to submit the statement along with evidence in the SC office. The hearing of case is adjourned for two weeks.

[/http://tribune.com.pk/story/1204011/kohistan-honour-killing-sc-gives-k-p-govt-two-weeks-wrap-probe/](http://tribune.com.pk/story/1204011/kohistan-honour-killing-sc-gives-k-p-govt-two-weeks-wrap-probe/)

BREAST CANCER: AWARENESS DRIVE BEGINS

Business Recorder, October 20, 2016

Actress Maya Ali, while addressing the inauguration of a three-day breast cancer awareness drive, by the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital & Research Centre (SKMCH&RC) at colleges and universities, has called for breaking social stigmas and myths attached to the women’s diseases like breast cancer. The three-day campaign began from Government College University Lahore on Wednesday with an awareness seminar which also addressed by oncologist Dr Kashifa Ehsan. The seminar was organised by the GCU Quality Enhancement Cell in collaboration with the SKMCH&RC

“Girls, it’s your life, make a promise to yourself to take care of yourself. And, the first step in this journey is that you must be aware about yourself” Maya Ali told a gathering of young female students. She told the students that in their youth they could not even talk to their parents about the feminine health issues due to lack of awareness. “But girls, you are really lucky that you are being given so much awareness about your health issues and life,” she said.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/94728/>

‘COUNTRY’S FUTURE BLEAK IF WOMEN AREN’T TREATED AS EQUALS’

The News international, October 23 2016

Our future is dark if we do not treat women as equals, internationally renowned scientist, social activist, and academic Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy said on Saturday.

He was speaking at the Karachi Women’s Peace Table at the Arts Council.

Talking about the social peculiarity of our society, he said, “The moment a girls is born, it is drilled into her head that being a girl, her only role in life will be to produce children, look after the husband, and just perform domestic chores; nothing but that.”

He added that that value may have been justifiable centuries ago but not today because this age was not that of muscular pursuits where muscle power was called for.

“Today is the age of push button existence and activity,” he added.

Dr Hoodbhoy said while half-a-century ago, fighter planes went all the way to their targets to bomb them, today we had drones, where a man sitting behind a computer desk thousands of miles away just has to adjust his joystick to bomb the target with absolute precision.

“In all fields of life there is total automation. Therefore, there should be not even an iota of discrimination.”

Decrying the trends affecting our society, Dr Hoodbhoy recalled the days in Karachi when he was growing up and said that girls used to go about freely on bicycles and no male could even think of ogling, or harassing females.

He added that the trend we were witnessing now was the outcome of the repressive gender-oriented values that were being foisted on society by orthodox elements.

He said that he did not remember having seen even a single veiled woman in Karachi.

He recalled a very famous personality, a leader of a right-wing party, who had visited Washington DC while he was there.

The leader, he added, declared at a dinner gathering that she felt really free there as she could wear and say whatever she wanted.

“Why then,” Dr Hoodbhoy queried, “should such people oppose personal freedom in their own country?” He said paradoxically enough, such obscurantist elements would strain the last nerve to get into the West.

Noted author and commentator on military affairs, Dr Ayesha Siddiqa, said women were the first casualties of a war. “Women and children suffer most in a war,” she noted.

She quoted the examples of Syria and Iraq where women were losing their children. “Today there is so much of clamour about young men ‘sacrificing’ their lives for the sake of the country but not a word about women who lose their children in a war”, she remarked.

“War snatches humanity from a society” she added. “Social militancy results from militarism.”

Expressing her outspoken views, she said, “We view war from the lens of stupidity.”

Referring to the increasing number of women coming into fields which till very recently had been considered the exclusive domain of men, she said the numbers really did not matter. “What we have to do is to ‘de masculinise’ society,” she added.

Dr Siddiqa said the two wars in which we had become “mercenaries” had instilled militancy into our collective psyche.

Another noted social activist, Dr Azra Talat Syed, said the western nations, under the umbrella of the globalisation, and the WTO, in addition to purchasing of weapons from the West, had bred this tendency where women were victims of war and economic policies.

She added that the US had told the Pakistani government that there would be no legal framework order for the workers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where American companies intended to invest, something that would hit women the hardest given the whims of the capitalists as regards the workers.

“It would spell harsh economic realities for women,” she remarked.

“We have to reverse this trend. We have to rid ourselves of the private sector.”

Umar Aftab of the White Ribbon Campaign said it was surprising that today, even in a cosmopolitan centre like Lahore, in a research with which he had been associated, 71 percent of the males surveyed said that women must “kept in their proper place”.

He added that our governments had a feudal stance and the situation called for a thorough revision of our curriculum to eliminate gender stereotypes.

Rumana Husain said the curse of weapons must be eliminated. Weapons, she added, promoted savagery. “We have to earnestly discuss the issue of provision of social justice”, she said. “We are paying for Zia-ul-Haq’s deeds.”

She said her group had written letters to 1,200 parliamentarians telling them that 20 million people in Pakistan were armed to the teeth and that gun licences were being doled out generously. However, there was no reply.

Tehreek-e-Niswan president and noted classical dancer Sheema Kermani decried the way women were being discriminated against and said that this had to stop and women had to be treated at par with their male colleagues.

Noted poetess Dr Fatima Hassan said women’s intellect was a massive force and must be harnessed to eliminate gender inequality.

In a panel discussion, Hani Baloch, whose father Wahid Baloch was whisked away on July 26 and whose whereabouts are still unknown, said, “Peace implies that we all belong to each other. Violence is a shameful act but remaining silent over it is even more so”. She narrated the manner in which her father was picked up.

In the same discussion, Kaleem Durrani said institutions were overstepping their mandate and justice was not being dispensed.

The programme opened with a dance performance by Sheema Kermani’s dance group. Later there was a humorous skit originally by the Greek writer Aristophanes.

It is the story of the women of two warring groups who decide that this squabbling must come to an end. For that they feel that they would have to grab control of their respective treasuries. It was a really comical situation where the women of the group overpower three men to seize the treasuries. It featured dances and songs by Sheema Kermani.

There was also a video depicting violence against women showing a band of happy women going to fetch water, or working in the fields and how all of a sudden they are molested by men.

The programme ended with certain recommendations being approved by the participants. They were: (1) Missing persons: People should not be whisked away so that they are never heard of again. They should be tried in courts under the due process of the law. (2) We must condemn sexual harassment, especially on the campus. (3) All censorship in publishing pertaining to Balochistan must come to an end. (4) We are part of women against weapon

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/159182-Countrys-future-bleak-if-women-arent-treated-as-equals>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 10TH TO OCTOBER 16TH 2016

A PRAISEWORTHY STEP

Business Recorder, October 10, 2016

About 500 women are reportedly murdered each year in Pakistan by their close relatives in the name of honour; honour-killing cases that go unreported must be many more. And conviction rate in such cases is almost zero, because under the law the murderer would go scot-free if pardoned by the complainant who in such cases is invariably related to the accused. Punishing rapists is equally problematic, because in rape cases DNA verification as proof of the crime is not admissible as primary evidence.

Hopefully, all of this is going to change – a joint sitting of parliament on Thursday passed extensive amendments to concerned laws plugging loopholes that allowed people who committed such offences go unpunished. Both the Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 were originally moved by the ex-member of Senate Sughra Imam and passed by the Upper House. However, apparently under pressure of some religious parties, the National Assembly did not take them up, and the bills lapsed. Perhaps, but for some touching cases of women burning and the gruesome honour-killing of Facebook star Qandeel Baloch in recent months such a prompt legislation by parliament would not have happened.

It was Senator Farhatullah Babar, who has earned the ‘notoriety’ of seeking legislation for the weak and the powerless, moved the amendment bills in a joint sitting of parliament, and the house passed them unanimously. What other magic had worked for this dramatic turn we have no clue, except for the growing national awakening to get into pace with the time defying dictates by the so-called custodians of our culture and faith.

Sometime back, the Islamic Ideology Council had opposed admission of DNA proof of rape as primary evidence. Senator Farhatullah Babar is rightly elated that parliament has ‘asserted its authority over the Council’.

The amended law on honour killing envisages that if a woman is murdered in the name of honour by a close family member he would be liable to strict punishment even if he is pardoned by another family member. But it is up to the judge to decide if the killing was for honour or some other reason – a lacuna that is being pointed out by the civil society.

Also, there was some debate about the compoundability of offence of honour killing, to which Senator Babar reacted saying that that’s not an issue of ideology but of politics. If murder under the anti-terror laws and Women Protection Act 2004 was not compoundable, why should it be compoundable in honour killing cases.

Not only would the anti-rape amended law admit DNA as primary and exclusive evidence, it would also stipulate punishment for the officers who may sabotage or disregard the investigation. An added provision also holds that anyone who rapes a minor or a mentally or physically disabled person would be liable to punishment for death penalty or life imprisonment. T

he hearing of cases against offences such as rape would be held in-camera and would admit video links to record statements of the victim and witnesses. And the media has been barred from publishing or publicising names or giving any clue to identification of the victim, except when publishing the court judgement.

In order to incorporate such provisions, related sections of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) would be duly amended.

<http://www.brecorder.com/editorials/0/92549/>

NEW PRO-WOMEN LAWS A STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION: SUGHRA

The Express Tribune, October 10th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Beset by grief over murder of her daughter, an aggrieved mother from a village in Punjab’s Jhang district approached her public representative more than a decade back.

Genuinely outraged, she, too, is in a dilemma. In the same gathering at this representative’s ‘dera’ are some other members of the same family and relatives, pleading the mother to pardon the culprit.

The public representative herself a woman, backs the mother and asks her to let the law take its course and the mother stays the course. A few months later, the public representative comes to know the hapless mother capitulated under family pressure and ‘forgave’ the perpetrator – her son who had killed his sister in the name of ‘honour’.

Such cases are commonplace; in most cases, the whole family is accomplice to the crime, says Sugra Imam who encounters such cases in her constituency. The plight of this destitute mother and many others she dealt with, made her realise the loopholes in extant laws.

Former Senator Sughra Imam authored and tabled both legislations; the anti-honour killing and anti-rape bills passed unanimously during the joint sitting of both Houses last week.

She also has the distinction of having four private member's bills passed by the parliament – a record achievement for any legislator.

All these bills were passed by the Senate before Sughra's term as a Senator expired last year. They lapsed in the National Assembly. One of her senior colleagues Farhatullah Babar of the PPP also deserves accolades for persistently pursuing Sughra's bills. The pair made good use of parliamentary instrument that allows taking up before the joint session any legislation that was adopted in one house but lapsed in the other.

Sughra also shares her success with the government, particularly federal law minister Zahid Hamid for bringing up her bills on the agenda of the joint sitting where everyone voted in their favour. Tagged the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences in the name or on the pretext of Honor) Bill, 2016, it is aimed at preventing the killing of women in the name of 'honor' by making it a non-compoundable offence.

It prescribes tougher punishments than ordinary murder cases. The honor killing convicts will have to face a maximum prison term of 25 years even if relatives of the victims struck an agreement with the convict and pardoned them. However, they can play a vital part in pardoning the death sentence.

Existing laws allowed murderers to be released after legal heirs pardoned them.

The new anti-rape law, the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences Relating to Rape) Bill, 2016, added some new provisions, including provision for conducting DNA tests on both the alleged victim and perpetrator. Rape of minors, as well as the mentally- and physically-ill, would become punishable by death.

Law-enforcers or policemen would also face imprisonment if their negligence or biased approach was proved during investigation of such cases.

The former senator, who normally avoids media attention, in an interview with The Express Tribune termed passing of both the bills culmination of her life-long struggle. During public dealing as young legislator first as district nazim and then as member of the Punjab Assembly from 2002-08, before she was elected Senator in 2009, she encountered many such cases. She felt the need for delineating stricter laws to discourage the increasing trend for these menaces in the society.

"I can still recall those people... that mother, and (other) close relatives and some others from the same clan. They were perfectly aware that the killer will be set free because the complainant was the mother," she said.

In this particular case, she said, the mother appeared genuinely outraged, but in the end, she succumbed to peer pressure after some time.

"There were cases where the whole family was involved. One such case was brought before me," she said.

The accused and victim in honour killing cases are from the same family and tend to forgive each other hence there are hardly any convictions.

Sughra said she realised there were loopholes in the law which, were exploited to allow miscarriage of justice in most murders committed in the name of 'honour'.

“They kill with impunity because they know they will pay no price. The law was not proving any deterrent at all,” she remarked.

The newly passed anti-honour killing law, is the amended version of Sughra’s draft. She had proposed making the offence non-compoundable, including the death penalty. She calls the amended version still a step in the right direction.

“In due course as the new amendment is implemented we will see its impact and then we can assess whether it has the desired deterrent effect. If not, legislation is a dynamic process and it can be improved,” she said.

She also rejoices the passing of her other bill — the anti rape law. It is a step towards moving away from circumstantial evidence towards empirical evidence, helping rape victims get justice, she said. According to her, existing laws relied heavily on circumstantial evidence to prove rape cases, resulting in negligible conviction rate.

Her two other bills, adopted in a similar manner during the previous joint sitting of the parliament, dealt with conflict of interest.

The Civil Service Amendment Bill, bars civil servants to take another job with any international organisation or donor while in service. The other was privatization commission amendment bill binding the commission members to have post-transaction audit of privatization needs.

She had moved also another bill that proposed a bar on dual nationals on joining civil service, judiciary or the armed forces. The bill was dropped at the nascent stage.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1196366/new-pro-women-laws-step-right-direction-sughra/>

THE WEB AND WOMEN’S HARASSMENT

Dawn October 12th, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

LAST week, law-enforcement officials from the Federal Investigation Agency arrested an assistant professor at the University of Karachi. According to an FIR registered against him, he had made five fake Facebook profiles of a female colleague. The profiles had been created as early as 2015; her picture had been used and in at least one case included lewd and immoral content. The arrest was made under Section 21 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, and the suspect will remain in police custody for 14 days until a remand hearing and, eventually, a trial date is set for him.

The KU cyber-harassment case is not unique. According to the FIA, there were 3,027 cases of cybercrime in the 2014-2015 period, and 45 per cent of these concerned the online harassment of women by men. According to the NGO Hamara Internet, cases of stolen Facebook profile pictures are routine and in some cases have forced women to completely stop using social media sites. In several cases, women report having their Facebook profile picture stolen and manipulated through the use of photo modification software, which is cheap and easy to obtain.

These doctored pictures are then used to blackmail women, especially those who are not particularly web-savvy and do not know how to contest such claims or lodge complaints on Facebook. Afraid of the consequences and the censure of male family members, most do not report the harassment to law-enforcement agencies. They (and often all other women who hear of such cases) stop using the internet altogether.

This sort of exclusion of women from digital space is a tragedy. As is well known, women in Pakistan already face all sorts of harassment and restrictions on entering and inhabiting public spaces. Given this, the internet space had over the years become a venue where they could participate in discussions, debates and make their perspectives (so ignored or marginalised otherwise) known.

However, as is the case of the actual physical public sphere, online harassment by men seeks to exclude and push them out of this new realm as well. It could even be argued that since cyber-harassers can maintain their own anonymity, the realm offers even more opportunities to target and stalk women with little fear of being found out.

Cyber-harassment does not simply exist in the theft and proliferation of doctored profile pictures without the consent of the victim. At home, women are often not given the right to privacy in their digital interactions.

As a Hamara Internet report documents, many Pakistani women are forced to share their password information with brothers, fathers, husbands, etc as a condition of their being permitted to use the internet at all. Smartphone passwords and email passwords have to be supplied for regular inspection by these male family members. Of course, those male family members do not share their own password information with their female relatives.

This practice is so commonplace and considered so justifiable within families that it is hardly, if ever, discussed or critiqued. In reality, it presents a form of discrimination that rests upon the assumption that only men have a right to privacy, while women's digital lives (like their actual lives) must be approved and analysed by their male guardians.

The premise is wrong in real life and wrong in virtual life. If women must share because 'they have nothing to hide' then so must men, whose refusal to do so suggests that they may have a lot to hide.

The particular perniciousness of the cyber-harassment of women is also attached to shaming norms within Pakistan and their clever exploitation by cyber-harassers. The fear and panic that women experience following the theft of a profile picture is a consequence of the fact that even the most superfluous suggestion of wrongdoing (even if fake and doctored) is enough to condemn a woman as immoral in Pakistani society.

The fact that the picture is fake or the information incorrect is often insufficient to remove this taint. Cyber-harassers know this and exploit it well. Their own conscience is shelved, an act made easier by the fact that many of those who use virtual means to harass and stalk women imagine these actions to be less real, and hence unpunishable.

The work of NGOs like Hamara Internet and the Digital Rights Foundation (DRF) presents some hope in this regard. The former regularly holds workshops around the country trying to educate women on how to prevent cyber-harassment, how to report it and how to manage their own digital shadow.

They recommend that women begin conversations with male family members regarding their right to digital privacy, put password codes on all their devices, and regularly utilise anti-virus software so that their data is not compromised. They recommend using a search engine like DuckDuckGo to see the personal information about them that already exists online. A reverse image search using a Facebook profile picture can also show if that data has been stolen.

According to Nighat Daad, who heads DRF, the recent case of cyber-harassment at KU is not the first time the institution has had to deal with the issue. It is the first time, however that something has been done about it. It is a good first step, but it does not take away the potential misuse of the law by state authorities to impose greater restrictions on the use of digital spaces in Pakistan.

Her point is a useful one; ensuring that the web is both free of state intrusion and constraint and also free for women is a delicate balancing act. It is also, however, a very worthwhile one.

The worldwide web is an interface of opportunity, a forum where Pakistanis, so often excluded and marginalised, have a window to the world. It is worth their efforts to keep it open, free and equally available to men and women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289530/the-web-and-womens-harassment>

ISLAMABAD: UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, commemorated the UN International Day of the Girl Child on 8 October with a cricket day for girls.

The event took place at Pakistan Sweet Homes in Islamabad on Tuesday, and more than 70 girls from 4 different schools and 15 women from the expatriate community participated. A total of 350 spectators, organizers and cricket players took part in the event. Young girls from Mashal Model School, Millennium Roots Schools, National Special Education Center and Pakistan Sweet Homes played a number of cricket matches in an all-day tournament to celebrate the day.

The UN International Day of the Girl Child promotes girls' human rights, highlights gender inequalities existing between girls and boys and addresses the various forms of discrimination and abuse suffered by girls around the world, a statement issued by the UNICEF office in Islamabad said.

The world's 1.1 billion girls are part of a large and vibrant global generation poised to take on the future. Yet the ambition for gender equality in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights the preponderance of disadvantage and discrimination borne by girls everywhere on a daily basis.

Speaking at the event, Ms. Sangeeta Thapa, Deputy Country Representative of UN Women, congratulated all participants and said that cricket is an excellent way to promote girls' empowerment. "Sport creates confidence which is required for all girls to grow into strong and independent women", she said.—NNI

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/12/4-page/802768-news.html>

PAKISTAN HAS HIGHEST INCIDENCE OF BREAST CANCER IN ASIA

Business Recorder, 12 October 2016

LAHORE: Pakistan has the highest rate of breast cancer all over Asia due to which every year around 40,000 women die. One out of every nine women in Pakistan faces risk of the disease while the prevalence of this deadly ailment is the highest amongst all types of cancer in the country.

National Coordinator, Pink Ribbon, Omer Aftab told Business Recorder that fortunately, breast cancer can be detected and cured at a very early stage.

Therefore, it is necessary to focus on prevention and diagnoses rather than cure since early diagnosis in breast cancer increases chances of survival to more than 90 percent, he said.

Experts revealed that the recent trends in Pakistan have shown that the breast cancer incidence is alarmingly high in young girls. Breast cancer is one of the oldest types of cancers and also the most common form among females. Breast cancer's basic definition is an uncontrolled growth of breast cells.

When cells divide and multiply rapidly, they form a lump, called tumor. Nearly 80 percent of findings on mammogram are not cancers.

They are usually benign tumors, a cyst, or some other non-cancerous condition. A tumor is defined as cancer only when it can invade nearby tissues and organs and damage them. Then it is called malignant, experts said.

In last 25 years, experts said, Pakistan has witnessed a significant increase in number of cases of various kinds of cancers and the threat claimed not less than 100,000 lives in 2015. The number of deaths from cancers particularly from lung cancer in males and breast cancer among females is also on the rise in the country. Apart from many other factors, lack of awareness among public about various aspects of the problem is a leading cause of damages due to cancers, the experts added.

They said studies revealed that every year, nearly 300,000 new cases of various kinds of cancers are reported from across the country that adds up to the existing pool of millions of patients of cancer undergoing treatment in Pakistan.

According to health experts, there are number of reasons for rise in number of cases of cancers though the four main causes include: longer life expectancy, more accurate diagnosis, alarming prevalence of Hepatitis B and C and the rise in tobacco use.

Raising public awareness about breast cancer is of singular importance as it is the necessary first step that will go a long way towards alleviating the burden of this disease among Pakistani women, Omer said.

On the other hand, Pakistan lacks facilities for treatment of cancer patients and various studies have shown that less than 40 percent of all cancer patients in the country are able to receive health care while diagnostic and treatment facilities are not available to over 60 percent patients.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/10/12/4-page/802772-news.html>

UNDOING THE HONOUR LAWS

The Express Tribune, October 11th, 2016.

It's true when they say one man's shame is another's pride. Just as it's true there are men in this country that find honour in honour killing.

The sentiment's supposed to be an old one: in certain Ottoman lands, the killer would sprinkle his victim's blood on his clothes and parade through the streets, thus 'increasing his honour.' It would be courting arrest, unless the blood was a sister's or daughter's.

True or not, the story is haunting: even back then, a man's honour was directly related to a woman's body. And even back then, it was thought a fair trade: a woman lost her life, and a man regained his dignity.

A trade that, for all intents and purposes, was legalised in Pakistan. Because when we talk about honour killings, we need to talk less about social norms and more about the codes that encourage these norms: the qisas and diyat laws.

Consider: a woman is murdered over a loss of honour. This 'loss' may flow from seeking divorce (Samia Sarwar), marrying for love (Salma Bibi), or posting Internet videos (Qandeel Baloch) — the murder is uniform and, more often than not, gruesome.

The vast majority of victims are women, and the vast majority of the killers are blood relatives.

That's where qisas and diyat kick in: a relative of the heir could pardon the killer via blood money, and the killer could go free. And because the killer was often a father or brother — and thus related to the victim's 'heir' — Pakistan witnessed the gross spectacle of brothers pardoning brothers and fathers pardoning sons. But the justice system wasn't always a joke. This disaster began as late as 1990 — a car-crash led by Justice Afzal Zullah and piled on by establishment flunkies Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi and Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

It bears repeating from an earlier column — in greater detail than before — that these laws were not initiated by an elected government, that they found no place in popular sentiment at all. In a decision of the Supreme Court's Shariat Appellate Bench, Justices Zullah and Pir Karam Ali Shah — career conservatives — declared parts of the Pakistan Penal Code illegal in 1990. The substitute was deemed the qisas and diyat laws.

Justice Zullah began haranguing PM Benazir to draft these laws. Ms Bhutto knew the judges had sensed weakness (the SC had kept mum on the topic under General Zia). Yet BB fought it out anyway, dispatching her Attorney General to file a review. But President Ghulam Ishaq Khan ended up sacking Benazir, and bringing in Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi as

interim PM. Both Ghulams, unloved and unelected, began casting around for legitimacy. They landed on the Supreme Court, and its qisas/diyat pet project.

In the hopes that Benazir's dismissal would be green-lighted by the SC, the Ghulams ingratiated themselves by fast-tracking the qisas and diyat laws. Thus, as Tahir Wasti puts in *The Application of Islamic Criminal Law in Pakistan*, 'The Supreme Court did not deem it necessary to disapprove a statement made by [an unrepresentative] Government that was only in place for 90 days. It did not ponder over the fact that a law of such enormous importance should, firstly, be enacted by an elected Government and, secondly, legislated after thorough debate — in the National Assembly — of its advantages and disadvantages.'

The ordinance was promulgated, and the result was disaster. 'Compromise' applications flooded the courts. As Mr Wasti's research determined, the incidence of murder increased. At the same time, convictions dropped and compromise shot up; a law that 'let you get away with murder'.

Here's an ordinance thrown together for the wrong reasons, hideously drafted, erroneously applied, and failing in its result. In spite of all this, it was raised to an Act of Parliament in 1997, by the Muslim League. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Now, nearly 20 years later, the same Muslim League is looking to course-correct: it has brought on the Criminal Law (Amendment) (Offences in the Name or Pretext of Honour) Act 2016. The right says it's gone too far, whereas the left says it's not gone far enough: democracy in action.

The root issue remains: the offence of honour killing remains compoundable (i.e., open to compromise), meaning the victim's heirs may still pardon the killer. Yet the new Act means that, whatever their pardon, the killer will still serve a minimum sentence of 25 years.

This compromise on compromise — a sop to the religious right — is unwarranted: if terrorist offences are not compoundable (as provided in the Anti-Terror Act), why should honour killings be treated any different?

Then there's the trouble with such distinctions in the first place: lawyers are already foreseeing situations where the killer can claim a simple murder instead of an honour killing, and thus not attract any such pardon-exemption. Should the court believe his story, the killer may well avail the full pardon and walk out of jail, as majority of them have over the past 25 years.

Thus we circle back to the root: the fact that there's any kind of pardon for any kind of murder at all. No doubt, legislation is about making waves, and honour killings paint Pakistan in savage hues. This amendment is a step in the right direction, and that too as a result of the Sughra Imams and Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy that led the charge.

But just because the splashiest murders are being exempted from pardon (and not fully) doesn't mean we accept the morality of these pardons otherwise. It's time parliament did away with bad laws, rather than expend its energies on making them less bad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1196760/undoing-honour-laws/>

TOO EARLY TO WED

Dawn, October 14th, 2016

Yoriko Yasukawa | Jean Gough

REKHA (not her real name), who lives in the Rangpur division of Bangladesh, got married when she was just 13 years old — "just after my first menstruation", as she recalls. A year later, the 14-year-old had a child of her own, joining the ranks of the thousands upon thousands of adolescent mothers in a country where child marriage remains widespread, even though the legal age of marriage is 18 for females and 21 for males.

Rekha's story is far from unusual. Almost one in two girls in South Asia — in countries including Bangladesh, India and Nepal — will marry before turning 18, and one in six will marry before the age of 15, if current rates continue. While the practice of child marriage has declined in South Asia over time, falling from 63 per cent in 1990 to 45pc in 2010, and from 31pc in 1990 to 17pc in 2010 for girls under 15, it nevertheless remains far too high. In Bangladesh where 59pc of girls are married before the age of 18.

In Nepal, the figure is 37pc. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, some 33pc of girls are married before age 18, and 21pc of girls in Pakistan. Child marriage is a practice that primarily affects girls but boys too. While a much smaller number of boys are married as children, there are also child grooms in the region, who marry even younger child brides.

For literally millions of girls like Rekha, child marriage violates their human rights. It threatens their lives and health, as well as their future prospects, exposing them to early pregnancy, and increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Child marriage, quite simply, robs them of their future.

As the evidence shows, girls who marry young often become pregnant while they are still adolescents, putting them at risk of complications in pregnancy or childbirth — complications that are a leading cause of death among older adolescents in developing countries.

They are also more likely to experience violence, including sexual violence, than girls who marry over the age of 18 years, and to be more exposed to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV.

When they marry, girls are often forced to drop out of school so they can assume household responsibilities, denying them their right to complete their education. Child marriage limits their opportunities including their job prospects, and has long-term effects on their families.

It also has negative impacts on their children. A recent global study in five middle-income countries shows that children born to mothers 19 years or younger have a 20pc to 30pc increased risk of low birthweight and pre-term birth compared to mothers aged from 20 to 24 years. Moreover, they have a 30pc to 40pc increased risk of stunting and failing to complete their secondary-level schooling.

While many countries in South Asia have laws in place to prevent child marriage, the practice still persists. Often, at the state and community level, traditional and customary laws still allow girls younger than 18 years to marry with the consent of their parents and other authorities. Unequal power relations between men and women, women's and girls' restricted rights and opportunities, and norms which place a higher value on sons rather than daughters reinforce the practice.

And, not surprisingly, vulnerability to child marriage increases during crises when family and social structures are disrupted — for example when families are separated during natural disasters or conflicts, or when they are faced with economic hardships that prompt parents to marry off their underage daughters.

Countries around the world have committed to “eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation” in the Sustainable Development Goals that underpin the 2030 agenda whose central pledge is to leave no one behind.

UNFPA and Unicef are working together to end child marriage through a multi-country initiative to prevent girls and boys, from marrying too young, and support those already married. In South Asia, Unicef and UNFPA, in partnership with governments, are implementing proven strategies for change: keeping children — especially girls — in school, increasing their access to healthcare, educating their parents and communities, increasing economic support to families, and putting in place and enforcing legislation.

Just some days ago, Unicef and UNFPA hosted a meeting of experts from South Asia and around the world to share and build the evidence base for change.

Strong partnerships at all levels are required to end child marriage. The scale of the problem requires all of us, governments, local actors, the global community and the United Nations to act together to end child marriage. All of us need to join hands to give back to children, particularly girls like Rekha, their choices, their dreams, their futures — and their childhoods.

Yoriko Yasukawa is the UNFA regional director Asia-Pacific. Jean Gough is Unicef regional director for South Asia.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1289812/too-early-to-wed>

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES PREVENT WOMEN FROM JOBS: STUDY

Dawn, October 15th, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Women in Pakistan face numerous barriers to work, with limits on mobility and family responsibilities most often cited as important to the decision not to work, says a new study released by the Asian Development Bank.

Their job access is limited by social norms restricting how a woman may travel or appear in public, according to the synthesis report, titled “Female labour force participation in Asia — Constraints and Challenges”, which covered Pakistan, South Korea, Indonesia and China.

According to the study, female labour force participation (FLFP) in Pakistan, Indonesia and China is higher in rural areas than in cities, although this is often driven by unpaid family work in agriculture.

Restrictions on women’s mobility appear to be a major factor contributing to gender disparities in economic outcomes in Pakistan.

Women at higher levels of education who work outside the home earn more than twice as much as those who work at home. While women’s education is rising, its benefits can only be fully realised if women are able to work in jobs that fully utilise their skills, the study emphasises.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1290130/family-responsibilities-prevent-women-from-jobs-study>

WOMEN SEEK PROOF OF OWNERSHIP FOR LAND GIVEN TO THEM

Dawn, October 15th, 2016

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: A seminar held to study the state of public land grantees comprising many previously landless peasant women, organised by the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) at their office here on Friday, brought up several issues faced by these women even after being awarded agriculture land.

“Thanks to the government, I now have two acres of land on which I grow rice,” said Bhana of Thatta. “But I don’t have the proof of ownership of this piece of land. I have no documents,” she said.

Sahiba, also from Thatta, said she was given four acres of land. “I grow wheat and rice on my land and I plan to grow tomato, too. But I face plenty of hurdles from getting seed, insecticides and loans for all that as I have no documents to prove ownership of the land I need all this for,” she said.

Meanwhile, Murad Khatoon from Badin said she was given 16 acres but she could not even step on the land as the zamindar won’t allow it.

Tahir Iqbal of the Legal Rights Forum explained that a piece of land was given to a peasant woman for 15 years and she must pay Rs100 every year for those 15 years to make it Rs1,500 after which she was presented the documents of that land she has been cultivating for 15 years. "But," he said, "the flaw in this agreement is that there is no mechanism in place for the collection of this Rs100 per year. The women don't know and are confused about where to make the payment or to whom," he said.

"That could be very dangerous because not making regular payments means that the land they have now may be reverted to the government," he said.

Iqbal also said though it was a great initiative on the part of the government to have distributed public land among peasant women, there were several cases of this having been done haphazardly. "Some households ended up with too much land as every woman in that family got a piece of land. So there is a need for proper research so that one piece of land goes to one household," he said.

"Another issue is that when a peasant woman has land, she is not supplied water for irrigation through the tube well which is owned by the zamindar."

Uroosa Khatti said many issues were being highlighted now after analysing the situation now following the giving of lands to the women. "At some places the land has not even been properly demarcated while at others there are issues coming up with the zamindar. These are illiterate women who, if they go into litigation, cannot really fight the cases on their own," she said.

"There is also a need to look at the political will in carrying out the process. It should be a transparent procedure throughout," she said, adding that decisions in several problematic cases were still pending with the government in the matter.

Babar Ayaz then pointed towards another aspect of the scheme like the importance of women's economic empowerment. "When women start to earn, they also earn respect. Peasant women, who play a major role in our agriculture, deserve 50 per cent of the public land being distributed among the peasants," he said.

"It is heart-warming to see all these women, who were never even included in major family decisions such as their own children's marriages, being asked their opinion now after they have been given their own land," he said.

Anis Haroon, NCHR's member from Sindh, who was chairing the seminar, said that there was a need for an effective redress mechanism to be put in place by the government to resolve the issues of the public land grantees. She also said that the deserving peasants should be identified without any prejudices, keeping in view the poverty scorecard.

Finally, Erum Khalid, special assistant to the Chief Minister on Women's Development, who was the guest of honour, said she and her party, the Pakistan People Party, carried a lot of respect for the peasants, especially women, as they were the ones doing most of the work. "They feed us through their agriculture. So land reforms were and still are the need of the times," said.

About the Rs1,500 in 15 years payment after which comes the real ownership, she said that it was for the protection of the women themselves. "Here even if a woman owns a gold ring the men folk in her family want her to sell it. She won't be able to sell this land if she doesn't own it. And by the time she would have its ownership she would be too strong for anyone to push her in any direction," she said.

"Of course, there will always be flaws whenever any new scheme is executed. We will resolve the issues as soon as we can."

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 3RD TO OCTOBER 9TH 2016

WOMEN AS PROPERTY

Dawn October 4th, 2016

LAWs enacted in Pakistan that guarantee equality and protection for women have never been extended to Fata. Treated as personal property, their fate tied to tribal customs or *riwaj*, tribal women have limited recourse to the law under the colonial-era FCR. Because the underlying component of tribal society is patriarchal, women must live by the rules of engagement set by men.

This is the context of a report in this paper over the weekend that focuses on the appalling practice of buying and selling women, a custom codified under *Turizona* law in Kurram Agency. Established under British rule in 1944, this law allows for tribal women to be purchased like cattle for the purposes of matrimony and at varying price tags — *rasmana* or money that the heirs of a woman receive when she is sold.

Her price depends on whether she is single, married, widowed or even abducted. Indeed, such sordid customs — *vulvar* and *swara* included — must have no legal standing whatsoever in the 21st century. The challenge is to ensure that anti-women customary laws are not codified in the process of instituting reforms in Fata.

However, pro-women reforms will not be widely accepted without changing the perceptions of tribal men. This is doable through education and instituting gender equality via legal and political reforms. One way to weaken tradition is to repeal outmoded laws that are replete with inhumane and discriminatory clauses.

Surely the government knows that what is due to women needs attention in the tribal region; laws justifying customs deny them their right to gender equality and fuel religious intolerance and violence, whether they disenfranchise women or subject them to forced marriages to settle feuds. The latter is criminalised in the rest of the country, but not in Fata.

Even though political agents have appellate power over *jirgas*, they acquiesce in decisions adversely impacting women. The superior court's jurisdiction must be extended to Fata so that women can seek constitutional protection. That their lives have been gravely threatened by militancy and disrupted by military operations further underscores the necessity of removing legally enshrined gender-based discrimination when mainstreaming Fata.

If ever there was the right moment for debate around reforming a much-neglected region and the status of its women, this is it. Further, for counter-insurgency to succeed, women as one of the most affected groups must be at the core of peace-building and political decision-making.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1287775>

MAN KILLS WIFE FOR 'HONOUR' IN ISLAMABAD

The Express Tribune, October 5th, 2016.

Arsalan Altaf

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have managed to solve the mystery surrounding the dumped body of a young woman found near Sabzi Mandi nearly 10 days ago.

She had been strangled to death allegedly by her husband because he had 'doubts about her character' and then fled the country, police said.

On September 25, Islamabad police, received a tip about a suspicious suitcase dumped near a bus stand along the IJ Principal Road near Sabzi Mandi. Upon inspection, police discovered that the body of a young woman had been stuffed into the bag.

Officials initially had few clues apart from sketchy footage from some surveillance cameras which showed that a taxi had dropped the bag off. However, police could not identify the taxi since its number plate was not visible.

They, however, managed to identify the woman as 26-year-old Anam Saleem. A post-mortem report showed that she had been strangled to death.

Officials told The Express Tribune on Tuesday that Anam's husband had arrived in Pakistan on September 22 from Saudi Arabia, where he reportedly works.

A day later, he went to the Benazir Bhutto International Airport to receive his wife, who was returning to the country from Abu Dhabi. Usman then took his wife to the upscale DHA locality in the capital along with a friend, Basharat.

"Usman killed Anam by strangling her, as he had doubts about her character," a police officer familiar with the investigation told The Express Tribune. He spoke on the condition of anonymity since he was not authorised to speak to the media.

"[Usman] stuffed her body in a suit case and dumped it along IJ Principal Road on the evening of September 25," the officer added.

The next morning, Usman boarded a flight for Saudi Arabia and left the country.

The officer added that the police's Special Investigation Unit had managed to apprehend all those who had facilitated the murder including the drivers and Usman's friend Basharat while red warrants have been issued for Usman.

Officials further pointed out that all suspects had confessed to the crime while Anam's clothes, purse and other belongings were recovered from Basharat's house.

Police officials said that Anam hailed from Kharian in Gujrat district. They further disclosed that she belonged to a Christian family, but had converted to Islam before marrying Usman.

Meanwhile, police have not made any headway in the case of two other mutilated bodies which were found in the same area over the past two weeks.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1193640/murder-mystery-solved-man-kills-wife-honour-dumps-body-near-sabzi-mandi-says-police/>

ANTI-HONOUR KILLING, ANTI-RAPE BILLS FINALLY PASSED

Dawn, October 7th, 2016

Hassan Belal Zaidi

ISLAMABAD: The joint sitting of both houses of parliament on Thursday finally passed two key pro-women bills that have been pending assent for a long time.

The Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 were originally piloted by PPP legislator Sughra Imam and passed by the Senate in March 2015. However, since they were not taken up by the National Assembly in time, the bills lapsed.

Thereafter, the only way to secure their passage was in a joint sitting of parliament.

Although the bills remained in cold storage for quite some time, parliamentarians were jolted out of their lassitude when a number of horrific incidents of women-burning came to light in quick succession in June; Maria Sadaqat in

Murree, Ambreen in Abbottabad and Nazia Hameed in Kasur. These were followed by the shocking honour-killing of social media personality Qandeel Baloch by her own brother.

This series of tragic events reinvigorated efforts for the passage of these bills, but efforts were stalled as the Committee of the Joint Sitting on Bills struggled to win over the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI). Both parties were not ready to vote for the proposed laws because they considered them to be against the tenets of Islam, though their primary objections were to the anti-honour killing bill.

Under the new law, if a woman is murdered in the name of honour by a close family member, they will be liable to strict punishment even if they are pardoned by another family member.

Law Minister Zahid Hamid told Dawn that the bills had been unanimously approved by the Committee of the Joint Sitting on Bills.

According to him, the anti-honour killing bill, in principle, directs judges to sentence someone accused of an honour-killing to a life-term in prison, whether the victim's immediate family forgives the culprit or not.

On Thursday, however, PPP senators Farhatullah Babar, Sherry Rehman and others objected to the watering down of this clause, and asked for honour-killing to be declared a non-compoundable offence.

Mr Babar told the house that when murder was not compoundable under anti-terror laws, meaning that qisas and diyat did not apply, why was it being made an ideological issue for this law?

He termed those opposing the exclusion of qisas and diyat from the honour-killing law as being motivated by "politics and not religion".

The most significant provision of this bill is the fact that it gives legal cover to the collection and use of DNA evidence to prove that rape has been committed.

This flies in the face of a ruling by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), which had held in 2013 that DNA evidence could not be considered as primary evidence in rape cases, though it could be used as supporting evidence.

"Parliament has asserted its authority over the CII through this law," Mr Babar told Dawn after the session.

The bill makes amendments to Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1898 and the Qanun-i-Shahadat Order 1984, some of which are quite ground-breaking.

For example, it holds officers who may sabotage or disregard the investigation to account by stipulating three years in prison, a fine, or both for those who do not pursue an inquiry diligently.

It also increases the punishment for obstruction of such an investigation from three months in prison to one year, and the fine from Rs500 to Rs50,000.

The new law stipulates that anyone who rapes a minor or a mentally or physically disabled person will be liable for the death penalty or life imprisonment.

The same punishment is prescribed if a public servant such as police officer, jailer or medical officer takes advantage of their position to commit rape.

It also declares that trials for offences such as rape and related crimes shall be conducted in-camera and also allows for the use of technology such as video links to record statements of the victim and witnesses, to spare them the humiliation or risk entailed by court appearances.

The media has also been barred from publishing or publicising names or any information that would reveal the identity of a victim, except when publishing court judgements.

Talking about the anti-rape bill, Mr Babar said that the new bill also deletes provisions in the Qanun-i-Shahadat (law of evidence) relating to questioning the character of the rape victim, so that sex workers are not excluded from the law's protection.

Oscar-winning filmmaker Sharmeen-Obaid Chinoy, who was one of the voices calling for the swift adopting of these bills, told Dawn their passage was a win for the women of Pakistan.

“This bill is the first step – we need to make sure it is implemented and men are sent to jail for honour-killings. We need to make examples of people so that men begin to understand there is no honour in killing a woman,” she concluded.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1288569/anti-honour-killing-anti-rape-bills-finally-passed>

POLISH LAWMAKERS OVERWHELMINGLY REJECT TOTAL BAN ON ABORTION

Dawn, October 7th, 2016

WARSAW: Polish lawmakers voted overwhelmingly on Thursday to reject a proposal by an anti-abortion group that would have imposed a total ban on abortion, caving in to massive outrage by women who have been dressing in black and waging street protests across the country.

The mostly Catholic nation already has one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe, with abortion only allowed in rare cases — rape or incest, when the mother's life is in danger or the foetus is badly damaged.

The proposal for further tightening the law came from a citizens' initiative that gathered some 450,000 signatures in this nation of 38 million. It was supported by the Roman Catholic church.

But it was highly unpopular with most Poles, with people baulking at the idea that a teenage rape victim should be forced to have her baby, or that a woman whose health was badly compromised would be forced to carry to term. The proposal had also called for prison terms of up to five years for women who sought abortions.

With abortion already illegal in most cases, many women said what frightened them the most in the proposal was that it could have led doctors to be afraid to perform prenatal tests or that women who suffered miscarriages could start to fall under criminal suspicion.

Initially many members of the conservative ruling party, Law and Justice, supported the proposal. Two weeks ago a majority of lawmakers voted to consider it, sending it to a commission for further study. But the party backed away from it under massive social pressure, and lawmakers voted against it 352-58.

The outcome of the vote is a blow to the ruling party, which has a core of ultra-conservative Catholic voters that wanted to see further restrictions to the abortion law. But the party also came to power thanks to centrist voters and young people who were attracted by the party's welfare programme, with its promises to help the poor and even out the vast economic differences of the post-communist era.

Many in that latter group have been taking to the streets in recent days, and opinion polls show that the party's support has now fallen to its lowest point since it won elections a year ago. Now the party finds itself on the defensive after angering groups on all sides — women, its traditional opposition, moderates among its own electorate and religious conservatives.

Mariusz Dzierzawski, from the Stop Abortion committee, accused the ruling party leadership of “hypocrisy” for turning its back on his group's proposal. Prime Minister Beata Szydlo vowed that her government will now take other steps to protect human life. She announced a new plan to earmark more money from the budget for families with disabled children and said it would begin an information campaign that would “promote the protection of life”.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288539>

JOURNALISM — NO LONGER A MAN'S WORLD

The Express Tribune, October 7th, 2016.

KARACHI: The field of journalism is no more a ground where women are not allowed. Instead, in the past few years, women have been welcomed as much as men in the field.

This was expressed by participants belonging to various media and social organisations in a discussion on 'Media's Role on Gender and Youth Rights' on Thursday at the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi. The discussion was organised by Mediators, a public relations firm.

Various topics relating to media, gender and reporting were spoken about and participants were free to express their points of view.

Reporter Anil Datta commented on gender equality in the media and said that in recent years he had met some very promising women working in the field. "Our job has no timings, therefore, there was a time when women themselves refrained from joining it and organisations also hesitated from hiring them," he said. "But the interest shown by them was convincing and now in many organisations they have equal representation." Speaking about the freedom of reporting, Datta shared that journalists in Pakistan are as free to work as those in developed countries.

Shazia Hasan, a reporter at an English newspaper, said that when she entered the field of journalism, she was discouraged from taking the sports beat and was told that the beat does not relate to women. But later, she claimed, she took on the challenge, took sports as her beat and worked on it for several years. "I had to prove myself at every opportunity and now I am working for the city pages of my paper," she shared. Hasan said that various magazines are now being headed by women, which proves that women are as competent as men in the field of journalism.

Expressing satisfaction over the number of women in his organisation, Fahim Siddiqui, who works at a news channel, claimed there is always a 'soft corner' for women, resulting in them receiving many privileges such as pick and drop services and increased salaries and promotions where as young men coming into the field have to struggle a lot.

Agreeing with Siddiqui's previous point, Nimra Malik, a reporter at an Urdu newspaper, said she believes that in the name of feminism, women sometimes receive advantages that are not given to men. She added that her male colleagues do not receive the same incentives that are given to women.

This story is totally different at regional channels, claimed Hameed Bhutto, who is associated with regional electronic media. Bhutto said that according to his experience, women are not given a fair chance at regional news channels and newspapers. He added that organisations have started to realise women's importance and soon the stereotype of not hiring women because they are 'less courageous' will change.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1194723/gender-equality-journalism-no-longer-mans-world/>

LAWS AGAINST RAPE AND 'HONOUR' KILLING

Dawn, October 8th, 2016

THERE is a welcome change in attitudes to gender-based violence in Pakistan, but progress remains uneven and cautious for the most part. On Thursday, a joint sitting of both houses of parliament enacted two important, long-pending pieces of legislation, including the Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 and Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015.

The first stipulates that an individual found guilty of murder in the name of honour will be liable to a life term, ie 25 years, even if he is 'forgiven' by his victim's family. The other legislation, the anti-rape law, introduces sweeping changes to the way rape cases are investigated and prosecuted. For the first time, the collection and use of DNA evidence to prove rape has been given legal cover. The law also sanctions police officials who sabotage investigations

or obstruct justice in rape cases, and enhances the punishment for certain categories of the crime such as the rape of a minor or a physically/mentally disabled person.

The bill on 'honour' killings may well have remained in cold storage for even longer had it not been for a summer of gruesome murders of women at the hands of their families which were highlighted in the media. However, its enactment into law has been greeted with reservations in some quarters, mainly for the understandable reason that the crime remains a compoundable offence — ie, one in which a compromise can be effected. That is a particularly grotesque provision in the context of such killings where the family of the victim and the perpetrator are very often one and the same. Moreover, the new law does not take away judicial discretion over whether to sentence someone who has killed in the name of 'honour' to prison in the event of a pardon by the victims' family. The best one can hope is that the enhanced jail term for this crime — earlier it was 10 years minimum — indicates the gravity of the offence, thereby encouraging judges to disregard compromise when deciding punishment.

Meanwhile, the anti-rape law serves the cause of justice somewhat better. By stipulating in-camera trials and the use of technological aids such as video testimony of victims and witnesses, it seeks to mitigate the humiliating ordeal rape victims are subjected to in court. This measure, along with that mandating the protection of their identity in the media, should encourage more victims to come forward and pursue justice.

Excluding questions about their character from evidentiary proceedings is likewise a progressive step: a victim's sexual history has no relevance in a rape trial. However, the definition of rape and consent in criminal law remains incomplete and outdated, a shortcoming that the anti-rape law does not address. Thus although both the recently enacted laws are a step in the right direction, they are certainly not the last word on the serious crimes they address.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1288682>

A PRAISEWORTHY STEP

Business Recorder, October 10, 2016

About 500 women are reportedly murdered each year in Pakistan by their close relatives in the name of honour; honour-killing cases that go unreported must be many more. And conviction rate in such cases is almost zero, because under the law the murderer would go scot-free if pardoned by the complainant who in such cases is invariably related to the accused. Punishing rapists is equally problematic, because in rape cases DNA verification as proof of the crime is not admissible as primary evidence.

Hopefully, all of this is going to change – a joint sitting of parliament on Thursday passed extensive amendments to concerned laws plugging loopholes that allowed people who committed such offences go unpunished. Both the Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 were originally moved by the ex-member of Senate Sughra Imam and passed by the Upper House. However, apparently under pressure of some religious parties, the National Assembly did not take them up, and the bills lapsed. Perhaps, but for some touching cases of women burning and the gruesome honour-killing of Facebook star Qandeel Baloch in recent months such a prompt legislation by parliament would not have happened.

It was Senator Farhatullah Babar, who has earned the 'notoriety' of seeking legislation for the weak and the powerless, moved the amendment bills in a joint sitting of parliament, and the house passed them unanimously. What other magic had worked for this dramatic turn we have no clue, except for the growing national awakening to get into pace with the time defying dictates by the so-called custodians of our culture and faith.

Sometime back, the Islamic Ideology Council had opposed admission of DNA proof of rape as primary evidence. Senator Farhatullah Babar is rightly elated that parliament has 'asserted its authority over the Council'.

The amended law on honour killing envisages that if a woman is murdered in the name of honour by a close family member he would be liable to strict punishment even if he is pardoned by another family member. But it is up to the judge to decide if the killing was for honour or some other reason – a lacuna that is being pointed out by the civil society.

Also, there was some debate about the compoundability of offence of honour killing, to which Senator Babar reacted saying that that's not an issue of ideology but of politics. If murder under the anti-terror laws and Women Protection Act 2004 was not compoundable, why should it be compoundable in honour killing cases.

Not only would the anti-rape amended law admit DNA as primary and exclusive evidence, it would also stipulate punishment for the officers who may sabotage or disregard the investigation. An added provision also holds that anyone who rapes a minor or a mentally or physically disabled person would be liable to punishment for death penalty or life imprisonment. T

he hearing of cases against offences such as rape would be held in-camera and would admit video links to record statements of the victim and witnesses. And the media has been barred from publishing or publicising names or giving any clue to identification of the victim, except when publishing the court judgement.

In order to incorporate such provisions, related sections of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) would be duly amended.

<http://www.brecorder.com/editorials/0/92549/>

November 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 28 TH TO DECEMBER 4TH 2016

OLD ENMITY: MAN THROWS ACID ON WOMAN IN KHANPUR

The Express Tribune, November 28th, 2016

BAHAWALPUR: A man attacked a woman with acid over an old enmity in Khanpur on Sunday. Kainat Bibi, a resident of Vehari, told the police that she went to meet her relatives in Khanpur when suspect Javed Gujjar and his two companions barged into the house and threw acid on her. As a result, she suffered burn injuries on her face and other body parts.

The victim was rushed to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Khanpur where she was under treatment. However, the police had registered a case and started investigation.

Earlier on June 16, a woman threw acid on a man for declining her marriage proposal in Multan. Shamim, resident of Moza Gharyal in Multan district's Makhdoom Rasheed area, threw acid on Sadaqat, 24, after he refused to marry her.

In another incident, two men riding a motorcycle threw acid on a group of women, including a five-year-old girl, apparently in the wake of a dispute over the minor girl's custody.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1246306/old-enmity-man-throws-acid-woman-khanpur/>

MEDICAL REPORTS CONFIRM RAPE CHARGE AGAINST RETIRED COLONEL

The Express Tribune, November 29th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: Medical reports have confirmed the rape charge against a retired army officer, police officials said.

He was arrested in September after being charged with rape.

SH*, a retired colonel, was arrested by the Golra police after he allegedly sexually assaulted a woman in a house in Sector G-13 on September 28.

The victim*, in her statement, told the police that she saw an ad in the newspaper about employment opportunities for girls at a property office in Islamabad. She dialed the number given in the newspaper and was told by SH* to come to Islamabad.

The victim, a divorced mother-of-three, worked as domestic helper in Lahore. After being promised a job by ST, she came to Islamabad on September 28 and was received by him at the bus station. ST took me to an empty house in Sector G-13 where he raped me,” the victim stated in her complaint to the police. She says that after the assault, she went into a washroom and dialed 15. A police team reached the house and arrested the suspect on the woman’s complaint.

Now, police sources have informed The Express Tribune that the results of a medical examination of the victim and the suspect confirmed that the sexual assault took place. Police have submitted the medical reports along with the charge-sheet to the court.

*Names withheld to protect identity

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1247232/ungentlemanly-officer-medical-reports-confirm-rape-charge-retired-colonel/>

‘IT’S AN AMAZING TIME FOR WOMEN’

Dawn, November 30th, 2016

Peerzada Salman

KARACHI: This year in May the WOW Festival in Karachi generated quite a buzz in the country and around the world. A Thinkin session for the next festival was held at the British Council on Tuesday afternoon.

The session began with all participants introducing themselves to the host. They spoke about what they did and their interest in the WOW (Women of the World) Festival. After a couple of speeches by British Council director for Sindh and Balochistan Chris Hunt and Neha Malkani two short films were shown. The first was to do with the WOW London festival and the second had selected shots from the festival held in Karachi’s Beach Luxury hotel in May.

This was followed by the founder of the festival Jude Kelly’s address to the audience via video link. She said she founded WOW because she realised that any advantage she had was because other people had fought for women like her. She said there was no country in the world yet where we could say ‘that’s what a gender-equal world looks like’. She said the reason she thought of a festival and not a conference was that because she wanted to celebrate all that every single girl had done. She said there was still a lot to be solved.

Ms Kelly said the festival had spread to many countries, becoming a global movement. She said it gave the women a chance to think about things like ‘what do we do about sexual harassment’, ‘what do we do about education’, ‘what do we do about all things that affect us’, etc. She said women in Karachi or Rio de Janeiro or in Finland wanted change. She remarked, “It’s an amazing time for girls and women.”

Highlighting the importance of Thinkins Ms Kelly said you couldn’t have a festival about women unless it was with and by women of all backgrounds. So the Thinkins allowed everybody to have their voice heard. She said: “Every voice has to count, everyone’s story has to matter.” She said stories were the most important thing. She said keynote speeches, poetry and debates were essentially stories.

Ms Kelly said she had the fortune to be part of the WOW Festival in Karachi. She said the energy, anger (at times), and the vividness were wonderful. She said it was great to see 10-year-olds sitting alongside older people. Mentioning the presence of boys in the festival, she said equality was about a changed world for everyone. She urged the participants of Tuesday's Thinkin to be as brave as possible.

Jim Hollington, British Council's director for arts in South Asia, said the festival held in May was a success and the council was absolutely committed to making sure WOW Karachi was sustainable. He said it had been decided that Karachi would be the first of a number of WOW festivals across the South Asian region. He said they had planned to take the model of Karachi and take it to other cities of South Asia in three years. He said WOW would go to Kathmandu, Nepal in February next year.

Amenah Sheikh talked about the team that helped organise the May festival and the activities that happened during the event. Her speech was followed by audience participation. They were divided into five groups to come up with suggestions for the coming festival. It took them a little over half an hour to note down their ideas.

Group 1 said sessions based on women's literature should be included in the event. Group 2 said women should take themselves seriously first and there should be success stories from low-income groups' women. Group 3 and 4 said discussions should be diverse and instead of talking to people, problems should be addressed. Group 5 said there shouldn't be any cultural barriers.

Finally, Raania Durrani, who will soon join as director for arts, thanked the groups for giving their ideas and hoped that the conversations would carry on all through the year.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299492/its-an-amazing-time-for-women>

NO FAIR DEAL FOR WOMEN

Dawn December 1st, 2016

I.A. Rehman

THIS year, Pakistan's women activists are observing 16 days of activism against gender violence (Nov 25 to Dec 10) with greater fervour than previously. At the same time, no sooner is a law to curb forced conversions adopted in Sindh than the orthodoxy is out in battledress to kill it. The fight for women's rights in this country is going to get even more bitter.

Our women suffer every possible form of deprivation, insult and injury. Over the years, they have also won a few concessions in the form of somewhat favourable laws and policies. They have scored these successes largely through their own struggles. They have certainly received some support from governments, though more in the form of rhetoric than benevolent measures. And they have been helped by a tiny percentage of men who can risk being taunted by big, burly clerics as wives' 'slaves', or worse, as the West's 'stooges'.

Each year, the women of Pakistan march a step forward and are pushed more than two steps back by the formidable knights of orthodoxy, patriarchy and pseudo-religious militancy. Thus, on balance, year by year the condition of women becomes bleaker and bleaker. Why is this so? But let us first pay some attention to the women's dirge.

At most of the meetings held in connection with 16 days of activism, the audiences were reminded of Pakistan's being the third most dangerous country for women in the world, where 90pc of women experience some form of violence, and where the daily violence chart shows six women abducted, another six murdered, four molested and three driven to suicide.

Some other indicators of women's plight include the Gender Gap Index 2015 that found Pakistan second from the bottom among 145 countries; the maternal mortality rate that shows Pakistan has slipped from 147th to 149th position

in global ranking; and other disturbing figures showing that 55pc of girls do not go to school and 35pc are married before they turn 16.

While no form of women's oppression can be condoned, violence is the worst affliction they are subjected to. And we use the term violence in the broad sense it has been defined by WHO ie "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation".

That violence against women is on the increase cannot be denied. The causes are known: the state's growing reliance on physical force to settle any matters; brutalisation of society especially as a result of indiscriminate hangings; legalised and illegal torture/ detention cells; social customs that discriminate against the poor; the spread of evil customs of vani and swara, from peripheral districts to metropolitan centres; and poor implementation of women protection laws. The state has displayed neither the will nor the capacity to tackle these issues.

While there is some hue and cry when a Qandeel Baloch is murdered by a family member, few attempts are made to deal with less visible violence that women like her undergo.

Sindh has been criticised for raising the marriage age for girls to 18 years and extraordinary efforts are being made to block similar laws in other provinces. The laws made to curb violence against women run into two big obstacles. Firstly, they could be denounced by the Council of Islamic Ideology; its edicts against the Sindh child marriage law or the protection of women acts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are glaring instances. Secondly, they may not produce the desired result for want of serious effort in implementing them. The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act is very much in force, but even magistrates are not aware of this fact.

Moreover, there is no systematic monitoring of the impact of women-friendly legislation. Have the authorities assessed the effectiveness or otherwise of the law to protect women against social evils?

Above all, violence against women, or any form of discrimination against them, cannot be curbed by only punishing the criminals directly responsible for such acts. The evil of women's persecution cannot be fought without adopting a two-pronged strategy for their uplift.

Firstly, all those who preach hatred against women, from any pulpit or any platform, must be treated as criminals. Secondly, women must be offered the fullest possible opportunity for economic independence and advancement. This can be done, for instance, by eliminating unpaid women's labour in agriculture, and by opening up to women jobs in sectors where they are still unwelcome.

A fair deal for Pakistan's women would require political will and a multidimensional drive to ensure more attention towards them in the Vision 2025 projects than is visible at the moment and meaningful interpretation of the Sustainable Development Goals; these two programmes will offer measures for women's progress or lack of it that no government can ignore.

Tailpiece: Sixteen months have passed since Zeenat Shahzadi, a young human rights activist, who dreamed higher than her family's means permitted, was picked up from a bus stand near her home in Lahore. Her crime: she represented an Indian woman whose young son had 'disappeared' in Pakistan while trying to rescue an internet friend in distress. That man was traced and is now in prison for trying to be a good Samaritan. He is alive and his mother can hope to see him. But hope is deserting Zeenat Shahzadi's mother; she is not sure if her daughter is alive.

The Commission of Inquiry into Enforced Disappearances looked at her file again in Lahore last Thursday. It only looked at the file. It had no word of cheer for Zeenat's mother. The investigators' faces — and perhaps their hearts too — were as impassive as ever. The inspector general of police was told to appoint a new investigation team!

What more horrible example of violence against women could be offered during these 16 days of activism?

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299680>

GIRL COMES UNDER 'ACID' ATTACK

Dawn, December 2nd, 2016

RAWALPINDI: A grade-10 female student suffered burns when two motorcycle riders threw a liquid – believed to be acid – into her face in Saddar Berooni on Thursday, police said.

The mother of the student in her complaint lodged with the police said her daughter was going to school when the two motorcycle riders targeted her.

“My daughter suffered burns on her arms and hands and got her burqa burnt. However, she saved her face by covering it with her hands.”

The complainant said after the attack her daughter returned home and was taken to hospital.

Deputy Superintendent of Police Saleem Khattak said preliminary investigation showed that one of the motorcycle riders, suspected to be involved in the attack, had proposed to the girl but her parents rejected it.

He said after turning down the proposal, the parents got the girl engaged to someone else.

The police said though the boy had been nominated as the accused in the case, it was yet to be ascertained if he was involved in the attack or not.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1299996>

WOMAN'S ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF OF DARUL AMAN BASELESS, SAYS MINISTER

Dawn, December 3rd, 2016

SUKKUR: Sindh Minister for Social Welfare Shamim Mumtaz has said that several inquiries instituted to look into the allegations levelled by a Darul Aman inmate, Ms Abro, against its staff found them to be baseless.

The minister told journalists during a visit to the Darul Aman that Ms Abro had accused the facility's staff on Nov 23 of selling her to someone but several inquiries conducted so far by officials revealed that Ms Abro had married the fourth time through her own contacts after failure of three marriages but the fourth too did not work and she had to return to the Darul Aman for shelter, she said.

The minister criticised the role played by police in the episode and said that the protectors themselves violated the sanctity of chador and char diwari by helping the inmate escape.

In spite of undeniable proofs against Ms Abro, the department was conducting another inquiry to see if any member of Darul Aman was involved in her escape. If anyone was found guilty, strict action would be taken against him, she warned.

The minister said that Darul Aman fund had been raised from Rs800,000 to Rs2.4 million per year.

The facility's staffers were undergoing a training course and later the inmates would be offered counseling so that they could lead a normal life in future, she said.

The women in distress who took shelter in Darul Aman were provided religious and modern education as well, she added.

She said that 6,000 NGOs were registered in Sindh and many more were in the pipeline but unfortunately only 1,000 were genuinely working.

Registration of FIR ordered in fake encounter case

The additional judge of Pano Akil, Rajesh Chandir Rajput, has directed police to register an FIR under section 302 PPC against SSP Amjad Shaikh, an inspector, two SHOs, three constables and six private persons on charges of killing an engineer in motorway department in a fake 'encounter' on Oct 13.

The judge passed the order on a petition filed by Mohammad Azeem Bhutto who accused SSP Amjad Shaikh, Inspector Mushtaque Shah, SHO Khalid Memon, SHO of Abaad police station Shaukat Arain, SHO of Pano Akil, constables Nadeem Ahmed, Mukhtiar Ahmed and Shahabuddin and, private persons Imdad Chandio and five others of killing the engineer in a fake encounter.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300097>

PARTIES, CIVIL SOCIETY TO ENSURE WOMEN VOTERS' REGISTRATION

Dawn, December 4th, 2016

LAHORE: Political parties, civil society organisations and the media have agreed to form a provincial committee for making coordinated efforts to enhance the registration of women voters in Punjab ahead of 2018 general election.

The consensus was developed at a consultation organised by Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), in collaboration with its member organisation PATTAN here on Saturday. The committee will be mandated to take up the issue of registration of women for their computerised national identity cards (CNICs) with the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) and their subsequent registration as voters with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

"As many as 6.5 million women are not registered as voters in Punjab. These women may also be not registered for their CNICs, which is a legal prerequisite for voter registration," said FAFEN's communications and advocacy manager Syed Abdul Ahad while speaking at the consultation attended by representatives of all major political parties, civil society organisations, and the media. Nadra, however, did not send any representative to the meeting.

The consultation also resolved that the government must ease the procedural formalities for the registration of CNIC and authorise local government chairmen and councillors for attestation of citizens' registration application forms. It also urged Nadra to expand its existing infrastructure to include more facilitation centers, as well as Mobile Registration Vans.

TDEA-FAFEN CEO Shahid Fiaz termed the gap between male and female voters as one of the major electoral issues. He called upon the stakeholders to coordinate their efforts and form a committee to take up registration issues with the authorities concerned.

Ruling PML-N MNA Shaista Pervaiz Malik told the consultation that getting CNICs for citizens was a cumbersome process and required improvements. She said bureaucratic hurdles and lethargy on part of Nadra and other state institutions were the major causes for low women voter registration that needed to be urgently addressed. She stressed that ECP should pressurise Nadra to register as many citizens as possible before the upcoming general elections.

PTI MPA Saadia Sohail complained of the attitude of Nadra staff towards people, who had to wait in long queues for hours in hostile weather at the authority's centres. She said CNIC was also a prerequisite for opening a bank account and registration of marriage, asking the government to improve the working of Nadra for enhanced registration of citizens.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan representative Hussain Naqi said the existing Nadra infrastructure was inadequate to register 6.5 million women in Punjab. He proposed that ECP should issue 'Voter Cards' to citizens as was done in India.

ECP Deputy Director Rai Sultan Bhatti, Sangat Development Foundation's Zahid Islam as well as representatives of PPP, Jamaat-i-Islami, Awami Workers Party and MQM-Pakistan also spoke on the occasion.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300097>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 21ST TO NOVEMBER 27TH 2016

TWO WOMEN SUFFER RAPE TORMENT IN KASUR

Dawn November 21st, 2016

KASUR: Two women were raped in the separate incidents in the Kasur area on Sunday.

A fake faith healer raped a woman on the pretext performing an exorcism on her at village Baloki.

The suspect went to the house of a man who believed that his daughter was possessed by evil spirits. The suspect took the girl to a room to exorcise the evil spirits from her and allegedly raped her there.

Sara-i-Mughal police arrested the faith healer and registered a case against him.

In another incident, a man raped a woman at village Mallanwala in the area of the Pattoki Police Station.

The victim, a resident of village Naroki Majah, went to the outhouse of a male relative in village Mallanwala but he was not home. She started waiting for him at the outhouse. Meanwhile, three people, including one identified, appeared there. The identified man took the victim to a room and raped her.

Police registered a case against the suspect and his two unidentified accomplices without any arrest so far.

(Names of victims and suspects have been withheld as per the newspaper's policy)

A 10-year-old boy was shot dead while a man was injured in firing by the guests at the wedding house over unknown reasons at village Attari Virk.

According to complainant Muhammad Asghar, he along with his son Shahid, 10, went to the house of his relative, Muhammad Liaqat, to attend the wedding of his son that was due after a couple of days.

Asghar said other guests including the suspects, Sajid, Nadeem and Zafar, were already there. Nadeem and Zafar, on being incited by Sajid, opened fire on Asghar with a pistol and the bullets hit his son, Shahid, and another guest Iqbal. Shahid died on the spot while Iqbal was injured and shifted to hospital.

Illahabad police arrested Sajid and Zafar and entered a case against them. However, the FIR did not mention the motive behind incident.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297655/two-women-suffer-rape-torment-in-kasur>

POWER SECTOR: WINDS OF CHANGE

Khalid Saeed

Is the promised relief from power shortages by the next elections really around the corner? Will it also bring about any reduction in electricity bills?

The government claims to be on track for adding around 10,000MW of additional electricity by end 2018 or earlier, which is supposed to completely eliminate the need for any loadshedding.

The total generation capacity is to be more than doubled over the next five years from the current 23,000MW, raising nuclear power's contribution to around 9pc of total generation by 2021. Hydel generation is supposed to add 2,500MW to the system over the next two years. An additional 3,000MW of hydel power is also being pursued and could contribute more over the next few years.

After many hiccups, we are finally getting imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Around 3,600MW of electricity is to be generated with LNG, while coal based generation, will add around 6,000MWs. Power generation capacity from early 2018 is expected to stay ahead of the peak demand for the next few years.

Apart from expanding generation capacity, more significantly, the future fuel mix for power generation is being diversified. A balanced fuel mix, apart from ensuring our energy security, will reduce the cost of electricity as well.

Last year, furnace oil and diesel accounted for 36pc and gas and hydel generation 29pc each in our power generation. The share of hydel power, which is the cheapest source, has drastically dropped from over two-third in the mid eighties to less than one third. The furnace oil and diesel based generation produces the most expensive electricity. In 2014, the cost of oil based electricity was Rs16 per unit compared to less than Rs5 for gas and just over Rs1.50 for hydel and nuclear based generation from the existing plants.

Our planners erroneously assumed unending supplies of cheap domestic natural gas. The shortages of gas and loadshedding over the last decade, however, did not deter the successive governments from freely allocating it, out of political expediency, for transport and domestic sectors at the cost of industry and power sectors. Such short-sighted policies resulted in a declining share of gas for the power sector.

Despite the clamour about its deleterious environmental impact, coal still produces 40pc of global electricity; its share in US, China and India's power generation ranges from 39pc to 69pc.

Coal based power has been conspicuous by its almost total absence from Pakistan's power generation despite the country having one of the largest coal reservoirs in the world. We have had to pay dearly for this omission. However, now, coal will contribute around 18pc to our power generation in the next three years. LNG, though not as cheap as domestic gas, is still a welcome addition and will remedy gas shortages.

Our past energy policies, while offering over-generous incentives to investors, failed to prioritise or incentivise fuel choice for them. Resultantly, furnace oil and diesel (HSD), the two most expensive fuels, accounted for 36pc of our electricity generation in 2015-16.

The International Energy Agency forecasts that global oil based power generation will be reduced to an insignificant share of 2pc within 25 years.

A major shift, both in developed and developing countries is currently under way whereby the use of renewable energy is growing at a much faster rate than fossil fuel energy. The inclusion of wind and solar power in Pakistan's power mix is in line with global trends.

The country has the potential to generate 2.9mMW of solar energy and 60,000MW from wind energy. Any future fuel generation mix must be diversified, reliant on cheaper indigenous fuel resources and meet the criteria of reliability, affordability and safety in addition to its environmental impact.

The substitution of oil and diesel based electricity with cheaper sources will bring down the cost of electricity and, apart from providing some relief for the consumers, also improve the competitiveness of our exports.

Besides an uninterrupted power supply, electricity consumers look forward to benefiting from the reduced cost of electricity as well.

The Pakistan Power Policy 2013 had promised reducing the average cost from 12 to 10 cents per unit by 2017. It registered a decline from Rs10.59 per unit in 2014 to Rs9.84 in 2015. Moving forward, we should see a more significant and sustainable decline in electricity cost, not dependent only on international oil prices.

The reduced generation cost will benefit the end users only if the bleeding of the power sector due to poor governance and corruption is controlled.

The financial health of the sector cannot improve unless huge leakages through transmission and distribution losses and non-recovery of dues are plugged. Curbing the freedom of the power sector watchdog, Nepra, in the performance of its duty to safeguard consumer interest will be an ill-advised move and any temptations at 'clipping the wings' of the regulator will be a bad news for consumers.

While the winds of change are approaching, there is a need to have transparency and consistency in our policies to sustain investor confidence and maintain due regard for consumer interest.

Decisions like abandoning the Gadani Power Park Project, recent cancellation of 1,000MW of imported coal projects, failure to ensure expeditious commissioning of the ill-fated Nandipur power project and inexplicable delays in approvals for some already pending projects have reportedly disillusioned and discouraged domestic investors.

Such U turns raise doubts about the transparency of the process and can become serious hurdles in fulfilling the government's promise of a loadshedding free Pakistan by 2018.

The author is ex-chairman, Nepra and currently heads, Energy Research Centre, COMSATS.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297581/power-sector-winds-of-change>

MOU SIGNED FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION OF WOMEN

Dawn, November 23rd, 2016

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to promote social and economic protection for BISP beneficiaries.

Under the terms of the agreement, BISP and UN Women will take on joint ventures related to gender equality, violence against women, economic empowerment and leadership.

The BISP and UN Women will also launch campaigns for the commemoration of key international days on women rights and spread awareness on subjects related to empowerment in the BISP population.

The BISP-UN Women cooperation will leverage community outreach, resources and technical expertise in gender equality to close the gender gap that affects the lifestyle of women.

Speaking on the occasion, BISP Chairperson Marvi Memon said that partnership with UN Women would educate women on their rights, nutrition, mother and child health, sanitation, basic finance and entrepreneurship for informed decision-making.

Director of UN Women Jamshed Kazi said that the partnership with BISP, with millions of beneficiaries across the country, will generate "catalytic multiplier effect" for UN Women's ongoing initiatives in Pakistan.

“Through the alliance, we firmly believe that we will make significant headway in tackling gender inequality in Pakistan by 2030,” he said.

The ongoing initiatives aim at empowering women economically, tackling gender-based violence at home and in public spaces and teaching resilience to cope with natural disasters and displacement due to political conflicts.

The MoU was signed by Mr Kazi and Director General of BISP Shahid Gul Qureshi.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298079/mou-signed-for-social-protection-of-women>

‘HONOUR KILLING’

Dawn, November 23rd, 2016

DERA MURAD JAMALI: A man shot dead his wife and a man in the name of honour in the Bohar locality on Tuesday.

According to police, it was the third incident of honour killing in Nasirabad and Jhal Magsi districts over the past 24 hours.

No arrest has been made so far in any of these cases.

Police officials said that Ali Nawaz Abro opened fire on his wife Hameeda and Abdullah Abro in Dera Murad Jamali town, killing them on the spot.

The bodies were handed over to their families after medico-legal formalities.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298076/honour-killing>

PAKISTAN SECOND LOWEST IN GENDER PARITY

The Express Tribune, November 24th, 2016

Ammar Sheikh

LAHORE: Despite noteworthy improvements in the status of women, Pakistan ranks the second lowest in the South Asian region when it comes to gender parity, according to a report that provides details on key indicators of women empowerment in five countries – Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The report titled ‘Empowering Women in South Asia’ was launched by Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) Mahbub ul Haq Research Centre as part of its Annual Human Development in South Asia Report for 2016.

The research looks at the status of education, access to healthcare, economic inclusion, availability of jobs, participation in key government functions and law-making. While Pakistan made significant improvements, the country ranks just above Afghanistan at the bottom.

As per the report, women’s capabilities and empowerment in areas of politics and law have increased significantly in Pakistan. However, choices for women in the economic arena remain low and whatever they contribute is undervalued.

Pakistan, just like in most South Asian countries, customary practices and religious interpretations often override formal laws for protection of women from discrimination and violence, despite the existence of legal provisions.

In the education sector, the reports states, indicators of women have recorded significant improvement. “Female literacy rate has improved by about 50% while female gross enrolment rates at the primary, middle and matric levels have also increased by about 15 to 20%, with a similar trend in higher education.”

However, an overwhelming 55% of females are illiterate, with significant gender disparity at all levels of education. Moreover, the country has the largest number of out-of-school children in the world only after Nigeria – more than half of whom are female.

Similar trends have been found in health care. The report notes that women’s overall health has improved, for instance the life expectancy of women has increased to 66.5 years. The fertility rate has decreased to 3.6 births per woman. The change is said to be due to an increase in the use of contraceptives.

The report states that between 2000 and 2014, women’s labour force participation rate increased by 50% while gender-wage inequality decreased. The change has been mainly accredited to the increased educational achievements and more employment opportunities.

The report notes that only two out of every 10 women of working age participate in the labour force with the majority doing low-quality jobs. Women work more than men, in both paid and unpaid jobs, but their contribution is unrecognised.

As per the report, the Constitution guarantees equality between men and women in social, economic and political aspects but the practice is hindered by discriminatory customs.

Over the past 15 years, the country has witnessed the highest number of laws being passed or amended for women. The country has also formulated a number of labour laws. However, implementation of these laws is evident from the high incidence of violence against women.

The reason behind this is said to be the poor performance of the judiciary and police, which provide space to informal legal systems.

For the entire region, the report states, there have been improvements in women’s social, economic and political empowerment but compared to other parts of the world, Pakistan fares only better than Sub-Saharan Africa..

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1242403/regional-report-pakistan-second-lowest-gender-parity/>

SIALKOT INCIDENT: SHAHBAZ TAKES NOTICE OF GIRL’S TORTURE

The Express Tribune, November 24th, 2016.

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif took notice on Wednesday of the rape and torture of a 16-year-old girl in Sialkot and sought a report from the Sialkot DPO. The Chief Minister directed that justice should be provided to the aggrieved family at any cost and best treatment facilities should be ensured for the victim. A man had slit the throat of a girl allegedly after he failed to subject the girl to sexual assault.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1242573/sialkot-incident-shahbaz-takes-notice-girls-torture/>

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Express Tribune, November 24th, 2016.

Globally, more than one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way, most often by someone she knows including her partner or another male family member. Eliminating violence against women is a priority of the Australian Government and the Australian people.

Australia's citizen of the year in 2015 was Rosie Batty, a woman who had suffered years of domestic violence. Rosie has galvanised attention within Australia on domestic violence against women and girls, as well as boys and men.

She is a courageous champion of all those who have suffered in this way, and by ensuring that domestic violence issues are openly discussed, has contributed to Government efforts to combat domestic violence in Australia.

Australia welcomes the focus on gender equality in the recently adopted United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has placed gender equality at the core of Australia's foreign policy and overseas aid programme. Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals states: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

In recent years, Pakistan has passed a number of laws for the protection of women. In 2010 Pakistan's parliament adopted the 'Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Bill 2009'. Two additional bills were signed by the President in December 2012 criminalising the practices of vani, watta-satta, swara and marriage to the Holy Quran, which used women as tradable commodities for the settlement of disputes.

This year, the Government of Punjab took welcome steps to ensure constitutional provisions to safeguard women's rights by introducing the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act (2016).

This Act provides legal protection for victims, as well as a toll-free number to report abuse and psychological and physiological support. The government has further established a special task force in the interior Sindh for action against the practice of Karo-Kari, by establishing helplines and offices.

And recently, a joint session of parliament also approved the Anti-Honour Killing Bill (2016) which introduces strict punishments for convicts and prohibits victims or their families from pardoning perpetrators.

Whether in Australia or in Pakistan, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, it is foundational for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. In addition to its indirect consequences, violence against women imposes substantial direct costs on society through lost wages and productivity, demands on health care and social services, as well as criminal justice costs.

Australia's development assistance partnership with Pakistan focuses on gender equality, including in supporting efforts and programmes to protect women from violence. Australia has invested AUD8.65 million to help improve access to support services, to assist efforts to change violent behaviour, to support strengthened implementation of policy and legislation and by promoting safe cities in Pakistan.

In addition to assisting measures that support women and girls, as in Australia, so in Pakistan we also encourage 'the other half' to speak out against and support an end to gender-based violence. Male champions for change are also important for promoting equal opportunities for women and girls.

Aside from government and development partners' efforts, all over the world it is up to every member of their community to develop the approaches that will achieve gender equality and combat violence against women.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world. It is therefore not one woman's or one man's battle against violence; it is a battle involving all men and all women against injustice, inequality, discrimination, and oppression. It is a battle we fight together, women and men, globally, side by side.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1242226/ending-violence-women/>

IFC LIKELY TO INJECT \$500M INTO PAKISTAN DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Express Tribune, November 24th, 2016.

Shahbaz Rana

ISLAMABAD: The International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group may inject \$500 million in Pakistan Development Fund Limited (PDFL) – a company set up with a generous Saudi contribution of \$1.5 billion – as the government has offered it 20% equity stake.

The government has decided to keep control of the company in its hands and therefore, offered only 20% equity stake to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group, said sources in the Ministry of Finance.

The IFC wanted majority stakes in the company, which the government did not agree to, said the sources. The IFC also wanted the position of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the PDFL. However, the government did not want to give up control of the company, they added.

The negotiations between IFC and the Finance Ministry have been taking place for almost six months. It was not immediately clear whether the IFC accepted the government's offer.

The spokesman for the Finance Ministry, Dr Shujat Ali, was not available for comments.

However, unlike the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank is, in principle, willing to become equity partner in the PDFL. The sources said that the government has informed the IFC that it would retain 40% stake in the company while 40% may be given to other stakeholders. They said that the government was also in negotiations with China Development Bank. A Qatari company was also interested in the venture, they added.

Even if the IFC agrees to 20% shareholding, it will still need other partners to fill the remaining 40% stake. The sources said that the IFC and the Finance Ministry have yet to resolve the issues regarding the structure of the company and administrative affairs. The company cannot become operational in the near future due to these issues, the sources added.

Due to non-resolution of administrative and financial issues, the \$1.5 billion Saudi gift remains unutilised even after almost three years. Saudi Arabia had 'gifted' \$1.5 billion to Pakistan in 2014 to help Islamabad in its time of economic distress. The government did not disclose the purpose of the gift and instead stashed away the money in the PDFL, announcing the firm will act as an independent development finance institution (DFI) and operate on commercial basis.

Later on, it started finding an equity partner, although \$1.5 billion was sufficient to start various projects. So far, the PDFL has existed only on paper and has not financed any projects. Instead of utilising the \$1.5 billion, the government has contracted commercial loans for financing mega projects over the past two and a half years.

The government has not even appointed a full-time CEO for the company set up to channel the funds. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar is the Chairman of the PDFL while Finance Secretary Dr Waqar Masood is the interim CEO of the company.

The Finance Minister has chaired a couple of PDFL meetings but things exist only on paper, the sources said. They added the government has every intention to utilise the funds for financing development projects but some procedural formalities have yet to be completed.

In June, Dar invited the ADB to join the PDFL as an equity partner, according to a finance ministry handout. However, the ADB termed it a riskier venture and instead offered to provide loans for the PDFL on sovereign guarantees. The ADB also offered its technical expertise in the development of a commercial business plan with strategies and timeliness to run the PDFL, said the sources

The IFC was also in contact with the ADB, convincing it to acquire stake in the company, said the sources.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1242349/stake-ifc-likely-inject-500m-pakistan-development-fund/>

RADIO PROGRAMMES ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE LAUNCHED

Dawn, November 25th, 2016

KARACHI: Uks, research, resource and publication centre working for women empowerment, gender equality and equity within and through the media, has launched a series of radio programmes to show solidarity with the 16-day international campaign against gender-based violence starting on Friday.

The theme of this year is 'From peace in the home to peace in the world: make education safe for all'. In the 16-episode radio series, Amn ki Shama sey Ilm ki Lau, (Lighting the Torch of Education through the Candle of Peace) Uks radio producers explore various factors and gender unjust practices contributing to denial of education to girls including violent extremism, lack of awareness of basic and legal rights, illiteracy, forced marriages, lack of access to opportunities, for instance, mobility and economic stability.

Each 10-minute programme developed in the national context can be accessed on Uks's website for each of the sixteen days of the campaign till Dec 10.

The first programme of this series would also be aired on Sunno FM 89.4 at 3pm on Nov 25.

"Pakistan ranks second last out of 144 countries in the Gender Equality Index. Despite the formulation of several women protection laws and policies during the decade, Pakistan has been registering an alarming increase in gender-based violence.

"Prevalent across classes, ethnicity, urban and rural divide, gender-based violence has its roots in the patriarchal structure that dictates the status of women and girls at the household, community and policy levels.

"Although education is in the top six sectors undertaken under the head of gender-based violence projects in the country, women and girls continue to be worst sufferers as far as denial of access to education and inaccessibility to quality educational opportunities are concerned," says a press release.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298436/radio-programmes-on-gender-based-violence-launched>

COP CONVICTED OF RAPING DAUGHTER GETS LIFE IN JAIL

The Express Tribune, November 25th, 2016.

Rizwan Shehzad

Islamabad: As you read this on Friday, the international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign will be kicking off. On Thursday, a court in Islamabad sentenced a man for committing the most egregious form of gender violence, and that too against his own child.

A trial court awarded life imprisonment to a man who repeatedly raped his 20-year-old daughter for four years.

The accused was a policeman who contested the rape charge by claiming he should only be charged with fornication. The case itself was also fraught with twists and turns as the prosecution eventually managed to get a conviction after the girl informed the court that she reached a compromise with her father and did not wish to pursue the case further.

District and Sessions Judge Sohail Ikram awarded life imprisonment to former Islamabad Police Constable Dilpazir, on charges of raping his daughter for four years after the prosecution successfully established charges against him.

The court also fined him Rs100,000. The victim*, who was a schoolteacher, lodged a rape case against Dilpazir at the Koral Police Station on July 29, 2015. In the FIR, she alleged that her father also used to rape her and beat her.

The girl informed the police that she sought help from her relatives, but no one believed her. She added that the school principal advised her to report her ordeal to the police.

Subsequently, she approached the Koral police for registration of the case and also told them that her father may attempt to kill her for speaking out. Upon the registration of the case, the police arrested Dilpazir and later submitted a charge sheet before the court.

In September 2015, the court framed charges against the constable, who pleaded not guilty.

Soon after the indictment, however, the complainant informed the court that she wanted to withdraw the case because she had reached a compromise with her father.

At this point, Special Public Prosecutor Aamir Nadeem Tabish contended before the court that the accused was facing a rape charge which is a non-compoundable offence and an out-of-court settlement should not affect the court's proceedings.

Tabish argued that the crime was not against an individual but against society, therefore, the state is the complainant in this case, and not the victim, who merely provided information. Consequently, the victim recorded a statement against her father.

Later, the prosecution produced 11 witnesses to prove the case against Dilpazir.

During arguments, counsel for Dilpazir claimed that it was not the case of rape but "fornication", claiming that the daughter was a "consensual participant".

To this, Tabish noted that it could not be considered fornication as Dilpazir always extended threats of dire consequences to the girl whenever she tried resisted him.

Tabish later told The Express Tribune that irrefutable evidence of the heinous crime came in the form of a compact disc (CD) with a 10-minute long recording of an assault.

He said that the police seized the CD after Dilpazir allegedly confessed to his involvement and revealed that he also made mobile-phone video of the assaults.

*name withheld to protect identity

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1243631/perverted-policeman-cop-convicted-raping-daughter-gets-life-jail/>

WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN FEDERAL LODGES

Dawn, November 27th, 2016

LAHORE: A 35-year-old woman was found dead in a room allocated to a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz MNA at the Federal Lodges called Chamba House, in the Racecourse Area late on Saturday.

Police said Samia Chaudhry, a resident of Sahiwal, had been living in the room since Nov 22. She was found dead by a waiter late on Saturday. She was staying at the lodges with the reference of MNA Chaudhry Muhammad Ashraf, from Sahiwal (NA-161).

The waiter alerted the police and they took the body to a morgue for autopsy. Civil Lines Division Superintendent of Police Ali Raza said they had collected evidence from the crime scene. He also said that it was impossible for someone to stay at the lodges without a reference from an MNA. He said the cause of death would be found after a post-mortem examination.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298934/woman-found-dead-in-federal-lodges>

‘2012 KILLINGS’ PROBERS VISIT KOHISTAN VILLAGE

Dawn, November 27th, 2016

MANSEHRA: Members of an inquiry commission on Saturday met family members of the four women allegedly killed in a Kohistan village after a video showing them sing and dance at a wedding surfaced in 2012.

The visitors led by district and sessions judge of Kohistan Shoaib Khan also spoke to the residents of Khotakot village in Pales tehsil.

The commission formed by the Supreme Court consists of district police officer Kohistan Abdul Aziz Afridi, woman police officer Shahzadi Naushad Begum and National Database and Registration Authority and health department officials.

Its members left Dasu at around 9am for Khotakot village under tight security provided by the police and recorded statements of the family members of the women in question as well as local residents. The police cordoned off the area to avert any mishap. The commission members didn't return to Dasu until night.

The Supreme Court had tasked the commission with looking into the 2012 incident at the request of Mohammad Fazal Kohistani, whose three brothers were killed by the families of women seen in the video.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298942>

‘WE CAN ONLY PROGRESS IF WE EDUCATE AND RESPECT OUR GIRLS’

Dawn, November 27th, 2016

Peerzada Salman

KARACHI: The occasion was the 30th anniversary of Citizen's Education Development Foundation (CEDF) and the highlight of it was a panel discussion on 'Taaleem aur roshan khayali' (education and an enlightened approach to life) at the Alliance Francaise on Saturday evening.

Moderated by journalist Ghazi Salahuddin, those who took part in the discussion included poet Zehra Nigah, educationist Baela Raza, journalist Zubeida Mustafa, Liaquat (a teacher) and Shakeel (a student).

The first question that Mr Salahuddin put to the panelists was about an enlightened approach to life. Ms Nigah said to speak on the subject was both easy and difficult. She said people had been complaining about the quality of education for a long time, but there were individuals who tried to rectify the problem and eventually became the backbone of society. In that context she narrated the tale of a Hindu mythological god, Inder, who, after getting miffed with a small town (basti), deprived it of rain.

It took no time for the town to get desolate. One day he forgot what he had done to the town and visited it. There he saw a little thrush filling a drop of water from a puddle in its beak and flying into a destroyed, dried-up field to water it. The god made fun of the bird saying it was a fool to think that a drop of water could make the field fertile again. The thrush replied it only knew that this much it could do, and therefore must do.

Ms Raza said we needed to see whether the issue of education was the failure of the state or society's. She said the intent of the state was not bad, but it just couldn't deliver. She said Sindh had the poorest indicators, and yet there were so many enlightened people in the province. She said the people and organisations working on the subject needed to 'scale up'. She said bearing in mind technological developments we needed to have a new kind of education.

At that point Mr Salahuddin interjected and stressed the significance of human dignity. He said all men were created equal, so we should accept everybody with dignity.

Ms Mustafa said the discussion that was taking place was related to the issue of language. She said for a child to have roshan khayali, it was important that his teacher or facilitator should enable the child to read for himself. More than that, she said, the teacher should be able to inculcate in the child the spirit (jazba) to read. She said very few teachers today had that ability. She urged that if children were taught in their mother tongue, it would help them to learn things in a better way. She said learning in mother tongue also enabled the young ones to develop critical thinking.

The second question that Mr Salahuddin put to the panelists was on the problem of intolerance and extremism. Ms Nigah told him that her sister's grandson liked airplanes and was told at home that it was the Wright Brothers who invented airplane, but his schoolteacher told him that it was invented by Muslims. And when the teacher was asked why she said that she replied children should be taught that whoever they thought were their heroes should be Muslims.

Liaquat, a teacher associated with the CEDF, said he had students from different religious backgrounds and he treated them equally.

Shakeel, a student, thanked Mr Liaquat for encouraging him to move ahead with his studies and he was able to pass his matriculation without going to school. On the importance of education for girls he said: "We cannot progress unless we educate and respect girls."

After the discussion a group of children sang a tarana penned by Ms Nigah. Ms Nigah was so inspired by their performance that, afterwards, she herself sang a couple of its lines. Renowned singer Tina Sani also appeared on stage for a brief period, and helped the children sing.

Naseem Salahuddin thanked the guests for coming. Earlier, Rehana Alam informed the audience on how the CEDF came about. She said it all started with a woman seeing a child working alongside his mother (maid) and she thought that he should be in school. On the work that CEDF undertook, she said it set up informal (home) schools, mobile schools and had sponsorship programmes in which the students who wanted to carry on with their education were helped to get admission to government schools. She said so far more than 12,000 had achieved literacy through the CEDF.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298816/we-can-only-progress-if-we-educate-and-respect-our-girls>

MAN ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY RAPING DAUGHTER

The Express Tribune, November 27th, 2016.

Arsalan Altaf

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police have arrested a barber who allegedly raped his 11-year-old daughter in their house on the outskirts of the capital.

The child's mother* had lodged a complaint with Tarnol police on Friday that her husband had raped their 11-year-old daughter in the early hours of November 25.

The complainant said she had witnessed the incident and that the victim was the daughter of the suspect.

On Saturday, Tarnol police said they had managed to arrest the suspect and were investigating the matter.

Tarnol SHO Inspector Muneer Hussain Jafferri told The Express Tribunethat the suspect and his family hailed from Sargodha. He added that the father worked as a barber in the Jori Rajgan area near Sangjani.

“We have registered a rape case, arrested the suspect, and are investigating the matter,” Jafferri added.

The official said that they had conducted a medical examination of the child but were still waiting for the report.

Meanwhile, the suspect will be produced before a magistrate today (Sunday).

In another case, Shalimar police have booked a man for allegedly raping a domestic worker*.

Police said the suspect, identified as Muhammad Zaman, allegedly intoxicated the victim before raping her in Sector F-11/1.

Officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity since they were not authorised to speak to the media, said that when the victim came to the station to lodge the case, she was not fully unconscious due to the intoxication.

In her complaint, the victim maintained that the suspect mixed alcohol in a drink to intoxicate her.

The victim, who the police said was around 40-years-old and worked as domestic servant, was taken to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) for a medical examination where doctors confirmed the sexual assault.

Police have yet to arrest the suspect till the filing of the report.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1245516/heinous-crime-man-arrested-allegedly-raping-daughter/>

PA SEEKS EQUAL SOCIO-POLITICAL STATUS FOR WOMEN ACROSS SINDH

Dawn, November 26th, 2016

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: Marking International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Sindh Assembly on Friday condemned physical and mental torture against women and vowed to frame all possible laws to provide basic rights to women.

The pledge was part of a resolution tabled by Pakistan Peoples Party and Muttahida Qaumi Movement lawmakers Ghazala Sial and Naheed Begum, respectively.

The resolution asked the government to take all-out measures to end violence against women and called upon the assembly to commit to provide equal political and social status to women across Sindh. After a few speeches, the resolution was carried unanimously when put to the house.

Earlier, women lawmakers said they were proud of the Sindh Assembly for making a number of legislation against domestic violence, harassment, protection of rights and redressing their grievances allowing women to feel secure at home and in the workplace.

Ms Sial said on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, she would like to praise the Sindh Assembly in general and the PPP in particular for framing important legislation for the protection of women rights.

MQM lawmaker Naheed Begum said the constitution assured equal rights to all citizens. “We are proud of the Sindh Assembly that has made many laws to protect women from violence and secure their honour,” she said while referring to the law against harassment in the workplace.

PML-F lawmaker Mehtab Akbar Rashdi said the real issue was not of legislation but of law enforcement that called for due attention of the government.

PPP minister Nisar Ahmed Khuhro said the assembly had made laws catering to all sections of society including women who were 52 per cent of the population. Just a day ago, he said, the provincial assembly had taken lead in the country by making the law against forced conversion.

After the adoption of the resolution, Deputy Speaker Syeda Shehla Raza adjourned the house at 1.35pm till Monday at 10am.

Before taking up the resolution on a motion tabled by Mr Khuhro for relaxing rules, the house elected Ejaz Hussain Shah Bokhari as a member of the Public Accounts Committee.

The minister also introduced the government bill – The Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto University of Law (Amendment) Bill, 2016 and deferred its consideration till Monday. By the amendment, a provision was made for minister, adviser or special assistant of a department to be the pro- chancellor of the SZAB University of Law, Karachi.

The adjournment motion of PTI lawmaker Khuram Sherzaman about recruitment in Sindh government departments, which was part of the order of the day, was opposed by Mr Khuhro. After hearing the mover on its admissibility, the chair termed it not maintainable and ruled it out of order on technical ground.

Earlier, when the chair gave floor to MQM lawmaker Heer Soho to take up her call attention notice, leader of opposition Khwaja Izhar-ul-Hassan drew attention of the house towards the reports that government had decided to pay Rs10,000 per month to the UC chairman and Rs8,000 to vice chairman. He said this move before the constitution of the provincial finance commission was beyond comprehension. While the minimum monthly salary of a worker was fixed at Rs14,000, the approval of Rs10,000 monthly salary for a UC chairman was unjustified, he added.

Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro said Rs10,000 was not a salary but honorarium just like assembly members who were not paid salaries but honorarium. Their position being elected members was to serve the people which could not be equated with the salary of an employee, he said.

In response to the call attention notice of PML-F lawmaker Nusrat Sehar Abbasi about the protests in Thar against the location of proposed Thar Dam that the residents said would engulf their agricultural land, Mr Khuhro said the issue was basically related to the irrigation department, but he would like to clarify that the 1,500 acre land mentioned by Ms Abbasi would be used for the water reservoir to generate electricity which would not only be enough for the Sindh province but also cater to the need of the entire country.

He explained that 1,000 acres of the said land was owned by the government while the remaining 500 acres were owned by the people most of whom realized the national interest and had no objection to the project. The affected people had been paid compensation and alternative piece of land, he added.

Health Minister Sikandar Mandhro said the location of the dam was a compulsion as there was no other piece of land in the sandy area where a reservoir could be built. He said Thar coal power project had vital importance for the future of Sindh. He added that the government was ready to build a model village with hospital and other basic amenities for the affected people.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1298671/pa-seeks-equal-socio-political-status-for-women-across-sindh>

SENATE CLEARS TOUGHER LAWS FOR FORCED MARRIAGES

The Express Tribune, November 26th, 2016.

ISLAMABAD: The upper house of parliament on Friday unanimously approved the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2016 which recommends more stringent penalties for forced marriages, fanning religious and sectarian divisions and providing misleading information.

Giving details of the bill, the State Minister for Interior Balighur Rehman told the Senate that punishment for forced marriage has been enhanced from seven-year-imprisonment to ten-year-imprisonment. “The bill also covers child labour and forced marriage with non-Muslims,” he said.

The minister told the upper house that a section has been included in the Anti-Terrorism Act. Under the new section, additional punishment may be given to people involved in mob violence and lynching, whether motivated by religious or any other reason.

He said the use of modern techniques have been introduced in the law of evidence. “There are a number of places where it is difficult to bring witnesses. In such situations, modern technology could be used.”

Rehman said amendments have been suggested in the Police Act and it has now been included in the duties of policemen to stop spreading hatred on the basis of religion or sect. “In this regard, three-year imprisonment will also be awarded apart from fine, if the officials failed to comply with order,” he said.

Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani expressed anger over inclusion of the repealed Protection of Pakistan Act (Popa) in the proposed amendments. “What sort of legislation the interior ministry and Senate Committee on Interior are drafting?” he said.

The Senate Committee for Interior Chairman Rehman Malik also asked how this act made its way back to the draft after the committee removed it. Law Minister Zahid Hamid replied it was a ‘typographical error’ and would be removed from the draft.

Senator Tahir Mashhadi of the MQM raised objection to the use of new methods in giving testimony. “We want punishment for culprits but history tells that in this country laws made with good intention are used against politicians,” he said.

Later, the house passed the bill unanimously. The Senate also passed a resolution paying tribute to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for enhancing salaries of the lawmakers.

On a point of order, Balighur Rehman said PakTurk schools were neither closed down nor their administration was being changed. He also informed the house that an inquiry commission has been formed to probe the inclusion of an indecent question in the matriculation paper of Allama Iqbal Open University.

State Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said Chashma Nuclear Power Plant will start generation 320MW electricity by December. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab told the house that the country has a reservoir of an estimated 186 billion tons of coal.

The Senate chairman expressed annoyance at the absence of minister of water and power and asked the government to submit a reply with regard to electricity crisis in Balochistan.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1244744/passed-unanimously-senate-clears-tougher-laws-forced-marriages/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 14TH TO NOVEMBER 20TH 2016

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE? WOMAN’S BODY EXHUMED ON ORDERS OF JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE

The Express Tribune, November 17th, 2016.

Muhammad Sadaqat

ABBOTTABAD: The body of a woman who was allegedly burnt alive by her in-laws, was exhumed amid tight security on Wednesday. The court of judicial magistrate had ordered the exhumation on the request of police, doctors said.

According to the Donga Gali police, a few days back, Shumaila Bibi 23, was hospitalised with 80% burns and later died in hospital. Her in-laws claimed that her injuries were caused by an exploding gas cylinder.

But Khalilur Rehman, the deceased's father, in his complaint to police stated that his daughter married Qasim without her family's consent, and soon after her marriage, her in-laws subjected her to torture and regularly beat her on the slightest pretext.

He further added that to get rid of her, Qasim and other family members set her on fire and termed it a gas cylinder accident. The complainant also said that Shumaila's in-laws obtained an autopsy exemption from him by taking his signature on a blank piece of paper in the presence of some policemen.

It was only after the local media raised the issue that the Donga Gali police registered a murder case against Shumaila's husband Qasim, his mother Parvin Bibi, and brother Naseer Ahmed under section.

The accused have already secured bail-before-arrest from a local court.

Meanwhile following registration of case against victim's in-laws, the police moved an application with the court of a judicial magistrate in Abbottabad seeking exhumation of the body for investigation.

On court orders, doctors from Benazir Shaheed Teaching Hospital Abbottabad exhumed the body amid tight security and collected samples from the body for analysis. Dr Tayyaba, Dr Nusrat Ara and Dr Shaheena Mehtab took part in the exhuming process.

Doctors said that the samples have been sent for further examination and the investigation process would be completed after the report.

At the exhumation, Shumaila's cousin Najamul Hasan disclosed that she had faced domestic violence during her one-year marriage.

He added that it was an open secret that Qasim and his family treated her badly only because she solemnised a court marriage without the consent of her family.

In support of his accusation, Hasan told the media that three days before Ramazan, Shumaila lodged a complaint with Donga Gali Police Station accusing Qasim of threatening to throw boiling water on her, but the police arranged a compromise between the couple.

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://tribune.com.pk/story/1233734/domestic-violence-womans-body-exhumed-orders-judicial-magistrate/>

FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE OF WOMEN URGED

Dawn November 20th, 2016

QUETTA: Acting Governor and Speaker of Balochistan Assembly Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani has emphasised the need for taking practical measures for financial independence of women, adding that women could protect their rights by making themselves financially independent and strong.

Addressing a ceremony held under the aegis of Aurat Foundation, an NGO, here on Saturday, she said: "We all will have to play our due role to ensure complete financial independence for women."

She stressed the need to launch campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of women's rights.

She said that goals of progress and prosperity could not be achieved until women were made part of the mainstream to take part in the development of the country.

She said that society would have to end taboos which put hurdles in participation of women in mainstream life.

“The stakeholders will have to create space for women to take part in economic, trade and business activities,” she said.

Ms Durrani said that she would continue her role for legislation on protection of rights of women.

Later, she distributed certificates and prizes among participants of the ceremony.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1297478>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 7TH TO NOVEMBER 13TH 2016
NA BODY DISAPPROVES BILL SEEKING QUOTA FOR WOMEN JUDGES IN IHC
Dawn, November 8th, 2016

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: Women selected on the reserved seats of the National Assembly opposed a bill seeking a quota for women judges in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

“The Islamabad High Court Act (Amendment) Bill 2016” was introduced by Nikhat Shakeel Khan of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which the National Assembly Standing Committee on Law and Justice examined on Monday.

The mover of the bill, who was also selected on the quota reserved for women, proposed an amendment to Sub-section 1 of section 3 of the Islamabad High Court Act, which is related to the appointment of judges.

Ms Khan suggested reserving seats for women to be appointed as judges in the high court.

However, the women lawmakers selected on reserved seats belonging to the ruling PML-N and the opposition PPP insisted that the appointment of judges should be made strictly on merit.

MNA Shagufta Jumani of the PPP said vacant seats of judges in the superior judiciary should be filled strictly on merit rather than under the quota system. She said reserving special seats for women judges would promote nepotism.

Opposing the amendment, Kiran Haider of the PML-N said Asma Jahangir and retired Justice Nasira Iqbal may be the role models for young women lawyers.

“Competent woman does not need any quota to prove their proficiency,” she said.

Asiya Naz Tanoli of the PML-N also opposed the proposal. “There is a need to examine this bill in accordance with the Sharia law,” she suggested.

Mahmood Bashir Virk, the chairman of the committee, added that it was not an issue of gender discrimination but a matter of professionalism.

“There is not a single precedent of special quota for women judges in India, Europe or the United States,” he maintained.

“We are not supposed to distribute quotas among different segments of society. But tomorrow such a quota may be demanded for provincial high courts as well” he added.

Secretary Ministry of Law and Justice Karamat Niazi informed the committee that the law did not restrict appointment of women as judges of the high court.

He explained that the chief justice of high court concerned forwarded names of eminent lawyers or district and sessions judges to the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP). The commission, headed by the chief justice of Pakistan, recommends certain individuals and the parliamentary committee endorses the nominations and then the president appoints the judges of the superior courts.

According to Mr Niazi, at present, three women were working as judges in the Lahore High Court, one each in Sindh High Court and Peshawar High Court, while there is no representation of women in the IHC and Balochistan High Court.

Member of the committee, retired Justice Iftikhar Ahmed Cheema, opined that if seats were reserved for women, their appointments would be made by compromising on the experience and capability.

The only member who supported the proposed amendment was S. A. Iqbal Qadri of the MQM. He recommended that the quota for women judges should be introduced to eliminate gender inequality.

The chairman of the committee, however, ruled that the proposed amendment would create complications and disapproved the bill.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295002/na-body-disapproves-bill-seeking-quota-for-women-judges-in-ihc>

GOVT TO SEND SHARBAT GULA BACK TOMORROW 'WITH DIGNITY'

Dawn, November 8th, 2016

Manzoor Ali

PESHAWAR: Withdrawing earlier request for permission to stay in Pakistan on humanitarian grounds, National Geographic famed 'Afghan Girl' Sharbat Gula has asked Pakistani authorities to send her back.

Officials in the know told Dawn that the news of the change of heart on part of Ms. Gula was conveyed to the home secretary by an Afghan diplomatic delegation consisting of Abdul Hameed Jalili and Naseem Kakar on Monday after which the authorities decided to send her back with dignity on Nov 9.

Sharbat Gula ordeal and deportation is likely to turn her into a poster woman of the strained Pak-Afghan ties, as the Afghan government apparently affronted by treatment meted out to her has decided to give a rousing welcome to her on her return to Afghanistan. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani will receive her.

Also, an Afghan delegation is likely to accompany Ms. Gula on the way home.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa home and tribal affairs department issued a statement saying Sharbat Gula's prison term will end on Nov 9 and that she will be sent home with dignity.

It said Ms. Gula, who is serving a 15 days jail term for obtaining Pakistani Computerised National Identity Card fraudulently, had submitted an application to jail authorities asking to be admitted to some major hospital in the city.

The statement added that the jail doctor diagnosed her with Hepatitis C and therefore, she was shifted from the prison to the Lady Reading Hospital on Nov 2.

It said Ms. Gula also submitted another application to the hospital urging Pakistani authorities not to deport her on completion of her prison term and rather allow her to stay put until the expiry of the deadline for the stay of other Afghan refugees in the country.

The statement said in light of her application, the KP home department was in contact with the interior ministry to address legal problems to let her stay in the country on humanitarian grounds and that things had made good progress in this regard.

“Now, Sharbat Gula has changed her decision and demanded she be sent back,” it said.

The statement added that the woman would be sent to Afghanistan with dignity after the prison term completed on Nov 9.

A senior relevant official said the Special Branch of the police had been asked to deport her.

He said the provincial home department was to take up her application with the interior ministry on Monday but her application seeking deportation to Afghanistan changed everything.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had arrested Gula on Oct 26 for getting Pakistani CNIC through impersonation.

An FIR in this regard was registered on Oct 20 against Ms. Gula and five other people including three former National Database and Registration Authority employees over issuance of CNICs to them.

On Nov 4, she pleaded guilty before the court upon which the court sentenced her to 15 days imprisonment and Rs110,000 fine.

On Saturday, PTI chief Imran Khan tweeted, “I want to request CM KP and the KP govt not to deport Sharbat Gula to Afghanistan on humanitarian or compassionate grounds.”

However, the tweet was later deleted.

Afterwards, the KP government hinted at starting correspondence with the interior ministry through the home department to stop deportation of Ms. Gula and give her the refugee’s status.

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.dawn.com/news/1295021/govt-to-send-sharbat-gula-back-tomorrow-with-dignity>

BRUTAL KILLING: TEENAGER MURDERED AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT

The Express Tribune, November 8th, 2016.

Shamsul Islam

Faisalabad: The body of a teenage girl missing since November 5 was found in a field in Faisalabad. Doctors and police confirmed the victim was gang raped before being murdered by unidentified suspects. Police have detained four suspects over the incident.

The victim’s father, Nazar Ali, told police that her daughter Razia had left for school on November 5 but did not return home. On inquiring from the school administration and from her class fellows, he learnt the girl did not reach the school and might have been kidnapped.

After three days of hectic efforts, her body was found in the fields of the Chak 395 village within the precincts of Tandlianwala police station.

Initial police investigations and post-mortem reports confirmed the victim was killed after sexual assault.

SHO Sarfraz Ahmad told The Express Tribune the police shifted the deceased's body for post-mortem to the Tandianwala Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, where a team of doctors conducted the autopsy and confirmed the teenager was killed after gang rape.

The police officer said that according to the post-mortem report, there were visible marks of injuries on the body of the victim, including the neck, chest and abdomen. The viscera from the body have been sent for chemical and DNA analysis.

After the incident, a wave of fear spread among the parents and students of the village, who expressed concern over the situation.

While speaking to The Express Tribune, Muhammad Javed said the incident created a sense of insecurity among the villagers and a number of parents were reluctant to send their kids to schools.

He added the majority of the villagers were compelled to accompany their children to schools and bring them home. "This creates a lot of trouble as it affects our daily earnings," he said.

Police Inspector Bashir Ahmad, who had been assigned the investigation of the case, said four suspects have been taken into custody.

"We have gathered forensic evidence from the scene of the crime and also collected some vital information on the basis of cell phones used in the area during the past 38-hours," he added.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1223758/brutal-killing-teenager-murdered-sexual-assault/>

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION A MUST TO ATTAIN REAL PROGRESS: GOVERNOR

Business Recorder, November 08, 2016

Punjab governor, Malik Muhammad Rafique Rajwana has said the country cannot attain real progress without active participation of women folks in all walks of life.

While talking to a delegation of businesswomen, representing Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry here Monday, Rajwana said that women are also showing interest in trade sector and excelling in business. He said the government is providing a platform to women for taking part in business activities enabling them to stand on their own feet.

The governor further said that Pakistani women are very talented and hard working and have proved their abilities in different sectors including business and trade. He said that Punjab government has taken solid measures for the progress of women and bringing them into national mainstream.

He said that women have been given 33 per cent representation on all decision-making boards and committees while their quota in government jobs has been increased from 5-per cent to 15-per cent. "Pakistan cannot make progress without participation of women in development process and giving them due status in the society," he said.

He said that government led by Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has taken historic measures for the empowerment of women as well as their welfare and betterment. The women trade delegation expressed gratitude to the government for encouragement of women in trade sector.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/100784/>

MAN THRASHES WIFE, SHAVES HER HEAD

The Express Tribune, November 7th, 2016.

HARIPUR: A man was arrested and sent to jail on judicial remand on Sunday for allegedly beating his wife and shaving her head.

This incidentally is the third recent case of head shaving in Hazara division, according to police records.

Ghazi police quoted Nasira Bibi, a resident of Ghazi, as saying that she married Tariq Nawaz of Kotehra Village some seven years ago and they have young daughter together. In her complaint, she accused Nawaz of frequently beating her over minor issues. She said that in July, he beat her mercilessly and shaved her head, after which she moved back in with her parents.

Nasira claimed that her husband also kept their daughter with him, and only allowed her to take custody of the child on the condition that she would not tell anyone what he had done to her.

Later, he started exerting pressure on her to return home.

Nasira added that she found it difficult to stay with Nawaz and refused to return to his house, which resulted in frequent threats from him. She accused him of threatening her and demanded legal action against him.

Consequently, the police arrested the suspect on Saturday under sections 337-B, 386 and 506 of the PPC and produced him before the court of a judicial magistrate, who sent him to Haripur Central Jail on judicial remand.

In May, Gul Shifa, 20, of Ahal Village in Ichriyan Union Council, Mansehra had accused her husband and his brother of shaving her head and chopping off her nose, while in early October, a married woman from Garhi Habibullah Mansehra, was stripped and got her head shaved by a man who allegedly entered her home with the intention of kidnapping her daughter.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1222810/cruel-unusual-man-thrashes-wife-shaves-head/>

AFGHAN PRESIDENT WELCOMES BACK NAT GEO FAMED 'AFGHAN GIRL' IN KABUL

Dawn, November 10, 2016

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani on Wednesday welcomed back Sharbat Gula, the green-eyed woman immortalised on a National Geographic cover, in Kabul after she was deported from Pakistan.

The president and first lady Rula Ghani honoured Gula and her children at a ceremony at the presidential palace in Kabul.

"Pleased to have welcomed Sharbat Gula and her family back to (Afghanistan), her life inspires us all and she represents all the brave women of this land" said President Ashraf Ghani on Twitter.

Ghani had promised to provide Gula, 45, with a furnished apartment to ensure she "lives with dignity and security" in Afghanistan.

Gula revealed that she first arrived in Pakistan an orphan, some four or five years after the Soviet invasion of 1979, one of millions of Afghans who have sought refuge over the border since.

Pakistani officials handed over Gula, whose haunting eyes were captured in a cover photo taken in a refugee camp in the 1980s, to Afghan border authorities after escorting her from a Peshawar hospital where she was being treated for Hepatitis C.

Gula, arguably Afghanistan's most famous refugee, was arrested last month for living in Pakistan on fraudulent identity papers.

Since July hundreds of thousands have returned to Afghanistan ahead of a March 2017 deadline for the final return of all Afghan refugees.

Last month UNHCR Refugee Agency revealed that more than 350,000 Afghan refugees — documented and undocumented — had returned from Pakistan so far in 2016, adding it expects a further 450,000 to do so by the year's end.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295342>

‘DNA EVIDENCE IS MOST IMPORTANT CLAUSE IN ANTI-RAPE BILL’

Dawn, November 11th, 2016

KARACHI: There are several instances where women have been denied justice in cases of rape on account of lack of evidence, while in one case even a court refused to accept DNA as evidence, said a women rights activist at an advocacy meeting on Thursday.

Seeking improved health-based response to gender-based violence (GBV), rights activist Anis Haroon said the most important clause in the Anti-Rape Bill of 2015 was the one about DNA evidence, as it was a scientific proof of rape.

Besides several human rights activists, officials of the home department, police and medico-legal officers also attended the meeting, which was organised by War Against Rape (WAR), a non-profit organisation, at Beach Luxury Hotel.

Given the importance of evidence, Ms Haroon said: “Isn’t it important to have a DNA laboratory in Karachi, which is a city of more than 20 million people, instead of sending samples to Islamabad?”

According to Ms Haroon, laws were useless until they were implemented. In this case, she said, it was imperative for the First Information Report (FIR) to be registered and followed by proper medico-legal tests.

“But we need to face reality and stop pushing things under the carpet,” said the activist, adding that one of the reasons behind the formation of WAR was people’s reluctance to report or talk about rape despite the increasing number of rape cases in the city in 1989.

“We only found out about them from word of mouth,” she said.

She also discussed post-rape rehabilitation and why going to police was important.

Earlier, the opening remarks were given by WAR programme officer Ruksana Siddiqui who discussed how the civil society organisation came into being in 1989. “We started working on the issue which was a taboo,” she said, adding that it was important to start a conversation about rape and Hudood Ordinance which people feared to talk about then.

These days, she said, they were going to different schools and communities in the metropolis to create awareness among students and parents.

WAR programme coordinator Nabila Qureshey explained some key findings and observations of the Anti-Rape Bill, 2015.

She said that along with DNA evidence, confidentiality, decision of appeal, and private courtroom hearing were positive aspects, but there were shortcomings also such as definition of rape, questionable quality of rape cases and punishment.

It was learnt after a consultation with police and other stakeholders that a rape survivor was never comfortable talking to a male investigation officer (IO), while there was a dearth of female IOs and MLOs, said Ms Qureshey, adding that female IOs were often threatened during a course of investigation.

Also, there was the issue of funding for DNA tests, need for forensic laboratory in Karachi and need to recommend female officers and police stations to rape survivors, she said.

The objective of the exercise, she added, was to build pressure on the relevant authorities for effective and sustainable implementation of the Anti-Rape Bill; secure survivor's access to justice by effective adoption of protocols and procedures with regards to record keeping in GBV cases by the Sindh health department and strengthening medico-legal responses — standardised rape examination kits, consent forms in Urdu and English along with revised medico-legal certificates.

Besides, WAR was also seeking to develop a basic streamlined screening mechanism for survivors who approached medico-legal centres in Karachi.

MoU signed

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed by WAR and special assistant to the chief minister on women's development Iram Khalid, on Thursday, for the purpose of networking and referral measures discussed at the meeting.

The programme was part of WAR's project 'Provide safe haven to GBV survivors through institutionalising two shelter homes and facilitating women survivors' empowerment' under USAID-supported Gender Equity Programme of Aurat Foundation.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1295545>

WOMEN URGED TO PLAY THEIR DUE ROLE IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC UPLIFT

Business Recorder, 11 November 2016

FAISALABAD: Agri Scientist have urged the women to play their role in socio-economic uplift with the tool of education, skills and their rights in order to compete with rest of the world.

While chairing a seminar on gender equality at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan said that women rights and empowerment was vital to achieve the dream of development. The women comprise 50 percent of the total population. We could not progress without involving them in social and economic life and bringing them into mainstream.

He said that the women are excelling in the every field of life. He said that the education works as engine of growth to address social and economic issue. He praised the government for the taking the initiatives for the cause of women emancipation.

Talking about UAF initiatives, he said that the UAF had set up a hostel for 1000 girls with the funding of the Punjab Government. It is the largest hostel countrywide.

He said that the University was making all-out efforts to provide the modern facilities to the women. The gender ratio in the postgraduate programs is 47 women to 53 men. The Day Care Centre, Women Complex comprising four hostels with state-of-the-art residential and sports facilities, Career Development Centre and working women hostel had been added.

MPA Najma Afzal said that we will not achieve the sustainable development if we nor achieve gender equality. We should ensure the participation of women farmers in decision-making process. She said that women comprise largest percent of the workforce in the agriculture sector.

She said that the government was committed to provide them their due rights and empower them so that challenges of the modern era. She called for capacity building courses for the women farmers.

Dean faculty of Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Iqbal Zafar said that women are playing an intensive role model not only as a house keeper but also as the working force in all aspects of life.

Dr Saira Akhtar said that women as mothers, sisters and daughters were playing a pivotal role for the development of the country. She stressed upon the need for women empowerment to end the poverty from the country. She said that the nation can't make the progress without the active participation of women and providing them rights.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/11/13-page/816001-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 31ST TO NOVEMBER 6TH 2016

BREAST CANCER: LET'S START WITH THE WORDS

The Express Tribune, November 1st , 2016.

Aisha Sarwari

A few years ago, I went to a restaurant where the waiter turned the deepest beetroot shade of red when I requested for a grilled chicken breast. I'd said the word breast and this had sent him shuddering. Unluckily for many chicken around this country the word chicken breast is gaining traction and respect and familiarity. It no longer conjures up images of a busty blonde.

Unluckily for about 40,000 women in this country that die of breast cancer every year, this word is still not appropriate to use in whatever mode or language for the mammary glands of a woman because it is shameful and dishonourable in society to do so. Thousands of the staggering number above could have been saved with what is a routine breast self-exam that can early-detect a tumour in time for a life to be saved. Breast self-exams are a simple technique of rubbing your breast, possibly in the shower, clockwise and anti-clockwise with your hand arched behind your shoulder and elbow pointing to the ceiling. Just this simple check on a routine basis is needed, and yet there is hardly any awareness of this self-exam.

Women, particularly in rural areas feel lumps when they've overgrown and metastasised already. They gather the courage to report it even later, when the cancer spreads to other parts of the body. Again rural women are very susceptible because they often store coins and paper money as well as essentials in their bras for safety. This puts them at greater risk.

Pakistani women are also deathly afraid of going to treat their lumps because they will become sexually undesirable, the only one currency they think their worth is measured in. For many in the west, Angelina Jolie's full mastectomy made the procedure much more acceptable but for a woman in Thar, her role model was her aunt who died of breast cancer, not the woman in some faraway land who battled it.

The prevalence of breast cancer in women in Pakistan is among the worst in the world, yet hardly anyone ever is talking about it. There should be posters in public restrooms and public service announcements on television rather than the myriad of ads that show women as subservient likeable beings. It is the tyranny of likability that gets women to fear creating trouble for the family if the lump they feel, turns out to be cancer. Women are swamped with signals from family that they are already much trouble and they don't want to burden anyone further, financially or socially.

This is a victim-blaming culture to begin with. A woman with breast cancer has got to be up to no good, no shred of doubt. There are many reasons women are dying because of honour in this country, having cancer in their breasts

should not be one of them. Cancer, if detected early, is just as curable as dengue or cholera. Let's not call women corpses until they are. Doing away with cancer lumps in breasts or doing away with the whole breast should not be more jarring than an appendix operation. Women before they can be identified as sexual beings, need to be beings first, and if a part of their body revolts against them, well then it needs to go.

Some brilliant people together with the pink ribbon campaigners lit up the Jinnah mausoleum pink for breast cancer awareness. It would also help if we can now stop defining women by their sexuality and then limiting their health procedures by it. All women must carry out regular breast self-exams, the men in their lives must reassure them that when or if women lose their breasts to cancer, they don't lose their dignity and self worth. The young girls must be taught new curriculum to guard against this disease whose cause is more likely to be ignorance than metastasising cells.

At the least let us be able to say the two words together before we can cure it out of Pakistan: breast cancer.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1216492/breast-cancer-lets-start-words/>

PROTECTION OF WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE: SHARMEEN APPRECIATES REFORMS

Business Recorder, 1 November, 2016

LAHORE: Two time Oscar Award winner, prominent filmmaker and journalist, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy visited the Chief Minister's Special Monitoring Unit (Law and Order Wing) on 31st October 2016. She was welcomed by Senior Member Law and Order Salman Sufi who discussed the women-centric reforms initiated by SMU with her.

Sharmeen lauded Salman Sufi for taking the lead in such reforms that are changing the face of Punjab in a positive way. Sharmeen and Salman Sufi agreed to strengthen the cooperation to promote and expand SMU reforms and the work Sharmeen is doing to eradicate violence against Women.

Sharmeen appreciated Strategic reforms such as the drafting and passage of the historic legislation, Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act 2016 and its implementation mechanism in the form of Violence Against Women Centers (VAWCs) as well as the Women on Wheels (WoW) campaign were talked about. Sharmeen lauded the efforts of the SMU Team and expressed her support for SMU's women-centric reforms.

Violence Against Women Centers (VAWC), first of which is set to be established in Multan within this year and will be the first initiative of its kind in the entire South Asian region as it brings together all justice delivery departments including first aid, police, prosecution and rehabilitation under one roof.

The Women on Wheels (WoW) campaign has already been launched in 5 districts of Punjab including Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi and Sargodha and will go on to spread to the rest of the 31 districts as well. Girls trained in these 5 districts will take part in the Women on Wheels (WoW) Mega Rally which will take place this year.

Later on, Director General PHA and Commissioner Lahore also joined the meeting to discuss the inauguration of the Greater Iqbal Park which includes the History Museum and Heroes Gallery within it.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2016/11/01/13-page/810525-news.html>

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN BILL AWAITS IMPLEMENTATION

Dawn, November 2nd, 2016

Imran Gabol

LAHORE: The Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Bill 2015 passed by the Punjab Assembly in February is yet to be notified for implementation.

However, a complaint lodged in March under sections of assault or use of criminal force on a woman and stripping her off (354) and punishment for criminal intimidation (506) of the Pakistan Penal Code was falsely reported as having been registered under the bill.

In that case, Green Town-resident Basra had filed a complaint against her husband Tayyab for torturing her and refusing financial assistance. Later, she deposed before a court that since she had reconciled with her husband, the first information report (FIR) may be quashed. The court dismissed the case as withdrawn.

The long-awaited Bill contains remedies for victims of violence, criminalisation of all forms of violence against women and provides for special centres that remove the usual hurdles that complicate a woman's quest for justice.

Under the Bill, violence has been redefined to mean any offence committed against the human body of the aggrieved person, including abettment of an offence, domestic violence, sexual violence, psychological and emotional abuse, economic abuse, stalking and cyber crime.

A toll-free universal access number will be introduced to receive complaints while district protection committee established to investigate complaints filed by women. Violence Against Women Centres (VAWCs) will be set up at district level across the province. The centres are supposed to be set up to solve the problem of FIR registration and streamline the case-flow process by bringing all the needed facilities under one roof — first aid, police reporting, FIR lodging, prosecution, medical examination, forensics and post-trauma rehabilitation.

A district women protection officer (DWPO) has been given power to raid any place to rescue the complainant with her consent. The officer can also file a habeas corpus case on the basis of any credible information of wrongful confinement of an aggrieved person. Several penalties (imprisonment and/or fine) have been laid out in the Bill for obstructing the work of a protection officer, filing a false complaint and breach of court orders or tampering with the Global Positioning System record.

Aurat Foundation Resident Director Mumtaz Mughal told Dawn implementation of the Bill at once is a costly exercise. The government planned to implement it in phases which needed huge infrastructure and budget for establishing VAWCs in districts.

She said the government had allocated Rs40 billion for the first VAWC in Multan which was under construction and will be completed by December.

She was of the view that the Bill could not be implemented without completion of the first VAWC. She also said currently the government did not have sufficient budget for establishing such centres in every district and for now Darul Aman were being upgraded for the purpose.

A senior police officer on condition of anonymity told Dawn that the course of investigation in women-related cases would be expedited after implementation of the law. Quoting rape cases, she said women did not know about preservation of evidences and they usually bathed themselves before a medical examination which resulted in damaging key evidence. She doubted better results could be achieved after implementation of the bill without changing the mindset of society.

Chief Minister's Special Monitoring Unit Chairman Salman Sufi told Dawn the Bill could not be implemented without completion of the first VAWC. He said they told the media and law enforcement agencies after passing the Bill that it could not be implemented till December.

He said they would provide rescue, first aid, police reporting, FIR lodging, prosecution, medical examination, forensics and post-trauma rehabilitation under one roof.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293748>

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Dawn November 2nd, 2016

UMERKOT: The Umerkot district and sessions court on Tuesday ordered police to register an FIR against the husbands and in-laws of two badly injured women, who informed the court that they were ruthlessly beaten up and thrown out of their house along with their children. It also ordered arrest of the suspects.

Rekha, wife of Om Prakash Kalal, accompanied by her seven-year-old son, Vireen, and Sunita, wife of Jai Dev Kalal, with her six-month-old daughter Tamana in her lap, went to the court after spending a whole night at the closed doors of their house.

They informed the court that they had long been tortured by their husbands and in-laws for not bowing to their pressure to let their respective husbands to contract a second marriage.

The affected women, along with their brother Lajpat Kalal, narrated their ordeal to local reporters near their residence in Kalal Mohala of Umerkot town and said that their husbands, father-in-law, mother-in-law and sisters-in-law all had been subjecting them to beating for several years.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293684/domestic-violence>

‘OVERCOMING ENERGY CRISIS A MUST TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT’

Dawn November 2nd, 2016

HYDERABAD: Speakers at an international symposium held here on Tuesday stressed the need for resolving the energy crisis and environment issues being faced by Pakistan. They said that sustainable development could not be ensured without overcoming the energy crisis.

The symposium was part of the three-day ‘4th international conference on energy, environment and sustainable development’ being held at the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET), Jamshoro. It has been organised by the Energy and Environmental Engineering Research Group of the university in collaboration with the US-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Water.

Speaking as the chief guest, Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) managing director Syed Wamiq Bokhari said that the country’s population was on the rise which put a big responsibility on energy and environment experts to ensure proper utilisation of natural resources.

“The energy crisis and environmental degradation are global challenges and we will have to find out how to meet them through modern technologies make sustainable development possible,” he said.

He stressed the need for integrated long-term energy planning in Pakistan.

Welcoming the delegates, MUET vice chancellor Prof Dr Mohammed Aslam Uqaili spelt out the aims and objectives of the symposium and urged the participating experts give their valuable input at plenary and technical sessions. He expressed his confidence that the delegates would present practicable recommendations to help all stakeholders to overcome the crises. He said the recommendations and proposals would be sent to government for due consideration.

Italy’s former minister for environment, land & sea, Prof Dr Corrado Clini said that energy and environment challenges were a global phenomenon. Pakistan, India, China and certain other states, he said, were the developing countries facing the major issue of increasing population.

“If these countries depended on traditional energy (coal etc), this will enhance environmental risks. They better opt for renewable sources like solar and wind energy.

Prof Dr Khanji Harijan said the conference, which would continue till Thursday, also featured presentations and specialised workshops.

Delegates from United Kingdom, Italy, Malaysia, Thailand, China and Taiwan as well as various local organisations and research bodies of universities across the country are participating in the conference.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1293683/overcoming-energy-crisis-a-must-to-ensure-sustainable-development>

SHARBAT GULA DENIED BAIL IN CNIC FRAUD CASE

Dawn November 3rd, 2016

Waseem ahmad shah

PESHAWAR: A special anti-corruption and immigration court on Wednesday rejected the bail petition of National Geographic famed 'Afghan Girl' Sharbat Gula in the CNIC fraud case, shocking her admirers, including Afghan diplomats, who demanded her release on humanitarian grounds.

Pronouncing its order, judge of the special court Farah Jamshed Khan observed that the defence counsel had admitted that the accused/ petitioner (Sharbat Gula) procured her Pakistani Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) being an Afghan national.

One of her counsel told Dawn that a bail petition was likely to be filed with the Peshawar High Court Thursday (today).

As Ms Gula, who was arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Oct 26, has been suffering from Hepatitis C and therefore, she was shifted to Lady Reading Hospital from Peshawar Central Prison.

She was sent to prison by a local court on judicial remand for 14 days on Oct 28.

Defense counsel and prosecution had completed their arguments over the bail petition a day ago.

While Afghan diplomats, including Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwal, were optimistic about the positive outcome on the bail petition as they were in contact with several Pakistani government officials and ministers, the court's order was a setback to them.

The ambassador addressed a news conference in the afternoon here and said the arrest of Sharbat Gula had displeased Afghans and therefore, the Pakistan government should handle her case very carefully.

He said Ms Gula, who was in her 40s, was a widow suffering from Hepatitis C and that her husband and eldest daughter had died of the same disease.

The envoy said he was optimistic Sharbat Gula would get relief from the court in the next two days.

accused petitioner is admittedly an Afghan national and as admitted by the defence counsel during the course of his arguments that during Afghan was she along with her family came to Pakistan however to this effect no card of

registration in respect of proof of registration being a registered Afghan has been produced or is found available on record.

“Prime facie perusal of the record also reveals that not only the computerised ID card was procured by present accused petitioner but prior to this she also obtained her manual ID card meaning that on both the occasions she impersonated herself as Pakistani citizen without legally adopting the status of same.

It is also an admitted fact that the relevant Nadra official who allegedly collaborated and facilitated present accused petitioner in obtaining her CNIC are also enrobed as co-accused in case FIR in hand.”

The court observed: “Accused/petitioner was not only illegally staying in Pakistan but at the same time she misused her said stay and to this effect learned defence counsel merely confined his arguments on humanitarian grounds rather than legal especially in the light of applicability of section 14 Foreigners Act.”

In the news conference, the Afghan ambassador said the Pakistani government after coming to know that the detained woman was Sharbat Gula should have owned the ‘innocent face’ and offered her nationality but instead, she was unfortunately sent to jail in the fraud case.

“It would have sent a very positive message to Afghanistan had Sharbat Gula been released on humanitarian grounds,” he said, adding that the interior minister had already announced that she would be released on humanitarian grounds.

Mr. Zakhilwal said Sharbat Gula represented the soft image of Afghanistan.

“She is illiterate and did not obtain CNIC by herself. Someone facilitated her,” he claimed, adding that Pakistani authorities had blocked her card around a year ago.

The envoy said Sharbat Gula never challenged her case as she planned to return to own country.

He said many countries including the US had offered citizenship to Sharbat Gula after her photo appeared on the cover of National Geographic Magazine first in 1985 and then in 2002.

“She did not accept these offers and preferred to stay in a country where she is familiar with its language, religion, culture and Sharbat Gula denied bail in CNIC fraud case customs,” he said.

Mr. Zakhilwal said thousands of Afghans had obtained CNICs and Pakistani authorities should have picked any other case instead of Sharbat Gula.

The envoy said Nadra had provided CNICs to thousands of Afghans, who had gone to Middle East on Pakistani passport and also purchased properties.

“Issuance of CNIC to refugees is a very complex issue. This matter is under discussion with the ministry of Safron,” he said.

On Oct 20, the FIA had registered FIR against three former employees of National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) for allegedly issuing CNICs to Ms Gula and two other Afghans shown as her sons.

The FIR says after completion of inquiry Number 4/2015 and checking of Nadra records, it had been established that three employees of Nadra Peshawar office including Palwasha Afridi, Mohsin Ehsan and Emad fraudulently issued Pakistani CNICs to Afghan nationals including Sharbat Gula, Wali Khan and Rauf Khan.

The officials were charged under sections 409, 419, 420, 468, 471 and 109 of Pakistan Penal Code, Section 5(2) of Prevention of Corruption Act, and Section 30 of Nadra Ordinance.

SPECIAL COURT SUMMONS SHARBAT GULA

Dawn, November 4th, 2016

PESHAWAR: A special anti-corruption and immigration court has summoned National Geographic-famed Afghan woman, Sharbat Gula, today (Friday) after the Federal Investigation Agency filed interim challan (charge sheet) against her over forgery to secure Pakistani Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC).

Judge Farah Jamshed Khan, who has dismissed bail petition of Sharbat Gula on Nov 2, has directed that the suspect should be produced on Friday, official sources informed.

An official in the know said the FIA had submitted the interim challan on Nov 1 as it had already completed investigation against Sharbat Gula, who was arrested by the agency on Oct 26 from her house in Nauthia area.

He said the challan pointed out that the suspect had already admitted her guilt during her interrogation.

The official added that the Afghan woman had claimed that her late husband, Rehmat Gul, had earlier made a manual national identity card for her in 1988.

He added that Sharbat Gula admitted during interrogation that she had later visited the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) offices outside which she met an agent, who made her CNIC after receiving some money.

An expert said it was up to the trial court to decide whether it was going to start trial of the suspect on the basis of interim challan or to wait for the final charge sheet.

He added that there was a possibility of the suspect pleading guilty as her lawyer, too, had admitted in her bail petition that she had a Pakistani CNIC.

The FIA has registered the FIR on Oct 20 against three former Nadra employees for allegedly issuing CNICs to Ms Gula and two other afghans shown as her sons.

The FIR says after the completion of inquiry and checking of Nadra records, it had been established that three employees of Nadra Peshawar offices including Palwasha Afridi, Mohsin Ehsan and Emad fraudulently issued Pakistani CNICs to Afghan nationals, including Sharbat Gula, Wali Khan and Rauf Khan.

The officials were charged under sections 409, 419, 420, 468, 471 and 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code, Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, and Section 30 of the Nadra Ordinance.

Palwasha Afridi and Mohsin Ahsan has secured pre-arrest bail from a court in the case, the third official has been absconding.

Meanwhile, a delegation of civil society activists from KP and Fata visited Lady Reading Hospital to meet Sharbat Gula, who was admitted there on Wednesday.

The delegation consisted of chairman of Tribal NGOs Consortium Zar Ali Khan Afridi, coordinator of Pakhtunkhwa Civil Society Network Taimur Kamal, noted politician Nazeef Khan Utmankhel of Ashnagar, Irfan Khan and Malik Niaz of the National Party, human rights activist Masood Shah and woman rights' activist Sana Gulzar.

The policemen deployed there didn't allow visitors to see the Afghan woman. However, Sana Gulzar was allowed to present a bouquet to Sharbat Gula.

The delegates said Sharbat Gula was not an ordinary woman and that she was a celebrity known as 'Afghan Mona Lisa' after the appearance of her photo on the cover of National Geographic Magazine, first in 1985 and then in 2002.

They demanded that the government order her release by withdrawing case against her.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294149/special-court-summons-sharbat-gula>

FEMALE SCHOLARSHIP

Dawn, November 4th, 2016

Nikhath Sattar

WHAT would the world have been like if women had played a role in interpreting the Quran and development of Islamic jurisprudence? Most certainly, there would have been direct impacts on the state of women and social and economic progress in Muslim countries, and perhaps on issues related to increasing militancy.

Unfortunately, women have been conspicuous by their absence in Quranic learning and teaching throughout the centuries. The issue of female scholarship of Islam and the Quran is one that needs attention now more than ever, as the consequences of patriarchal readings become obvious in the Muslim world.

It was only during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) that women were included in discussions on Quranic revelations. They went to mosques and listened to the Prophet's message. Soon after, as old customs found their way back and beliefs from other faiths filtered in, women were relegated to an inferior position and their intellectual growth was curtailed through lack of education and exposure and imposition of male-dominated discourses.

Men read and interpreted the Quran and hadith, bringing their world view to bear on what women should and should not do. The Word of God, when it interacts with human beings, is interpreted with the inherent biases of individuals. Every person is a product of her or his environment and experience and must necessarily build these into his or her understanding. Hundreds of years of Quranic interpretation and the development of fiqh that forms the basis of laws in Muslim countries, by men have had a major effect on the lives of Muslim women.

It is not the Quran that is patriarchal and oppressive towards women, but the mindset of the interpreter. The subjugation of women has been sanctioned by many well-respected male scholars. Maulana Maududi and several others emphasise the 'management' of women by men and propagate purdah restrictions, despite, arguably, the fact that the Quran contains no injunctions for these. Thus, women are prevented even from taking a breath of fresh air.

Until the 20th century, women scholars were few and far between. If there were any, their work was limited to the confines of their homes.

Nazirah Zein Ed Din (1908-1975) was a Lebanese woman who wrote *Removing the Veil and the Veiling* when she was only 28 years old. The book caught the attention of scholars in Muslim and non-Muslim countries alike, but was fiercely contested by a small group of men in Egypt. Nazirah argued for social reform, led by liberation of women by removing barriers to women's education, and active participation in society.

She said: "A woman's mind is inherently better than a man's. He surpasses her with his physical strength and she surpasses him with her reasonable and noble character." Her book came to be widely read and honoured for its sheer force of argument and religious reasoning.

Nusret Begüm Emin of Iran and Aisha Abd-ur Rahman of Egypt wrote well-researched tafsirs. Aisha brought in the view that both Eve and Adam were created from the same nafs (spirit) as opposed to the notion that Eve was created from Adam's rib, a view widely propagated over the centuries. Zaynab Al Ghazali was the first woman scholar who interpreted the Quran through a contextual reading. Laleh Bakhtiar is the first American woman to have translated the Quran into English.

Asma Barlas and Riffat Hasan have written extensively about women-specific verses. They use hermeneutics based on the sacred text and provide a holistic basis, as opposed to piecemeal readings, for their arguments. Their writings are markedly different from the beliefs propagated by men and focus on how the Quran addresses both women and men in society and their mutual responsibilities.

Women Muslim scholars differ from the predominantly male view that women are originators of sin, inferior to men and the 'other', while men are the 'normal'. They show deeper awareness of the problems faced by Muslims today and use Quranic injunctions, inviting Muslims to move towards a better understanding of their holy text and its eternal guidance.

They underscore the fact that the Quran is meant for common people and must not be left to a group of scholars only. Their readings of verses on wife-beating, evidence of women, marriage and divorce laws, modesty and equality are well-argued and coherent. Many modern male scholars, such as Khaled Abou El Fadl and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, share some of their views.

Female Islamic scholarship, especially when it dares to question entrenched views and practices, is not encouraged. Will there be a time when these works are shared widely and opportunities provided to women to study the Quran with an open mind, without being influenced by unfounded religious pressures?

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294092/female-scholarship>

'AFGHAN GIRL' SHARBAT GULA TO BE DEPORTED

Dawn, November 5th, 2016

Ali Hazrat Bacha

PESHAWAR: A special anti-corruption and immigration court on Friday ordered the deportation of Sharbat Gula, the green-eyed "Afghan Girl" whose 1985 photo in National Geographic became a symbol of her country's wars, after finding her guilty of illegally obtaining a Computerised National Identity Card.

The court also sentenced her to 15 days imprisonment and fined her Rs110,000.

Farah Jamshed Khan, the special court judge, issued directions for Ms Gula, who was arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Oct 26, to be deported to Afghanistan after completion of her sentence. Her prison term would be counted from the day of her arrest.

Ms Gula had pleaded guilty to six charges against her, including her illegal stay in Pakistan, forgery, cheating, tampering with documents and violation of the Nadra (National Database and Registration Authority) Act.

Ms Gula was brought to the Federal Judicial Complex, where the special court functions, amid much media frenzy. A large number of reporters, photographers and cameramen had waited eagerly for her since morning till the judge ordered their expulsion from the courtroom.

The court indicted Ms Gula under various sections of the Pakistan Penal Code, the Nadra Act and the Foreigners Act. She was sentenced to 15 days imprisonment on all six counts, but the sentences would run concurrently. The court also fined her a total Rs110,000 under each of those sections.

Ms Gula was shifted from prison to the Lady Reading Hospital on Nov 2, the day her bail petition was rejected by the same court. She was suffering from hepatitis C.

Special prosecutor Jawed Khan Mohmand represented the FIA and Advocate Malik Mubahir Nazar appeared on behalf of Ms Gula. The FIA had submitted an interim challan on Nov 1, as it had completed its investigation in Ms Gula's case.

The FIA claimed that Ms Gula had admitted during interrogation that she had earlier also acquired a national identity card.

On Oct 20, the FIA registered a case against three former Nadra employees for allegedly issuing computerised national identity cards to Ms Gula and two other Afghan nationals, shown to be her sons.

The FIR said it had established that three employees of Nadra's Peshawar office, Palwasha Afridi, Mohsin Ehsan and Emad, were complicit in issuing Pakistani identity cards to Afghan nationals Sharbat Gula, Wali Khan and Rauf Khan.

They were charged under Sections 409, 419, 420, 468, 471 and 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code, Section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, and Section 30 of the Nadra Ordinance.

Palwasha Afridi and Mohsin Ahsan were granted pre-arrest bail but Emad has been absconding so far.

Dr Omar Zakhilwal, president's special envoy and Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan, said in a statement on Facebook: "With utmost delight, I announce that Sharbat Gula is now free from the legal troubles she endured over the past couple of weeks. She will soon be free from an uncertain life of a refugee as she will be on her way back to her own country by next Monday where she still is a beloved image and a national icon.

She will be met by President Ashraf Ghani upon her arrival to welcome her back home and help her with her resettlement. I take this opportunity to thank all those who voiced their support and sympathy to the case of Sharbatgula. This includes prominent as well as ordinary people within the government, the civil society, the Peshawar Court and the FIA, the media and the public at large. You have all played a significant role resulting in today's good news."

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294383/afghan-girl-sharbat-gula-to-be-deported>

KP PLEADS AGAINST SHARBAT GULA'S EXTRADITION

Dawn, November 6th, 2016

Waseem Ahmad Shah

PESHAWAR: A day after a special anti-corruption and immigration court ordered the deportation of National Geographic famed 'Afghan Girl' Sharbat Gula, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Saturday decided to request the federal government not to extradite her and instead award her the status of Afghan refugee.

Official sources told Dawn here that the provincial government was likely to begin correspondence with the interior ministry through the provincial home department to stop deportation of Ms Gula, who was sentenced to 15 days imprisonment and fined Rs110,000 by the court for acquiring Pakistani Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) through impersonation.

An official said the provincial government would make the request on humanitarian grounds as Ms Gula was a widow and suffered from Hepatitis C.

Ms Gula was arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency on Oct 26 from her house in Nauthia area of Peshawar in the CNIC fraud case whose FIR was registered on Oct 20.

The court had ordered her deportation after completion of her prison term slated to end in few days.

As observed by the court, the jail term will begin from the day of her arrest.

Another official in the know said the KP government had sought the opinion of provincial advocate general Abdul Lateef Yousafzai on the matter and got the response that the deportation of Ms Gula, also known as 'Afghan Mona Lisa' was a federal subject and at the most, the provincial government could request the federal government in this respect.

When contacted, Mr. Yousafzai confirmed he had given legal opinion to the government on the matter.

He said the laws under which Ms Gula was arrested, including Foreigners Act and immigration laws, were federal subject and her deportation could not be stopped by the provincial government.

The advocate general confirmed that he had advised the government that it could request the federal government to give the status of Afghan refugee to Ms Gula after which she could stay in Pakistan until Mar 31, 2017, the extension given by the federal government to Afghan refugees to leave the country.

Under normal procedure, when a court issues deportation order of an Afghan convict, he or she is handed over to police by prison authorities and is subsequently handed over to tribal administration of Khyber Agency for onward deportation to Afghanistan.

Furthermore, it is up to the ministry of Safron to decide whether to award refugee status to a person or not.

Another official said the provincial government had also decided to provide treatment to Ms Gula, who had presently been admitted to Lady Reading Hospital, where she was shifted from the Peshawar Central Prison on Nov 2.

Also on Saturday, the ruling PTI's chief, Imran Khan, tweeted, "I want to request CM KP and the KP govt not to deport Sharbat Gulla to Afghanistan on humanitarian/compassionate grounds."

However, the tweet was deleted from his account afterwards.

The FIA has registered FIR against three former employees of the National Database and Registration Authority over the issuance of CNICs to Ms Gula and two other Afghans shown as her sons.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294622>

'EVERY SECOND WOMAN SUFFERS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN PAKISTAN'

Dawn November 6th, 2016

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: Every second woman in Pakistan suffers from some form of domestic violence that has an extremely damaging effect on her physical and mental well-being, said Dr Tazeen Saeed Ali during a session held on Saturday as part of the three-day national health sciences research symposium being organised at the Aga Khan University (AKU).

Titled Mind and brain, neuroscience today and tomorrow the conference features a number of local and foreign experts discussing and sharing knowledge on subjects ranging from translational neuroscience, artificial intelligence, brain trauma management to modern approaches to epilepsy, telemedicine and new treatment paradigms in child and adolescent mental health.

According to Dr Ali, the overall prevalence of domestic violence in Pakistan ranges between 21pc and 50pc. Women suffer violence over conflict with husbands and in-laws, at times over financial matters.

“Our study has shown that 97.7pc health professionals suffered some form of domestic violence at some point of their married life whereas 72pc had to face sexual abuse at home,” Dr Ali said, adding that women facing violence also developed reproductive health problems.

Infertility, she pointed out, was also found to be a major factor that provoked violence against women, though violence had its roots in the submissive gender role the society assigned to women.

Talking about how violence impacted health, she said it could have a wide ranging negative effect as the consequent hormonal changes altered immune system, damage growth and development, digestive and reproductive systems.

She recommended a combined multi-sectoral approach and awareness of women’s rights, among other things, as part of efforts to improve societal mindset towards women.

Sharing findings of her study based on the magnitude of workplace violence towards nurses at private and public sector hospitals, Rozina Somani, senior instructor at the AKU School of Nursing and Midwifery, said interviews with 458 nurses of four hospitals showed that 82pc of them had to face some form of violence at job.

“Seventy-seven per cent faced verbal abuse whereas 10pc were subjected to sexual violence. Thirty-four per cent complained of bullying,” she said.

Continuing, she observed that prevalence of violence was 83.6pc at private and 79.5pc at government hospitals.

The perpetrators were patient relatives, staff members and patients. Nurses found most vulnerable to violence aged between 20 and 29 and had less than five years of professional experience, she said.

“Low image of women, violence within society and low image of nursing profession are some major reasons which make women vulnerable to violence,” she said.

At another session on trauma management in Pakistan, experts expressed concern that the country had not a single designated functional trauma centre despite the fact it was among the top countries in the world severely affected by violence and terrorism.

“There is no concept of public safety and pre-hospital patient management as is evident from the recent accidents in Landhi and Gaddani, which resulted in huge loss of life.

“Routinely, general surgeons handle trauma cases at hospitals in our country while emergency interventional radiology is almost non-existent,” said Dr Hasnain Zafar, adding that it was the state’s responsibility to develop health and emergency services and run ambulance system.

Earlier in the morning, speakers discussed revolutionary changes and medical breakthroughs taking place in the field of neuroscience.

Computer simulations and algorithms, they said, had enabled researchers to emulate the complex electrochemistry of brain. This had resulted in new insights into mental disorders such as epilepsy — which affects two million people in Pakistan — and a range of medical innovations that is enabling children, who were born deaf, to hear for the first time and soldiers, who lost arms and legs in war, to control robotic limbs with their minds.

On the importance of neuroscience research, Dr Saad Shafqat, a professor of neurology at the AKU, said: “The human brain and its enigmatic product, the mind, are at the core of human identity, intelligence, character and personality. Together, their activity determines what it means to be human.”

According to him, diseases of the brain and mind such as epilepsy, stroke, depression and schizophrenia are devastating as they alter the person as we know them.

“Just as studies in the 1990s on clot-busting drugs revolutionised stroke treatment, we hope the research and clinical insights shared today will lead to changes in treatment for mental, neurological and neurosurgical illnesses in Pakistan.”

Dr Ali Minai, a professor of electrical engineering and computer systems at the University of Cincinnati, USA, talked about how both the brain and the computer were complex systems that used electrical activity to process information.

“Insights from the brain are already expanding the frontiers of medical and scientific knowledge. The future is even more promising as the creation of artificial intelligence or ‘learning computers’ can be used to augment our bodies for a wide variety of uses from entertainment to education and even applications related to security,” he said.

Dr Fowzia Siddiqui, a leading epilepsy researcher based at the AKU, pointed out that the centuries-old myth that epileptics were ‘possessed’ by supernatural forces was still widely prevailed in Pakistan and research had shown that only two out of 100 people in rural areas and less than three out of 10 epileptics in urban settlements were taking any medicine to control their disorder.

“Alarmingly, international studies estimate that 80 per cent of epileptics living in developing countries still remain untreated,” she said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1294475>

December 2016

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 26 TH TO JANUARY 1ST 2016

MEDICAL COLLEGES: 35 PERCENT GIRL STUDENTS NEVER START CAREER AFTER GRADUATION

Business Recorder, December 26, 2016

An estimated 35 per cent female students of medical colleges never start their professional career after graduation due to different social constraints in Pakistan. There is an urgent need for launching online family physicians’ courses to bring this pool of medical fraternity back in profession.

Founding Vice Chancellor, Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS), Prof Dr Masood Hameed, while talking to media, said that the female medical students occupied the general merit seats in public sector medical colleges and got subsidy from government but after completing their education they never started their professional career.

He informed the media that an estimated 35 female medical students out of 100 left medical profession after completing the graduation due to family and other social constraints. He further said that students who got admissions to medical colleges on general merit seats get subsidy of around Rs0.6 million in fee per year, so they complete their MBBS only after a government subsidy of around Rs3 million. Unfortunately, after completion of their medical course, most of the female medical graduates never work.

Prof Masood Hameed said that admission ratio of female medical students in medical colleges on general merit seats is high as compared to male in the country; thus there was an urgent need of introducing online family physicians’ courses to bring this pool of medical fraternity back in profession.

He said that government and families had spent millions of rupees on medical education, training and skill development of lady doctors annually but quitting medical profession was having a terrible impact on national healthcare system.

He said DUHS management has designed a special online family physician course for such female doctors to pull that pool of doctors back in profession. He said that DUHS will issue certificates to female doctors after successful completion tailor made online courses and such doctors can run family physician clinics at their homes.

<http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/117225/>

POVERTY, OUTDATED CUSTOMS CONSPIRE TO TRAP UNDERAGE GIRLS IN BRIDE SWAPS

Dawn December 31st, 2016

JAMPUR: Mohammad Ramzan can neither hear nor speak, and he has a childlike mind. But he knew his wife, Saima, was too young when she was given to him as a bride.

Ramzan, 36, smiles, eager to please, as he uses his fingers to count out her age when they married. One, two, three ... until 13, and then he stops and looks at her, points and nods several times.

The girl's father, Wazir Ahmed, says she was 14, not 13, but her age was beside the point. It mattered only that she had reached puberty when he arranged her marriage as an exchange: his daughter for Ramzan's sister, whom he wanted to take as a second wife.

His first wife, Saima's mother, had given him only daughters, and he hoped his second wife would give him a son. But Sabeel wouldn't marry him until her brother had a wife to care for him. She would be a bride in exchange for a bride.

"We gave a girl in this family for a girl in their family," Ahmed says. "That is our right."

In deeply conservative regions such as this one in the south of Punjab province, the tribal practice of exchanging girls between families is so entrenched, it even has its own name in Urdu: Watta Satta, which means give and take.

A girl may be given away to pay a debt or settle a dispute between feuding families. She might be married to a cousin to keep her dowry in the family or, as in this case, married for the prospect of a male heir.

Many believe that their Islamic religion instructs fathers to marry off their daughters at puberty.

"If it is not done, our society thinks parents have not fulfilled their religious obligation," says Faisal Tangwani, regional coordinator for the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan in nearby Multan.

Ahmed sees the hand of God in his daughter's marriage to a disabled man. "It was by God's will that he was chosen," he says. "It was her fate."

Ahmed sits inside the mud-walled compound where he lives now with his two wives. Outside, stray dogs roam in packs of three and four. They bite, Ahmed warns. He says that the fact that Ramzan is nearly three times his daughter's age is irrelevant. But the legal marrying age here is 16, and in a rare move, police did investigate Saima's marriage after they received a complaint, possibly from a relative involved in a dispute with her father.

Ramzan and Ahmed were jailed for a few days, but Saima testified in court that she was 16 and they were released. She says she told the authorities she was 16 to protect her father and husband.

In Saima's world of crushing poverty, where centuries-old tribal traditions mix with religious beliefs, a crippling cycle traps even the perpetrators with a life's burden: a father who longs for a son to help support his family; a wife who must provide that son; a daughter who must become a mother even when she is still a child.

Saima's mother, Janaat, agrees with marrying off her daughters early. She says girls are a headache after they reach puberty. They can't be left at home alone for fear of unwanted sexual activity or worse, the daughter leaves home with a boy of her choice.

"That would be a shame for us. We would have no honour. No. When they reach puberty quickly, we have to marry them," she says. "Daughters are a burden, but the sons, they are the owners of the house." She says she accepted her husband's marriage to another woman; after all, it's her fault he only has daughters.

"I feel shame that I don't have a son. I myself allowed my husband to get a second wife," she says.

Her husband's new wife, Sabeel, says she agreed to marry Ahmed because of her brother. She wanted him to have a wife.

"No one had been willing to give their daughters to my brother," she says.

Ramzan is quick to extend his hand to guests who enter through the torn and tattered curtain that hangs over the front door to his compound, tucked away in a narrow alley lined with open sewers.

Ramzan's elderly parents live with him. His father rarely leaves his bed, saying he has trouble walking.

His mother begs from morning until night, sometimes knocking on doors, other times parking herself in the middle of a dusty road, her hand outstretched for donations.

Like Ramzan, she can neither hear nor speak.

Both her hips and one knee have been broken. She gestures as if breaking a twig to explain her troubled knee.

Ramzan looks at Saima, her hair hidden beneath a sweeping shawl, her large brown eyes downcast.

"I didn't want to marry her so young. I said at the time, 'She is too young, 'but everyone said I must,'" he says through a series of gestures interpreted by those around him. He held his hand up just below his chest, showing how tall she was when they married.

Saima doesn't talk much. Her answers are short, and matter-of-fact.

"His sister and my father fell in love and they exchanged me," Saima says.

"Yes, I am afraid of my father, but it is his decision who I will marry and when." She picks at the rope bed where she sits with Ramzan. Her husband often reaches to touch the top of her head.

He gestures that he is afraid Saima will leave him one day, and says that God will be unhappy if she does. Saima had gotten pregnant soon after she came to live with Ramzan but lost the child at five months. Ramzan gestures that he wants Saima to take some medicine to help her get pregnant again.

Saima rarely looks in his direction but says she has no quarrel with him, nor does she plan to leave.

Saima says she understands her husband's gestures, but it's hard to know. Most of the translations are done by his 12-year-old niece, Haseena, Sabeel's daughter from the previous marriage.

Haseena was 10 when Saima married her uncle Ramzan and her mother left to live with the new bride's father.

Haseena stayed in the house with her uncle and her elderly grandparents to cook, clean and keep Saima company. She even prepared Saima's wedding dinner.

“When Saima married my uncle, my mother told me to leave school and be with Saima because she will be all alone at home,” Haseena says.

Haseena recalls that Saima seemed so young, the family felt sorry for her.

“At her age, she should have been playing.” Back at Saima’s old home, her seven-year-old sister, Asma, wanders around, shoeless, her hair matted with dirt and dust. Asma already has been promised to her cousin, who is about 10. They will marry when she reaches puberty.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1305486>

OVER 95PC WOMEN IN 17 CONSTITUENCIES DIDN'T VOTE IN 2013

Dawn, January 1st, 2017

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Over 95 per cent of registered women voters in at least 17 National Assembly constituencies did not cast their votes in the 2013 general elections.

A document prepared by the Election Commission of Pakistan, available with Dawn, reveals that turnout of women voters was less than one per cent in five of these constituencies.

According to disaggregated voters’ data, only one woman out of the total 138,910 registered in NA-33 (Upper Dir) had exercised her right to vote.

In the constituency adjacent to it, NA-34 (Lower Dir), women’s turnout was 0.11pc as only 231 out of 206,566 women voters had cast their ballots. In NA-37 (Kurram Agency), 459 out of 156,811 women voters had cast their votes or 0.29pc of the total registered women voters. However, the constituency registered an overall low turnout as 2,072 men out of 230,107 male registered voters had cast their ballots.

In NA-34, located in the troubled Bajaur Agency, women’s turnout was at 0.02pc and in NA-46, Khyber Agency, 0.2pc.

The trend wasn’t only limited to the tribal areas where certain cultural norms and the law and order situation could play a prohibitive role in this regard. Low women’s turnout was also reported in some constituencies of large cities in Punjab.

In NA-152 (Multan), the turnout of women voters was as low as 1.92pc as only 75,422 out of 3.9 million women voters had cast their ballots. The turnout for male voters in the constituency was 2.13pc.

The turnout of women voters was 2.13pc in NA-178 (Muzaffargarh), 2.24pc in the adjacent NA-177, 2.34pc in NA-175 (Rajapur), 2.71pc in NA-174 (Rajapur), and 2.82pc in NA-145 (Okara). The turnout recorded in NA-61 (Chakwal) was 4.42pc and 9.52pc in NA-64 (Sargodha).

The turnout of women voters in NA-271 (Kharan, Balochistan) was 3.51pc, but higher than the turnout for men, 3.04pc. In NA-31 (Shangla), 4.59pc of registered women voters had cast their ballots.

Interestingly enough, the turnout figures for women outstripped those of men in some constituencies, including NA-48 (Islamabad) where the women voters’ turnout was 61.75pc, compared to 61.01pc of male voters.

Similarly, in NA-51 (Rawalpindi) 53.24pc of registered women voters had cast their ballots compared to 52.31pc men. The difference in Attock's NA-58 was even higher — the women's turnout was 64.35pc while 61.81pc of registered male voters had cast their votes.

In NA-62 (Jhelum) 17.71pc women had voted, compared to 16.67pc men. Constituencies where the percentage of women voters was higher than that of male voters included NA-74 (Bhakkar), NA-93 (Toba Tek Singh), NA-101 (Gujranwala), NA-103 (Hafizabad), NA-111 and 112 (Sialkot), NA-115 and 116 (Narowal) and NA-180 (Muzaffargarh).

Areas with low female voters' registration

The election commission has identified over 26,000 census blocks where the ratio of registered women voters is below 40pc of the total enrolled electorate.

The ECP's gender affairs wing has shared the data with district election commissioners so that they could send it to district election commissioners. The district election commissioners will be asked to focus on the registration of women voters on priority and submit a progress report in four months.

According to another ECP document available with Dawn, 10,440 of these census blocks are in Punjab alone. Lahore tops in terms of the number of census blocks with low enrollment of women voters. The number of such blocks in provincial capital is 872, followed by Sialkot (755), Rahim Yar Khan (743), Sheikhupura (733), Narowal (620), Kasur (509), Bahawalnagar (501) and Jhang (490).

Sindh has 5,779 census blocks, including 1,575 in Karachi West, 629 in Karachi Central, 560 in Malir, 509 in Karachi East 401 in Korangi, 258 in Ghotki, 204 in Hyderabad, 131 in Khairpur and 117 in Kashmore.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the number of census blocks with less than 40pc registered women voters is 3,782, including 601 in Lower Dir, 600 in Kohistan, 469 in Upper Dir, 343 in Peshawar, 250 in Mardan, 147 in Mansehra, 138 in Chitral, 132 in Charsadda, 127 in Batagram and 103 in Bannu.

Balochistan has 3,539 such blocks, including 554 in Khuzdar, 315 in Kalat, 223 in Quetta, 208 in Dera Bugti, 196 in Killa Abdullah, 188 in Kohlu, 162 in Pishin, 143 in Awaran, 137 in Matung, 132 in Lehri, 125 in Loralai, 121 in Labella, 114 in Kachhi and 105 in Jhal Magsi.

In Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the number of census blocks is 2,410. They include 736 clocks in North Waziristan, 350 in Bajaur, 337 in Mohmand, 266 in South Waziristan, 240 in Khyber agency, 141 in FR Bannu and 121 in Kurram agency. The Federal Capital has 53 such constituencies.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1305675/over-95pc-women-in-17-constituencies-didnt-vote-in-2013>

SPIKE IN SEXUAL ASSAULTS RECORDED

The Express Tribune, January 1st, 2017.

Sexual assaults surged in the year 2016 as 21 sodomy and 19 rape cases were registered across the Peshawar district against 11 sodomy and 15 rape cases reported at various police stations last year. According to data provided by police, sodomy cases surged by 100 per cent and rape cases increased by almost 27 per cent in 2016.

A police official maintained that there was no actual increase in either rape or sodomy cases, instead it was the positive attitude of police who started registering FIRs in rape cases. In the past, they said, FIRs were not registered.

A rights activist, Uzma Mehboob, said that the incidence of rape was far higher than what was reported to the police.

“Regrettably, rape is not reported in a majority of cases. The victim, mostly women or girls, are stigmatised for life and the victim is always blamed for improper conduct,” she said, adding that even if such cases were reported to police, most of the accused were released by courts because of lack of evidence.

“If there is evidence against rapists, victims are forced to pardon, especially if the victim is from a poor family,” she said.

“Police lack capacity and equipment to properly investigate rape cases,” she said.

Another rights activist, Imran Takkar, stressed the need for all stakeholders, including the government, police and the media, to play active roles and said that a system was needed for preventing child rapes.

“Not just prevention but we also need an effective child protection system,” he said.

Child rights activist Arshad Mahmood said that K-P should formulate laws on the pattern of Sri Lanka’s National Child Protection Authority Act of 1998.

“There are 25 districts in Sri Lanka and the authority’s chairperson is directly answerable to the president. Likewise, the head of the Child Protection and Welfare Commission should be directly answerable to the chief minister,” he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1280828/spike-sexual-assaults-recorded/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 19 TH TO DECEMBER 25TH 2016

WHEN THE LAW DOES NOT PROTECT WOMEN FROM VIOLENCE

Dawn December 19th, 2016

Asad Jamal

The consistent and apparently rising incidence of violence against women is a sign of both societal degeneration and the inability to understand the crux of the problem. In the strictly legal and criminal justice system context, there is misplaced belief that solutions to the current morass lie in simply enacting more laws and prescribing harsher punishments.

The policy of prescribing harsh punishments is misguided because there is ample evidence globally that it doesn’t work. And while more laws for better prosecution may be needed, little to no groundwork is done before new enactments are introduced. One such example is the latest set of amendments to the criminal law framework — procedural and substantive — meant to increase prosecution of honour crimes. This move is likely to fail in its objective in more ways than one, and for more than one reason.

For instance, the fundamental lacuna in the law that allows out-of-court settlements or a compromise between private parties, that is the legal heirs of women and the offender who are mostly related in cases of honour crimes, remains in place.

The procedural gaps, which ensure perpetrators go unpunished, were not understood before enacting these amendments, therefore the problem remains unaddressed. For instance, there’s evidence to suggest that many cases of honour killings are forgiven and the prosecution is disbanded even before the trial begins.

These new set of amendments do not address this aspect of the problem. Conspicuously, therefore, we continue to lose the fight on two important fronts: impunity and the absence of preventive mechanisms.

Consider the following case. In May 2016, Zeenat, a young woman in Lahore who had married nineteen-year old, Hassan, a resident from her neighbourhood, was allegedly burnt alive by her brother with assistance from their mother.

After Zeenat contracted a court marriage of her own free will, she started living with her in-laws. Soon enough, the family was approached by her brother for her to return to her parents' home on the suggestion that she would be duly married and sent off in a traditional manner.

According to her family, it was being done to rehabilitate the family's 'honour,' as her act of marrying out of the family and without the consent of her brothers and mother had shamed the family. After Zeenat was killed, Hassan explained that she never wanted to go back to her parents' home. "Zeenat told me that they [her family] would kill her," Hassan says. He says that he was unable to do anything or to stop her when the elders of the family agreed that she must return to her family as they ran the risk of reprisal from her brothers. Zeenat was failed by society and the state.

There are no effective means for women in this society to avoid violence when it becomes imminent, or to seek refuge or even help. Had there been a mechanism within or outside state institutions, Zeenat might have been able to reach out for help. It is here that the state needs to make interventions in the system.

Most situations where women are likely to face violence and death can be avoided if the state were to establish institutions that work regularly in communities to prevent violence against women. Unless the state attempts to address the problem through preventive mechanisms, the rising trend of violence against women cannot be expected to recede just by virtue of improvement in existing laws alone such as the Criminal Law Amendment (offences in the name or pretext of honour) Act, 2016.

Take the case of rape. The prosecution of rape is admittedly and abysmally low. The reason behind it is not that the substantive law is not good enough. Yes, there are issues there too but the main problem is that the circumstances in which women victims of sexual assault have to fight their cause are simply not meant to support her.

Zeenat's is one in hundreds of cases demonstrating how the system is geared to work against victims of gender violence. In another instance, a 13-year-old girl who worked as a domestic servant in Lahore — and belongs to a poor Christian migrant family from a nearby town — was forced to withdraw a complaint of rape and reach a compromise with the accused after her case dragged on for six months.

The DNA report did not even arrive. In fact, the police had failed to preserve evidence and send it to the laboratory, until it was pointed out, three days after the incident, when negligence or deliberate dishonesty on the part of the police officer was observed. Then, when I visited the district prosecutor's office requesting speedy progress in the case, the concerned prosecutor cast aspersions on the young girl's character because she was a domestic servant and advised dropping the case.

The medico-legal officer who examined the victim did not know that sexual intercourse with a woman under the age of 16 was statutory rape. The compromise was agreed on by the father of the girl on her behalf, and it was him who received monetary compensation from the accused.

The case was consigned to record even before the charge could be framed. Rape is an offence that cannot be compromised or pardoned under the Pakistani penal law. It carries a harsh punishment of death or life imprisonment. Yet, lawyers are witness to compromises being filed and accepted in courts.

This clearly shows that lawyers, prosecutors, judges, medical officers and other actors in the system are insensitive to the individual victim's plight, as well as the destructive nature of such violence in the larger societal context. Given that no degree of harsh punishments can ensure equality, dignity and justice for women victims of violence, we need to correct the fundamental flaws within the criminal judicial system — before laws are amended.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1303233/when-the-law-does-not-protect-women-from-violence>

ARTS COUNCIL ELECTIONS: FEMINISTS DECRY SAHAR ANSARI'S NOMINATION ON PANEL

The Express Tribune, December 19th, 2016.

Karachi: Controversy surrounded the elections of the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi, as a group of charged activists shouted slogans against Urdu poet Sahar Ansari's nomination on the governing body of Ahmed Shah-Ejaz Farooqi panel contesting the polls on Sunday.

Led by Tehrik-e-Niswan's Sheema Kermani, activists belonging to National Students Federation (NSF), Karachi, and other groups gathered to make their voice heard against Ansari, who is undergoing investigations on charges of sexual harassment in the Sindh ombudsman secretariat.

A professor of the Pakistan Study Centre, Dr Navin G Haider, had filed a complaint against Ansari, who, she claimed, had sexually harassed her. After repeatedly having felt ignored and wronged by the university administration, she has now filed a complaint against the professor in the Sindh ombudsman secretariat.

Feminists protesting inside the Arts Council premises, where the elections were taking place, demanded of the Ahmed Shah-Ejaz Farooqi panel to remove Ansari from their governing body in light of the sexual harassment charges he is facing.

"Ansari is a shameless man who sexually harasses colleagues and students," said NSF activist Zehra Ali. "We are protesting against the fact that Ansari has been allowed to contest the elections of Arts Council, which is an avenue for promoting arts and culture. To allow him to be a governing body member means that Arts Council is officially an unsafe place for women. It will alienate women and prevent them from participating in arts."

Explaining the reason for the protest, another NSF activist, Laila Raza, told The Express Tribune that since the case surfaced, civil society activists have demanded of the president of Arts Council to remove Ansari, who was in the organising committee, and also cancel his membership. "Shah assured us that he [Ansari] will not be a part of his elections due to his controversial character but today he is contesting the elections as the governing body member," she said, adding that how can someone who is undergoing a trial before the Sindh ombudsman even contest the election.

Kermani has personally written to Arts Council about the issue and the kind of misogynist language used by Ansari for women who do theatre. She asked how Ansari, who uses abusive language for women doing theatre and passes comments on their clothes, can be the vice-president of the committee for arts and culture in the Arts Council.

As the protesters shouted slogans against Ansari inside Arts Council, police officials forced the activists to leave the premises and told them to protest outside. Even Kermani, who is a member of Arts Council, was told to leave. Later, she was stopped from stepping into the premises again until the protest went on.

An activist of Tehrik-e-Niswan, Waheed Ali, was also warned by the police to stop the protest or else face arrest.

As the protesters continued to shout slogans outside Arts Council, Ahmed Shah came to invite them for a talk. He claimed that even though they are taking him as a member on the governing body, an inquiry committee will be set up to investigate charges against him. Shah promised that if Ansari is found guilty, he will be removed from the governing body and his membership will also be cancelled. The protesters dispersed after this with mixed feelings – some were satisfied with Shah's promise while others felt that the promise was just a delay tactic to ensure that peaceful elections are held.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1267250/arts-council-elections-feminists-decry-sahar-ansaris-nomination-panel/>

WOMEN HAVING FUN

Dawn, December 21st, 2016

Rafia Zakaria

OVER the weekend, The Washington Post published a story titled 'In Pakistan, five girls were killed for having fun. Then the story took an even darker twist'. Written by Pamela Constable, the story was a follow-up of a gruesome case of five women from Kohistan whose lives, it is very strongly suspected, came to an untoward and cruel end four years ago. All of them are said to have been killed on the orders of a jirga, after a grainy video was shared, showing them clapping and singing at a wedding ceremony.

The past few months have seen some new but unsurprising developments in the case. The first of these, reported some weeks ago by the Pakistani media, relates to a fact-finding mission that told the Supreme Court that the women were, in fact, dead or missing; that the assertions of the elders who maintained they were alive did not appear to be true.

This position was based at least in part on the fact that experts in the UK looked at digital photographs of the women presented and deemed they were not the same as the women in the video.

Although the matter is in court awaiting a final decision, it is relevant to recall the incident that came to light some four years ago. At that time, I, along with many other commentators and human rights activists, noted that there was very little likelihood that the women would have been spared. With video proof of their so-called transgression and an edict reportedly demanding their killing, death was more or less inevitable.

The fact that elders in the village apparently thought they could simply produce another set of girls, which seems to have been the case, and insist that no such thing had taken place is further evidence of what all Pakistanis know, ie women's lives are worth little in Pakistan and women who dare to have fun, to be happy, are worth even less.

Devoid of identity and individuality, the girls of Kohistan, like their sisters all around the country, were considered interchangeable by the elders of their community, one exchanged for another, the dead for the living.

A little over two and a half months ago, the 'anti-honour crimes bill' was passed by the Pakistani parliament amid controversy and opposition by the religious parties. The bill enhanced the maximum imprisonment for so-called honour killers, who are most often close male relatives of the victims, from 14 to 24 years, regardless of whether or not they have been pardoned by their own family members.

One hoped that the passage of the bill and the media attention around it would serve as a deterrent to would-be honour murderers eager to slay their wives or sisters or daughters to avenge their cruel conceptions of a violation of their 'honour'.

Sadly, this has not been the case. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, almost 40 honour killings have taken place in Pakistan in the period since the bill was passed in October. While it is early yet as two months are admittedly not a very long period on which to judge the success of legislative initiatives, the numbers do not point in a hopeful or positive direction.

First, they suggest that the deterrent aspect of the law, which one would expect would be most significant in the months after its passage when it received the most attention, does not seem to have prevented perpetrators from committing such killings. Second, the numbers point to what seems to be the core problem in relation to honour killings in Pakistan: even legislation is unable to bring about the moral change that would make the communities themselves condemn such crimes and hence their perpetrators.

Without that grass-roots reform that should aim at making the very people that egg on these crimes to see the latter as the gruesome murders that they are, no change is possible.

If this premise, the absolute necessity of grass-roots moral transformation on the issue of honour crimes in Pakistan, is accepted, then many of the measures currently being used to combat honour killings would appear largely superfluous.

Grass-roots moral change is unlikely to occur via transnational activism and the naming and shaming mechanisms on which it relies. These mechanisms, which include stories like the one in *The Washington Post*, can at best produce legislative initiatives like the anti-honour crimes law passed earlier this year. Their sensationalist flavours, lobbed as they are atop cruel and ugly truths, do little to initiate moral change in communities like Kohistan.

Add to this the reality that impoverished communities in Pakistan and Afghanistan see the West as a corrosive influence and you have a situation where the commission of honour murders is seen as a mark of cultural autonomy and authenticity. *The Post*, Pamela Constable and numerous others may have the best of intentions in asserting that women in Pakistan are killed for having fun, but they end up making their situation possibly worse.

These acrid realities do not mean that no progress is possible. To end honour killings, the government of Pakistan must invest in reforms at the grass roots and empower women of communities as agents who report to law enforcement the potential and possibility of such crimes.

International media and activists should resist the temptation of condemning entire cultures and communities, as per the 'West against the rest' paradigm, and tell stories in a way that promotes the urgency of grass-roots initiatives and investment.

The girls of Kohistan are gone; to save the millions of others, ordinary Pakistanis must make the eradication of honour killings an urgent and immediate moral priority.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1303518/women-having-fun>

GIRL SNATCHED AWAY OVER FAMILY DEBT

Dawn December 24th, 2016

MIRPURKHAS: The mother rummages through a large metal trunk, searching for a picture of her young daughter taken away in the night to be the bride of a man who says the family owed him \$1,000.

Beneath the blankets, clothes and silver ornaments that she wears with her sari, Ameri Kashi Kohli finds two photos, carefully wrapped in plastic, of her smiling daughters.

Ameri says she and her husband borrowed roughly \$500 when they first began to work on the land, but she throws up her hands and says the debt was repaid. "We started with a loan, and every time they said they were taking money for our loan, but no one gave us anything to show we paid." Instead, the debt doubled.

And like everything else in her life, as a woman who is among the poorest of the poor, she knows she will be powerless to stop it from happening.

"I went to the police and to the court. But no one is listening to us," Ameri says.

Ameri works as a day labourer cutting sugarcane and feed for animals in Sindh, a region dominated by powerful landowners whose holdings stretch for hundreds of acres.

More than two million Pakistanis live as "modern slaves", according to the 2016 Global Slavery Index, which ranks the country in the top three offending countries that still enslave people, some as farm workers, others at brick kilns or as household staff. Sometimes the workers are beaten or chained to keep them from fleeing.

"They have no rights, and their women and girls are the most vulnerable," says Ghulam Hayder whose Green Rural Development Organisation works to free bonded labourers.

The night Jeevti disappeared the family had slept outside, the only way to endure the brutal summer heat. In the morning, she was gone. No one heard anything, her mother says.

The family turned to activist Veero Kohli to help free the girl.

Kohli, who isn't related to the family, was born a slave. She fled bondage in 1999, walking for three days to safety and seeking out the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan to help her before returning to the landowner to recover her children and free eight other families.

Since then, Kohli has devoted herself to challenging the powerful landowners, liberating thousands of families from bonded labour. She has been beaten; her home has been burned down. She has been arrested on concocted charges. Her husband has been arrested, and three of her sons have been jailed.

Five months ago, she went with Ameri to the Piyaro Lundh police station to find her daughter. "Her mother was crying in the police station to let her see her daughter," Kohli says.

They said the girl went willingly, Kohli says. "I told them: 'Let me talk to her. Let her mother talk to her if she went freely.'" They refused.

Instead, they called in the man who Ameri said had taken her daughter.

Hamid Brohi came alone, without the girl. "He said, 'Anyway, she is payment for Rs 100,000 they owe me,'" Kohli recalls.

He said he had forgiven the family's debt and tossed them off his land, Kohli says.

Now Kohli is returning to the same police station where police officer Aqueel Ahmed thumbs through a dozen files, barely containing his anger at the activist.

Finally, he pulls out an affidavit. In it, the girl, who now goes by the name Fatima, said she had converted and married Brohi of her own free will. She also said she couldn't meet her mother because now she was Muslim and her family was Hindu.

Jeevti can neither read nor write; her signature on the statement she purportedly made of her own volition is a thumbprint.

There was no police investigation into Ameri's allegation that her daughter was kidnapped, Ahmed says, nor was there any investigation into her age in a province where the legal age for marriage is 18.

"There was no cause to investigate. She said she went willingly. She said there was no coercion," Ahmed says.

A second police officer, Riaz Hossain, says he knows of several other Hindu girls who converted willingly, too.

But Hindu activists say the girls are kept isolated until they have been forced to convert and are married — and then it's almost too late to do anything.

Ameri, the mother, says she has been threatened by both the police and the man who took her daughter. She has gone to five different courts to get her daughter back, and failed each time. But she hasn't given up hope.

Police in a machine-gun-mounted jeep take Kohli, the activist, and a foreign reporter to visit the girl. Her mother doesn't come, too afraid, she says, to confront the police in person again.

Brohi, a sullen-looking man with a thin moustache, greets the police with an embrace. He angrily denies he took Jeevti as payment for the family's debt, despite his earlier boast to the activist that he had done just that. Instead, he insists he had an affair with the girl and married her. Kohli and her mother say there was no opportunity for that because Jeevti was always with her, even while working in the fields.

Inside, Jeevti sits on a double mattress on the floor, her head wrapped in a black shawl. Brohi leaves his young wife alone but hangs outside the door, scowling at her. Although she doesn't seem afraid, her eyes dart to the door where her husband hovers. When she speaks, her words seem rehearsed and odd for a 14-year-old Pakistani.

"I married him because I wanted to," she says. When asked about her name, she falters for a moment. She says that her Hindu name was Jeevti, smiling slightly, as if remembering her past. But now, she says, she is Fatima.

Finally, it is time to leave. Police, who have remained outside, sipping tea with Brohi's father and other men, escort the visitors back to the nearby village.

The visitors return the next day without police escort.

Within seconds, the police call a Pakistani colleague's mobile phone: "Why did you go there? What do you want? Why did you not stop first at the police station?"

Kohli says she will keep fighting for the girl in court but has little hope of getting her back.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1304176/girl-snatched-away-over-family-debt>

A SPARKLE THAT DOESN'T SHINE

Dawn, Sunday Magazine, December 25th, 2016

Sadia Wali

Making glass bangles is often a labour of love.

Each bangle passes through the hands of 60 workers before reaching the market for sale. There are more than 39 different processes involved, each intricate and attention-consuming. Some processes, however, require more blood than sweat.

"My nails bleed every day," says Hina, a home-based worker associated with Hyderabad's bangle manufacturing industry. "Five other girls and I join the spiral ends of processed bangles, which really is a very difficult task. When we carve designs on these bangles, shards of glass hit our nails and cut through them. The pain from these cuts and bruises has become part of my life."

Of the 39 different processes involved in making bangles, some are exclusively the preserve of women. In the year 1996, the tasks of sadai (aligning), jurrai (joining), katai (cutting) and printing designs went completely in the hands of women. Ever since, women became crucial cogs of the industry — HomeNet Pakistan and the Labour Education Foundation estimated in 2009 that more than 675,000 women were engaged in manufacturing glass bangles. This number has risen in the seven years since.

Despite being essential to Hyderabad's glass bangles industry, home-based women workers find themselves relegated to disposable status. The glass bangles industry has been on the decline for a few years now as manufacturers struggle with irregular gas supply and ensuring that labour regulations are met. Glass bangles only have seasonal demand — when the wedding season draws closer or if there are any festivities to be held. The rest of the year, business is very slow.

For an industry that is ailing, women and children are the cheap resource that keeps things ticking over. But when it comes to financial remunerations, safety gear or medical compensation, they are exploited by exclusion.

In 1947, when bangle-makers were migrating from India, the majority from the nearby state of Rajasthan settled in Hyderabad and started their trade in their adopted hometown. This sudden infusion of artisans boosted the Sindhi craft of bangle-making. Afterwards, more and more artisans adopted the trade and became professional bangle-makers. It is estimated that today, directly or indirectly, more than one million assistants and associated workers turn the wheels of Hyderabad's bangle industry. This includes the women.

In Hyderabad, the glass bangle industry is situated around three localities: Sindh Industrial and Trading Estate (SITE), The Old City and Latifabad. The SITE area is an established and formal industrial estate, where a number of glass bangles manufacturing factories are housed. But The Old City and Latifabad resemble a cottage industry, where a bulk of production takes place in one or two bedroom quarters which double up as tiny workshops.

According to a survey carried out in 2009 by the All Hyderabad Churi Welding Contractors Workers Union, 45 bangle manufacturing factories were operational in Hyderabad at the time. It was estimated back then that more than 10,000 male workers work at these factories in separate eight-hour shifts. However, the majority of the workforce engaged in the industry remains home-based women workers even today.

Labour activists explain that the industry is largely home-based because it removes any liability for factories and contractors. Factories had outsourced certain manufacturing processes of bangle-making after the industry began struggling with high input costs. Supply of gas is crucial to manufacturing but was perennially short in supply. As a result, tasks were distributed to many contractors who in turn hired many families to do various jobs without leaving the comfort of their homes.

The manufacture of bangles received industry status in 2007 under the National Employment Policy but bangle-making labourers aren't formally recognised as workers since they are largely home-based.

This is one reason why official statistics on the exact number of labourers involved in the glass bangles industry don't exist and why most labour organisations continue to work with estimates. Meanwhile, the government has made no attempt to count these women workers either.

On the ground, this practice translates into little remuneration and hazardous work conditions. Women bear the brunt of this exercise — not only are they paid low work compensation, any injury at 'work' is technically happening at home.

For the past 15 years, Jamila Abdul Latif has been doing the work of sadai and jurrai. During this process, she would cut the bangles by placing them over a flame and later weld them together.

Typically, women are paid by the tora (360-365 bangles). Sadai earns two and a half rupees per tora while jurrai bags five rupees per tora. Workers use their own fuel; they work on eight to 10 toras per day. Family members including small children also assist them. Their daily income is about 200-250 rupees.

But these numbers hide the real cost of working in this industry: Jamila became asthmatic and suffered heart disease as a result of the countless hours spent in front of the flames. For many years, she inhaled toxic fumes from the thinner and petrol used in manufacturing. Today her daughters, aged 23 and 26, assist her in making bangles. Their fate seems to have been written already.

Jamila has now been relegated to decoration duties. Her task is to adorn bangles with laces, beads, artificial diamonds, wooden material and thin metallic chains. These are wrapped in beautiful plastic sheets or card boxes by women at

home. For packing four karrhays and 12 bangles, they are paid six to 10 rupees. They typically work for 12 to 14 hours every day but are paid only two to three thousand rupees per month.

“Wages are generally paid late by the pallydar (contractor) and sometimes not at all,” explains Jamila, who currently serves as the general secretary of the Home Based Women Bangles Workers Union, Hyderabad (HBWBWU).

The range of injuries and illnesses that can be contracted due to the nature of work is rather wide.

Rehana is a 35-year-old woman who used to work the bhatti (makeshift oven) that shapes glass shards into circular bangles. One day, pieces of glass entered her eyes and eventually she lost her eyesight. “Instead of providing free health facilities or some compensation, the contractor did not even pay a month’s salary,” she narrates.

“Squatting for more than eight hours every day has caused arthritis and joint pain,” say Shabna, 30, and Naseema, 28.

Naseema has deep burn wounds on her face and neck. She was bending forward while doing jurrai work one day when the flame from the gas burner rose all of a sudden and caught Naseema in its path. The fan in the room was switched off — as is the practice, to ensure that the flames don’t flicker — and Naseema sustained severe burn wounds. Many women workers claim that suffocation, claustrophobia and even losing consciousness at work are usual. Most take it in their stride: grab some fresh air, have a glass of water and return to work.

With the path to earning a pittance marked by such danger, why do women still engage in bangle making?

Kausar is now aged 40 but she started working when she was hardly 13. At 15, she was married off. Before she turned 20, she had become a mother. Household expenses continued to grow as Kausar gave birth to six children. In such tender years, she was forced into making bangles to make ends meet.

“I do the task of boond,” says Kausar. She explains how she uses a tool which has a design carved on it to stamp the design on a bangle. But to do that, she first has to dip the tool in chemicals such as thinners, oil and glitter. Prolonged and sustained exposure to such chemicals induces asthma and Kausar, too, became a victim. Her thumbs have also been damaged because of her job. She works on 15 to 20 tora daily but the money she earns from them is not enough to meet her financial demands.

“Bangles are so beautiful, the most precious work of art,” says a wistful Kausar. “But nobody knows about the back-breaking work involved and the suffering and pain that bangle artisans go through.”

Women workers squat for hours on end as they complete jurrai work. This task requires absolute concentration and needs workers to stare at the flame continuously – Photo by the writer

Although most women find themselves in the same boat, contractors ensure that they cannot unionise to press for better terms and conditions.

“Home-based workers are scattered, unorganised and work independently. Very often they do not have linkages with each other,” explains Zehra Khan, general secretary of the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF). “In the past, they had no platform to unite and to think about their collective issues either.”

Women workers are often barred by contractors from joining any union or movement. In case they do, they are abandoned and work is taken away from them.

“A large majority of women workers are unskilled and only a small number is equipped with some training in bangle-making that they learn from their elders during bangle making at their homes,” explains Yasmeen Siddiqi, general secretary of the Welding Workers Union, Hyderabad.

“Women are traditionally not allowed to step out of their homes and go work at a factory. They are restricted to the four walls of their homes. But this industry allows them to earn a living while staying at home.”

Yasmeen has been engaged in the bangle industry for the past 25 years. Being a widow, she is the sole breadwinner of the family. Her daughter, seven years old, assists her in the work of sadai and katai. But even she is wary of the contractors. “They have an impolite attitude with workers,” she asserts.

Meanwhile, Nasreen, Rehmat, Shakeela and a few other female workers also complain of the harsh attitude of factory workers. They are harassed if they demand any increase in their remuneration. If they ask for a loan, the contractor lends them money but binds them to work at a place until they can pay off their debt. Social benefits such as old-age pension, funds, death, disability and accident insurance are not provided to women workers either.

“There is absolutely no facility available to workers in factories,” claims Rehan Yousafzai, president of the All Hyderabad Churi Welding Contractors Workers Union. “Workers especially women and child workers are vulnerable to diseases such as rheumatic pain, respiratory problems, tuberculosis and eye infections.”

For Zehra Khan, the issue comes back to recognising more than five million home-based women workers in the country as “workers” and handing them their due rights as per the constitution and the labour laws of the land. The women working in the bangles industry are not the only ones who work from home; many others are similarly employed in manufacturing shoes, garments, hosiery items, carpets, etc. Although their lines of work might differ, the problems faced by women are rooted in the same legal lacunae.

Currently, workers in the informal economy as well as those in the home-based sector are not covered by any labour laws. Nor does any definition of “home-based worker” exist as part of any statute. Therefore, the terms of their working conditions are not regulated by any law or regulation. Rates for work carried out cannot be renegotiated either; workers either accept the paltry sums being offered to them by a contractor or look for another job.

Similarly, labour protection, social security coverage and provision of safety and health services and benefits are not extended to the informal sector, including the home-based sector. Therefore, they are unable to access the services, facilities, rights and benefits that they ought to as part of the labour force.

“As soon as the policy of home-based workers gets practically implemented in the country, it will open new vistas of progress and prosperity for these women,” argues Advocate Rubina Brohi, member of the Sindh Human Rights Commission and regional coordinator of the Aurat Foundation. “The identification and recognition of home-based workers and mainstreaming of home-based workers into national economies would increase their productivity and help bolster trade and industry.”

“The immediate demand of home-based workers is to be recognised as workers, covered under EOBI and social security schemes and be provided modern vocational training to add value to their work,” says Khalid Mahmood, executive director of the Labour Education Foundation.

But such demands can only come to fruition if women workers can come together in organised forms and press for their demands.

“Home-based workers, including the women working in the bangle industry, should have the right to make their labour unions and elect their collective bargaining agents,” asserts Zehra Khan.

A national policy on home-based workers has been prepared by the Ministry of Women’s Development in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, and various stakeholders including workers unions and home-based workers.

The salient features of the policy are:

Definition and equality of legal status

- Equality of treatment and wages
- Skills training enhancement
- Access to credit, land ownership and assets
- Access to marketing channels and linkages
- Issuance of smart cards
- Enhance the quality and number of women employment in Pakistan with the ultimate goal of economic empowerment of women in rural and urban areas
- Right of association and collective bargaining
- Health and occupational safety standards at the workplace
- Social security benefits
- Literacy, basic and adult education
- Registration of home-based workers

The policy has been forwarded to the Sindh cabinet for approval and implementation in the province. Sindh Labour Department Director Gulfam Nabi Memon explains that after the passage of 18th Amendment in 2011, provinces had got the right to enact laws as per their local requirements.

“We have further improved the definition of ‘worker’. A section has been added to the standing order which said that a contract worker would not be required to do manufacturing jobs. Moreover, permanent and contract workers would enjoy same privileges,” says Memon. “Presently out of 12 laws, 10 have been approved by the Sindh government while two laws are under rectification (The Employment Act of Children and Payment of Wages Act). — S.W

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1304021/a-sparkle-that-doesnt-shine>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 12 TH TO DECEMBER 18TH 2016

GIRL POWER ALLOWS WOMEN TO SPREAD THEIR WINGS AND FLY

The Express Tribune, December 12th, 2016.

KARACHI: Allowing young girls to spread their wings and fly, the Girl Power project polished the dancing and boxing skills of about 100 participants.

The project, which was funded by the Franco-German Cultural Fund, sought to create spaces in Karachi where young women can pursue and express their music, dance and sporting aspirations and talents.

To promote female empowerment, five boxers from France and three dancers from Germany arrived in the city to train the girls. The boxers trained 40 young girls from Lyari and the German trainers held a workshop on urban dance movements, which was attended by 120 participants.

“It was a pleasure to welcome both the teams in the city,” remarked French consul-general Francois Dall’orso at the concluding ceremony of the project at Alliance Française de Karachi on Saturday evening.

Speaking about the project, German consul-general Rainer Schmiedchen said, “Our joint venture in Karachi aimed to give girls a space to express their aspirations, creativity and talents through movement, sports and music”.

However, more activities need to be organised, he said. “I am confident that there are many young women in the city seeking other expressions of power,” he added. We need to find a space in society for young girls, remarked Goethe Institut director Stefan Winkler. “Inclusion and participation is their key right.”

The three boxers from France shared their experience of working with young talent in Karachi. One of the boxers Sedja Sanogo said, “I really liked it here. It was a really nice experience. We got to teach [the girls] new ways of the game”.

“The girls had a tough time learning [boxing] but eventually discovered their real potential,” said boxer Myriam Addi. “Technically, they are not perfect but with our training we made them feel stronger.” However, Addi lamented that a week was not sufficient time to train the girls.

Boxing coach Emanuel Dos Santos claimed he had heard that Lyari was a dangerous place, however he found it to be otherwise. “We gained a very rich experience [through the training sessions]. Everywhere we went the people were very kind to us.”

Summing up the journey, Santos said “In all honesty, I am going to miss the people, the girls we trained, the hotels we visited and the places we shopped at”.

Speaking about the impact of the project, Alliance Française director Jean Francois Chenin remarked, “We have achieved a strong target with 40 girls getting trained as boxers, and over 100 as dancers. Initially, we were skeptical about this event and had some doubts but it proved to be quiet successful.” Sharing future plans, Chenin said, “We plan to make it an annual project”.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1260538/space-girl-power-allows-women-spread-wings-fly/>

SOCIAL SECURITY FOR HOME-BASED WOMEN WORKERS DEMANDED

Dawn December 15th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Home-based women workers from different parts of the city have demanded that they be included in the social security net after the chief minister finally approved a policy on recognising their rights.

The demand was put across by a group of home-based workers at a meeting held at Shahjahan Hall in Yusuf Goth, Gadap Town on Wednesday.

Organised by the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF), the meeting was attended by women workers from Orangi and Baldia Town apart from Gadap Town.

According to HBWWF secretary general Zehra Khan, Sindh is the first province in the country to have recognised the rights of home-based workers.

“As the policy is signed, providing recognition to around 12 million workers in Sindh, the workers ask to be included in the social security net as well.”

Ms Khan said the workers, who had forwarded the policy and worked on another act, passed away. She claimed that the Sindh Industrial Relations Act, 2013, which was awaiting the approval of a notification from the provincial assembly, was a progressive act concerning the labour class working in both formal and informal sectors.

“Now our immediate concern is to get the 12 million home-based workers, of which 80 per cent are women, under the social security network such as the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution (SESSI) and Employees Old-Age Benefit Institution (EOBI),” she added.

The forthcoming issues to be raised by the HBWWF, include the wage gap between both men and women labourers in the field. According to Ms Khan, men usually earn more than women in this society.

“The reasons given to us for the wage gap vary from women not working enough to demanding too much money. Our next target is to sort out the wage gap between men and women, as the reasons do not match the reality we have seen on ground. Women have to work twice as hard to be recognised anywhere; this profession is no different,” she added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1302429/social-security-for-home-based-women-workers-demanded>

MINOR GIRL 'RAPED ON PANCHAYAT'S ORDER' IN BAHAWALPUR

The Express Tribune, December 16th, 2016.

Kashif Zafar

Bahawalpur: In a bid to take revenge, three people raped a 10-year-old girl on the orders of panchayat in Bahawalpur on Thursday.

A police official told The Express Tribune, a gypsy family was residing within Derawar police station limits. He added family head Safdar's 11-year-old daughter Parveen went to a nearby hut for some work where Azam's son Amjad sexually abused her. "After the incident, Safdar called a panchayat to decide the case," the official said.

He maintained, "The members of panchayat announced that Azam's daughter Maryam should be raped in the same way to take revenge."

He said Azam sent Maryam to the complainant's place where Safdar and his two brothers Akhtar and Bilal sexually assaulted the girl. However, after the ordeal, Maryam's condition deteriorated and she was immediately shifted to the hospital.

The police official pointed out the accused fled the scene after committing the heinous act. Meanwhile, the police had recorded the statement of the victim and registered a case against the accused under Section 376/109 of Pakistan Penal Code. The police had constituted a team to arrest the culprits.

Earlier, a minor was assaulted by a youngster in Millat Town area. Police said an 11-year-old girl was alone at her house in Fatehabad when one Faqeer Muhammad arrived there and raped her.

Similarly in March, a 13-year-old girl was allegedly abducted and raped by two unidentified men in a car in Lahore's Punjab Housing Society. Police said Rabiya, 13, a house maid was going to a market in P-Block of the Punjab Housing Society when two unidentified men intercepted her and raped her.

A Gender Parity Report for the province released earlier in 2016 suggests that there has been a 20 per cent increase in cases of violence against women reported every year from 2012 to 2015.

The report compiled jointly by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women and the Urban Unit is set to be launched on Monday (today). The event will also feature the launch of a cyber-based Gender Management Information System that will provide data on 300 indicators affecting the status of women in society.

The report states 5,391 cases of violence against women had been reported in the province in 2012. The number of cases reported in 2015 were 6,505. It says that in 2015, 173 women were killed in honour-based crimes.

The number of reported cases of violence against women was relatively higher in districts with 50 per cent or lower literacy rate. Rahimyar Khan, Sargodha, Multan and Vehari were among these districts.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1264613/heinous-act-minor-girl-raped-panchayats-order-bahawalpur/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 5 TH TO DECEMBER 11TH 2016

THE JOURNEY OF FOUR SISTERS FROM SLUMS TO POLICE FORCE

The Express Tribune, December 6th, 2016.

The Bhatti sisters are among the shining stars of Pakistan. Achieving various milestones despite their not-so-affluent background, the four women, who grew up in the slums of Sukkur, made it to the police force.

Defying all barriers and stereotypes revolving around socioeconomic class and gender, Kashmala Bhatti, Shumaila Bhatti, Komal Bhatti and Maria Bhatti got education from government institutions and proved their mettle by clearing different examinations, including the National Testing Services examination, and finally joined the police force. Three of the sisters are serving in the Sindh Police while Shumaila, along with her husband, is working with the railway police.

Their father, Mohammad Anwar Bhatti, is a plumber and mother, Sajida Bibi, works as a lady health worker. With five daughters and two sons, it was not possible for them to send their children to private institutions, which is why all of their children acquired education from public schools.

Kashmala, the eldest among her siblings, joined the police force as a constable in 2004 after completing intermediate education. Alongside her job, she continued her studies and completed a Master's degree in English Literature from the Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur.

Her younger sister, Shumaila, followed in her footsteps. She was appointed as lady constable in Pakistan Railways and is now married to a head constable, who also serves in the railway police.

Meanwhile, Komal, a commerce graduate, and Maria, who has recently completed her intermediate education, were inducted in the Sindh Police this month. "Before our last successful attempt, both of us took written and physical tests three times before but the results were cancelled at the eleventh hour," shared Komal. "Heartbroken over our previous bitter experiences, we were not ready to go for the test. However, our sister, Kashmala, encouraged us and submitted our documents. To our surprise, we were selected on merit."

Maria, who is the youngest among the sisters, said that besides relaxing the upper age limit for the post of constable, senior police officials were kind enough to give relaxation to her in height as well. "My height is five feet and the prescribed height for lady constable was 5.2 feet," she shared.

"I am thankful to the Sindh IG, who relaxed this criterion, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to get selected." Komal and Maria shared that they are committed to continuing with their higher studies like their elder sister, Kashmala, which will also assist them in getting promotions.

When asked why the girls joined the police force instead of any other organisation, they shared that this was the only place where they did not have to give a bribe in order to get entry.

The father of the policewomen, Mohammad Anwar, holds his head high because of his daughters. Living in a two-room house in the slums of Freek Hill in Sukkur, his eyes beam with pride while talking about the achievements of his daughters. "As you see, we are living in poverty," he said. "I am a plumber by profession and earn very little."

According to him, it was a distant dream for him to think about 'buying' jobs for his children. "Believe me, I had never dreamt about my daughters getting jobs in the police force as you know jobs are mostly given on political basis," he said. Talking about their fifth daughter, Mohammad Anwar told The Express Tribune that she died at the age of 16 due to some illness that was never diagnosed.

Talking about Kashmala, her proud mother, Sajida, said how she not only supported her younger sisters and brothers, but also continued with her own higher education. Sajida also expressed gratitude towards the IG, DIG and SSP. "Today my head is held high because my daughters have proved that despite living in very poor circumstances, if there is a will there always is a way."

Sukkur DIG Feroze Shah said that the recent recruitments in the police force were done purely on merit and without any political influence. "I am happy that most of the candidates belong to poor families and have been selected on merit," he added. Sukkur SSP Amjad Ahmed Shaikh said that he also felt proud of the sisters. "All the meritorious candidates have joined the police force and I wish success to them," he said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1254407/defying-odds-journey-four-sisters-slums-police-force/>

‘FEARING DISGRACE, VICTIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON INTERNET RETRACT STATEMENTS’

Dawn December 7th, 2016

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Complainants facing sexual harassment on the internet continue to retract their statements despite being assured of timely justice, because of thana culture and the fear of being subjected to disgrace once they decide to pursue their case, said SP-South Shahla Qureshi at a conference on Tuesday.

The conference, which was organised by the National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), Sindh, with the collaboration of UN-Women, marked 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. The participants focused on the issue of strengthening human rights in Sindh while improving policies and protection mechanisms.

One after the other, speakers mentioned the lack of implementation of laws which eventually became an impediment in fighting a legal battle. While speaking about one of her colleagues, who found multiple online IDs with her name and pictures, and who also knew the person who created it, SP Qureshi said women feared the consequences of standing out by complaining or standing up for themselves. “In such cases, women need reassurances which is missing because police and other authorities are used as a force rather to serve the citizens,” she added.

Maliha Lari, consultant at Legal Aid Centre, made a strong point while discussing the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860. She said the PPC itself needed an overhaul or a review of particular laws which did not suit the current environment or were not in line with the current decade. She said that the present system looked at the laws in isolation, especially those pertaining to women, and that there is a need for a holistic approach.

Tahir Iqbal of the Legal Rights Forum said there was a vacuum in representation of people who were non-Muslims, women or labourers. Rape cases were treated the worst, he added.

“A woman in Tharparkar’s city, Mitthi, was presented 19 times before a court because the medical evidence was not collected properly and she was asked to explain,” he said. Similarly, he added, that there are laws pertaining to sexual harassment at workplace, but the committees which were supposed to begin work at district level are either not functional or do not exist.

Karachi police chief Mushtaq Mahar also showed up at the event for the afternoon session on law, policy and challenges. Speaking about the role of women in police, he said there’s a considerable vacuum. He said there were only 1,100 women police officers, whereas the number of male police officers was far bigger than that. Retired Justice Shaiq Usmani, who chaired the session, said police ought to be impartial and apolitical.

Shahnaz Wazir Ali, who chaired the last session, said the NCHR needed to assist and guide women development department. “Our new chief minister is pro-women and pro-children. What he needs to do is to demand a report, every three months, from multiple departments working on the plight of women, non-Muslims, labourers and children. What this would do is to keep the government from isolating these issues and see it as a whole connected and interlinked with each other,” she said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1300863>

FEWER WOMEN VOTERS

Dawn December 8th, 2016

WITH a general election coming up in 2018, it is troubling to learn that the gap between registered male and female voters has increased to 12.7m out of a total of 97.01m voters, with men comprising 56.26pc and women 43.74pc of the electorate. In other words, of the overall number of registered voters in the country today, 54.59m are men and 42.42m are women. Ahead of the local government polls in 2015, the difference between registered voters of both genders was 11.65m.

Before that, at the time of the 2013 general election, there were 11.04m more male registered voters than female. The latest figures, which were shared by the secretary of the Election Commission of Pakistan on Tuesday, came to light as a result of an exercise to revise electoral rolls.

The fact that men are being included on voters' lists at a faster rate than women, whose numbers already lag behind that of men, is a matter of concern. It means that a steadily declining ratio of women can participate in what is an essential feature of a democracy — the process of selecting their representatives at various tiers of government.

Of course, another aspect of female disenfranchisement is manifested at the other end of the electoral exercise where, in some of the country's more conservative areas, even women who are registered are not allowed to cast their ballot. However, while this violation of women' right to vote — in which reactionary local chapters of political parties collude — must be addressed, registration is the first step towards electoral empowerment.

It is worth determining whether the women 'missing' from the lists are in possession of CNICs, without which they cannot be included on the rolls. This should be remedied without delay so that the gender gap can be bridged in time for the next election. Both the ECP and the political parties must make every effort to ensure that the democratic process does not leave the women of this country behind.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1301117/fewer-women-voters>

BOLO HELPLINE SET UP FOR WOMEN

Dawn, December 9th, 2016

PESHAWAR: Senior Minister for Social Welfare Sikandar Hayat Sherpao has said that the present government is taking steps for improvement of the state of human rights in the province. He called upon the international community to support the efforts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for empowerment of the women, children, special persons and senior citizens.

Mr Sherpao was addressing a ceremony to inaugurate 'Bolo Helpline 0800-22227' established for supporting women rights here on Thursday. The ceremony was attended by Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms Margaret Adamson, country director Trocaire in Pakistan John O'Brien, parliamentary secretary social welfare Dina Naz and representatives of NGOs working for women rights.

The senior minister termed establishment of the said helpline as a fundamental step for provision of rights to the women and supporting victims of human rights abuse at every level against criminals.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1301414/bolo-helpline-set-up-for-women>