

## January 2017

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 23RD TO JANUARY 29TH 2017**

### **'WOMAN IS EITHER DISCUSSED FROM PERSPECTIVE OF VICTIMHOOD OR IS OVER GLAMORISED'**

Dawn January 23rd, 2017

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: Speakers at the second edition of Lahooti Mello that concluded at Hyderabad Club on Sunday discussed gender issues and revival of Pakistani films and remarked that woman was either talked about from the perspective of victimhood or was over glamorised.

"Eve's power play" was one of the important sessions moderated by Sahar Gul with panellists Senator Sassui Palijo, university teacher Arfana Mallah, architect Marvi Mazhar.

On Saturday the Mello was inaugurated by Sindh Minister for Culture Syed Sardar Ali Shah and US Consul General Grace W. Shelton. US Consulate Karachi was also partner in the event.

Marvi Mazhar said: "Since I belong to a political family and party like PPP I didn't face any hurdle but still there are barriers for women. Such support is not usually available for an average woman who will have to assert herself".

To a question from audience, she said that a woman was most likely not to lie. "It is perhaps because of a woman's upbringing that her score on honesty's count is better," she remarked.

Her co-panellist Arfana Mallah disagreed, saying "it is in fact society's checks and balances over a woman that she can't afford being dishonest".

Moderator agreed with a questioner, Wusatullah Khan, that it was a process and struggle that mattered and there were many heroes like Fatima Jinnah who stood against a dictator and Nusrat Bhutto who fought for democracy and remained unsung in history. At that point, Marvi Mazhar interjected to say that usually society talked about the celebrated heroes.

On women's security concerns, Ms Mallah pointed out that paradigm regarding woman's honour was changing and people needed to understand that her honour was not attached to her body. It was in fact everyone's own lens to look at women's empowerment. "Society is now questioning such social structure that deals with women," she said.

She said that woman was not taken as an individual in society but she was either discussed from the perspective of victimhood or was over glamorised.

She disagreed with a suggestion that if a rural woman attended to call of nature in the open fields it reflected her strength and said what was important was where this very woman was placed in society.

She said that women faced patriarchy in every society with different trends. She added that in Sindh woman's community and class background mattered the most.

Senator Palijo said while answering a question about misconception of feminism that unless women asserted themselves they would not be able to seek empowerment.

Film director Jamshed Mehmood Raza alias Jami while sharing his views at a session moderated by journalist, Rafay Mahmood, on “filmy chukar” with panellist Mehmood Mughal observed that revival of film industry was not that easy but it was gradually picking up pace.

“It is a fact when there were no Indian movies cinegoers were not seen in cinemas. You know one tends to visit a restaurant which is full of customers. Same goes for a cinema house,” he said.

He agreed with a questioner, Saif Samejo, that narrative of Pakistani artists should be collective and not only Punjab’s.

Jami said that his best production was Moor which talked about Balochistan although he was not able to speak about Balochistan’s issues that much.

He said that people of Sindh would have to speak loud and clear. He said that there was a mindset which wanted to invest Rs60m and earn Rs200m. Pakistani film industry was not stable but it would stabilise with passage of time.

The audience showed great excitement in story telling session by journalist Wusatullah Khan who narrated his life’s story and how he became a journalist though he aspired to be a pilot.

He never wrote until he had had a bet with a university friend for having his article published in a newspaper. “I won that bet of Rs200 after writing a piece on South Africa’s nuclear explosion story in a Urdu daily,” he said.

Lahooti Mello was held in perfect weather conditions. All main sessions including musical gatherings were held in the lawn of Hyderabad Club amid sunlight and moderate cold in the afternoon on Saturday and Sunday.

Saif Samejo, the driving force behind Lahooti Mello for which he partnered with US Consulate Karachi, believed that musical diversity was important and he had tried to gather singers and musicians from different areas.

“There were three American performers, one Hungarian and seven Nepalis who performed on fusion music in daylight and solo performances in the evening,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310136/woman-is-either-discussed-from-perspective-of-victimhood-or-is-over-glamorised>

## PAGARA EXHORTS DISCIPLES TO EDUCATE GIRLS, GIVE RIGHTS TO WOMEN

Dawn January 23rd, 2017

SANGHAR: The Pir Pagara, spiritual head of the Hurs, exhorted his disciples to educate their children, particularly girls, and give due respect to their women family members and their neighbours.

Wearing traditional robe and ‘kalangi’, he was addressing tens of thousands of his devotees in Awadh, some 20kms from Sanghar, on Sunday.

The Pir Pagaro was on a five-day spiritual tour of the district of Sanghar where a huge majority of his followers live. His address in Awadh mainly dwelt on women’s rights, especially their right to inheritance and education.

He said that in order to face contemporary challenges, education was a necessity. He encouraged them to arrange inter-caste marriages and advised them to discourage underage and forced marriages.

He said that an educated woman was a blessing for a family and urged his followers to give due right of inheritance to their female family members.

Admiring the services and sacrifices of the Pakistan Army for the defence of the country, he exhorted the mammoth congregation to stay loyal to the country. He asked them to carry out tree plantation for their own benefit and environment.

Later on, at the residence of MNA Pir Bux Junejo, the Pir Pagaro, who is also head of the Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F), told reporters that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had shrunk to Sindh only. In the 2018 general election, it would lose that position also, he added. Taking exception to the behaviour of the PPP legislators in the Sindh Assembly, he said the PPP leadership should rethink that how such people who did not know to respect women reached the assemblies. He said that it was not the first time that the PPP had shown disrespect to women.

The Pir Pagaro reached Sanghar city to attend a spiritual congregation of his disciples on Monday. A huge number of his devotees, including women and children, had already reached the venue and had set up their makeshift arrangements for an overnight stay.

On the call of the PML-F local chapter, a demonstration was held at Shaheed Chowk Khipro on Sunday in protest against the behaviour of the PPP legislators against MPA Nusrat Sehr Abbasi in the Sindh Provincial Assembly.

Holding placards in their hands and raising slogans against MPAs Imdad Pitafi and Temoor Talpur, they strongly condemned the offensive language used by the PPP members for Nusrat Sehr Abbasi.

They demanded an apology in public and resignation from Imdad Pitafi both as a minister and member of the assembly.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310133>

## ECP WRITES TO PARTY CHIEFS TO ENSURE FULL PARTICIPATION OF FEMALE VOTERS

Dawn January 25th, 2017

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has sought the help of political parties to bridge the gender gap by ensuring that the maximum number of women participate in the 2018 polls.

The commission, in a letter it wrote to 16 political parties, pointed out that there was a huge gap of 12 million between men and women registered as voters.

An updated electoral roll showed 42.4 million females against 54.5m males out of approximately 97m registered as voters.

“As head of a political party you are requested to help ECP in bridging this gap by asking your workers and supporters to encourage women, religious minorities, disabled persons and other marginalised segments of society to get registered as voters and use their right to franchise in the ensuing elections,” reads the letter, a copy of which Dawn has.

It noted that a failure to this effect would make doubtful the transparency of general elections while recalling that it was the ECP’s constitutional obligation to ensure equal and just participation of all in an electoral exercise and to conduct free and impartial elections.

Article 25 grants each and every citizen equal right and equal participation in the election process.

The 2nd Five-Year Plan suggested formation of a gender wing in the ECP as part of enshrined goals, the letter says.

Recipient of letters are Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan, Muttahida Qaumi Movement deputy convener Dr Farooq Sattar, PML-Quaid president Chaudhry Shujaat Husasain, Awami National Party president Asfandiyar Wali Khan, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Jamaat-i-Islami emir Senator Sirajul Haq, National Party president Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, National Peoples Party president Ghulam Murtaza Jatui, PML-Functional president Pir Sibghatullah Shah Pir Pagara, Awami Muslim League president Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chairman Mehmood Khan Achakzai, Qaumi Watan Party president Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao and PML-Zia president Ijazul Haq.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310629>

#### TEENAGER ARRESTED FOR 'RAPING GIRL'

The Express Tribune, January 27th, 2017.

LAHORE: A rape case was registered against an 18-year-old man for allegedly raping a teenage girl in the Nawan Kot police jurisdictions on Thursday. In their complaint to police, the family of the rape survivor said the suspect, Umar, was friends with the girl. On January 23, he entered their house forcibly and raped their daughter when she was alone at home. The suspect fled the scene afterwards. Police have registered a case under Section 376 of Pakistan Penal Code and taken the suspect into custody.

Police have collected forensic evidence from the crime scene and conducted medical examination of the victim. A police officer on the condition of anonymity said both the suspect and the girl knew each other well but the girl's family did not know about their relationship. Separately, a nine-year-old girl died after being hit by a motorcyclist in Baghbanpura. In Misri Shah, four rickshaws were gutted in a lightning strike. Valuables worth hundreds of thousands of rupees were burnt to ashes as fire broke out in a house in the same area. No loss of life or injury was reported.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1308193/booked-teenager-arrested-raping-girl/>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 16TH TO JANUARY 22 ND 2017

#### NEW SINDH POLICY ON HOME-BASED WORKERS LAUDED

Dawn, January 17th, 2017

KARACHI: The Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) welcomed the new policy for home-based workers approved by the Sindh government.

Speaking at the Karachi Press Club, general secretary of the HBWWF Zehra Khan, said the policy would ensure equal wages for women. Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah approved the policy on home-based workers in Nov 2016 while the law and justice department gave permission to pass the official notification on Jan 13. The approval of the policy makes Sindh the first province in the country to legally recognise home-based workers. She said that the policy was made keeping in mind international rules and regulations.

“This policy, which will eventually become a law, recognises the women workers as well as register them under the social security framework,” said Khan.

Accompanied by women workers, Zehra said that the policy remained on the back burner for three years until the CM took notice of it. She said that there is an estimated 1,20,00,000 home-based workers in Pakistan adding that the number may vary.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308832>

## THREE OFFICIALS SUSPENDED FOR CONCEALING GANG RAPE

Dawn January 17th, 2017

Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: The Punjab government on Monday suspended from service three senior-most officers of the Gujrat health department, including Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Altaf Hussain, for not informing the higher authorities about the gang rape of two lady health workers (LHWs) during a robbery at the Bheelowal Basic Health Unit near Tanda.

Punjab Secretary Health Ali Jan Khan issued the suspension orders of Gujrat CEO (Health) Dr Altaf, District Officer (Health) Dr Muhammad Ali Mufti and Deputy District Officer (Health) Dr Yousaf Dar with immediate effect.

On the direction of Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Health Khawaja Imran Nazir along with the health secretary visited the BHU to probe the incident.

The inquiry team reached the BHU and recorded the statements of the gang rape survivors and other staff and found that the incident had taken place on the night between Dec 29 and 30 but the district health officials did not inform the authorities. And when they did intimate the department after two weeks, they just mentioned robbery.

The minister took a serious notice of concealing of the facts by the officials and suspended the three seniors.

An official source privy to the inquiry team told Dawn the team had inquired about the lapse at the official end, the arrest of the suspects and the ways to compensate the rape survivors. It recorded the statement of District Police Officer Sohail Zafar Chatha also.

He said the deputy commissioner also did not know about the incident. He learnt it from one of his seniors in the Gujranwala commissioner's office and visited the BHU on Jan 12.

Sources said since the Bheelowal BHU was in the category of those units which remained open 24 hours, senior officials of the district health department had asked its staff not to leak the incident for the sake of their own security and assured them that the centre would either be removed from the 24/7 category or they could be transferred to a BHU which was not in that category.

Following the suspension of the CEO and DO of health department, Dr Abid Ghauri, the medical superintendent of Shabbir Sharif Hospital, Kunjah, has been given the acting charge of CEO and Dr Zahid Tanveer has been posted as acting DO.

Meanwhile, the Gujrat police buried, on a temporary basis, one of the suspects, identified as Arshad Lahoria of Sargodha district, as nobody approached the police to claim his body.

Four of the gang-rape suspects were killed by the alleged firing of their own accomplices during a shoot-out with Kunjah police near Kot Ghulam on Sunday.

A source in police said the suspects were detected through the data of mobile phones and they were arrested from the various parts of Punjab. Three of the four suspects belonged to the villages located in the Tanda police precincts and one of them was from the Bheelowal village.

The Kunjah police also lodged a case of encounter against the four deceased and their unidentified accomplices.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1308929/three-officials-suspended-for-concealing-gang-rape>

WOMAN SENTENCED TO DEATH FOR KILLING DAUGHTER FOR 'HONOUR'

The Express Tribune, January 17th, 2017.

Rana Yasif

An anti-terrorism court has punished a woman with death penalty for lynching her daughter in the name of honour for marrying a man of her own choice. A son of the convict who helped in murdering Zeenat Bibi, 17, last year has also been punished with a life term.

The convict Perveen Rafique had said in court that she had no remorse over lynching her daughter, confessing that she set her ablaze but her son and brother-in law were not involved in the incident.

It is pertinent to note that the newly-wed bride was burnt alive for honour by her for marrying a man of her own choice in the Factory Area police limits.

A case was registered on the complaint of victim's husband, Hassan Khan, who in his statement contended that he married Zeenat on May 29, 2016 in a local court.

He said that the victim's cousin, Mushtaq Ahmad, later requested her to go back to her parents so a proper ceremony could be held.

On the day of the incident, Khan received information that his in-laws were subjecting his wife to torture and rushed to Zeenat's house. Khan alleged that he saw his in-laws first beat his wife, douse her in kerosene and then set her ablaze.

Zeenat received multiple burns and died on the spot.

Police registered a case against three suspects, including the victim's mother, brother and brother-in-law Mushtaq, under Sections 302 (premeditated murder), 7ATA and other sections of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). The autopsy report revealed that the girl was tortured before being killed.

Mushtaq was later found innocent in the police investigation.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1297372/honour-crime-woman-sentenced-death-killing-daughter/>

MAN BURNS WIFE, RUBS SALT INTO HER WOUNDS

The Express Tribune, January 20th, 2017.

Muhammad Shahzad

LAHORE: As if being brutally beaten by her husband of 11 years was not bad enough, a woman was set ablaze by the same man in the Shalimar area. This was not the end of her ordeal as she—quite literally—had salt rubbed into her wounds.

The victim, Syeda Bano, got married to Mansha some 11 years ago and had four children from the marriage. In her statement to the police, the woman said she had been tortured by her husband for all these years. He was reportedly a drug addict and would quarrel with her under the influence for the sake of money.

On Wednesday night, the two had a heated exchange and this sent the husband into a frenzy. He started beating the wife and then set her ablaze. She suffered burn injuries and kept screaming, but this did not soften the suspect who allegedly proceeded to rub salt on her injuries.

The victim was admitted to Mayo Hospital with serious burn injuries and her condition is critical.

SP Civil Lines Ali Raza said a case was registered against the suspect under section 324 of the PPC (Attempt to Murder). Cops said they were investigating the matter further.

Meanwhile, the body of a woman was recovered from a drum which was dumped in the Lorry Adda. The SHO of the area said a passer-by spotted the corpse, placed in a drum near a stand, and informed the police.

A team of the law enforcers reached the spot, collected forensic evidence and recorded statements of eyewitnesses. The SHO said police were yet to ascertain the identity of the victim and were waiting for an autopsy report to investigate the matter further.

Violence against women in Pakistan is rampant. Over 3,000 women were killed over honor in a two-and-a-half-year period. As many as 3,275 cases, under Section 354 of the Pakistan Penal Code (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage the modesty of a woman), 376-A (rape) and 376-B (gang rape) were registered in Lahore over the last three years.

At least 943 cases were registered under these three sections in 2014, 1,088 in 2015 and 1,244 in 2016. An increase of 31.92% (301 cases) was observed when comparing 2014 with 2016.

Cases of assault increased 14.34 % (156 incidents) when 2015 is compared to 2016 and there is also a rise of 15.38% (145) when 2014 is compared to 2015.

Human right activists say that the reason behind this violence is the male mindset. Punjab Commission on the Status of Women chairperson states awareness campaigns by the media and rights organisations meant more cases were reported. This is unlike the past when women chose to remain silent and incidents went unnoticed.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1301052/adding-insult-injury-man-burns-wife-rubs-salt-wounds/>

## ONLY WOMEN TEACHERS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS PROPOSED

Dawn January 22nd, 2017

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: The provincial elementary and secondary education department has proposed to recruit only women teachers for both boys and girls primary schools in future.

The proposal will be formally put up to the provincial cabinet after the chief minister's approval, officials in the know told Dawn.

They, however, said the proposal if approved wouldn't be executed at once and instead, a proper mechanism would be developed for action on it through the future recruitment of only women teachers for primary schools.

Currently, men teach at primary schools for boys and women at primary schools for girls in the province.

According to the latest official statistics, the province has 14,357 boys primary schools with 45,525 teachers and 8,360 girls primary schools with 26,585 teachers.

A senior official of the education department insisted that women were found to be more caring than men when it came to teaching minors.

“A general consensus persists in the education department that female teachers are more effective than male teachers at primary schools,” he said.

The official said women teachers were emotionally attached to schoolchildren as they helped own children grow up and that they dealt with minor students kindly and patiently and rarely subjected them to corporal punishment.

Another official of the department said the proposal’s execution won’t adversely affect men currently teaching at government schools as it would be applicable to fresh recruitment only.

He said many primary schools for boys were short of teachers and therefore, the current male teachers could be transferred to other schools to create space for the recruitment of women teachers there.

“It will be very beneficial to the primary school students if the provincial government accepts the proposal,” he said.

When contacted, child rights activist Imran Takkar said psychologically, a child felt more comfortable with woman teacher than men.

He added that compared to men, women contributed more to the cause of education as teachers.

“The education department should take all stakeholders into confidence before taking a final decision on the posting of only women teachers to primary schools,” he said.

However, a former district education officer insisted qualified women would be available in urban or semi-urban areas only to serve as teachers.

“There will be a serious difficulty in finding such teachers in far-off areas,” he said.

The ex-DEO said the women teachers struggled to go to schools away from their houses.

“Women are good to teach students from nursery to third grade but they will face problem in handling students of fourth and fifth graders,” he said.

He also said the education department’s proposal would fail if women teachers weren’t provided with ‘pick and drop’ facility.

“It’ll be difficult for women teachers to reach schools on time using public transport vehicles,” he said.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1310011/only-women-teachers-for-primary-schools-proposed>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 9TH TO JANUARY 15TH 2017

‘SAFE TRANSPORT SHARING SERVICE’ FOR WOMEN COMMENCES IN TWIN CITIES

Dawn, January 9th, 2017

Shiza Malik

ISLAMABAD: For 29-year-old Ayesha Khan, learning to drive a car was a life-changing experience.



“Being able to drive opens up so many possibilities because you are no longer dependent on other people,” she said. Ayesha began driving her father’s car a few years back and practised with him.

“Being able to drive meant that I could even supervise the construction of my house, driving to Rawalpindi Saddar everyday to buy materials. It gave me a lot of confidence.”

Last year, she began working at a government ministry in G-5 and bought her own car to travel to work.

She has now joined the newly launched carpool service, SheKab as a driver, which has made her commute to work an income generating activity.

SheKab is a subscription based ride-sharing platform which uses intelligent clustering to connect riders with drivers and fellow commuters.

Riders sign up using the SheKab website, which also provides estimated costs. For instance, monthly pick and drop from as far as DHA and Bahria Town to F-7 or F-8 costs around Rs8,000 a month.

“I first signed up with SheKab as a rider and was impressed by their model. I could safely commute to work and sharing a cab with other women meant the cost was divided. I even made some new friends,” Ayesha said.

Masooma Zehra, a student at the National University of Sciences and Technology, has also been using SheKab since September.

“Safety is very important to my parents. If there was no safe way to travel to university, I wouldn’t be allowed to attend. In the past I would use private vans which meant I had to leave the house at 6am even if my first class wasn’t until 9am,” she explained.

For many women in Pakistan, lack of safe and affordable transport services means educational and employment aspirations remain unfulfilled.

Cultural barriers combine with inadequate transport services to ensure that many educated women are kept out of the workforce. Where services are available, they are often inconvenient and expensive.

“In some cases women spend up to 40pc of their incomes travelling to work,” said Hira Batool Rizvi, the brains behind SheKab.

Hira’s own experience of growing up in Islamabad had made her aware of the lack of safe and convenient transport services available to women and after completing a masters degree in the US, Hira began work on her idea of launching a ride-sharing platform exclusively for women.

“I began with the idea of women driving women but soon realised that in Pakistan, ideas which are too radical end up failing. Ideas such as the Pink Rickshaw sound great but never pick up because they are too in your face,” she argued.

In the hopes of bringing incremental change, Hira decided to utilise the existing taxi cab network in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

“I felt the use of technology was already a new thing so combining it with the existing yellow cab network would make the initiative more practical,” she says.

SheKab was launched in August 2015 with a fleet of five cabs. Today, there are 43 drivers signed up with the service, eight of whom are women.

The cars driven by men are regular yellow or black cabs while women drivers use private cars.

In the future, SheKab plans to lease out cars to women drivers who can use their income from the carpool service to pay the monthly instalments.

Cab driver Hamid Raja has been working with SheKab for the last one year and says he always prefers driving women to work.

“In my experience, women are more punctual and usually go straight home after work, which makes it more convenient for the driver,” he said.

His progressive views belie his scant education and he takes pride in driving women to their workplaces.

“Women are a part of society and we can no longer have them sit at home. It is important that we make it easier for them to work by providing safe transport,” he says.

Hira explains that most drivers have leased their cabs from the Punjab government’s taxi schemes and use the income from SheKab to pay their monthly instalments.

Understanding the importance of this additional income to cab drivers, at a time when companies such as Uber and Careem pose a threat to their livelihoods, Hira hopes to continue working with regular cabs.

“Even when we achieve our original model of women driving women, we will not leave out the hardworking men who drive cabs in our city,” she says.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307341>

### THREE POLICEMEN ARRESTED FOR RAPING, TORTURING WOMAN

The Express Tribune, January 9th, 2017.

Multan: A woman was gang-raped by six men, including three policemen in Multan on Sunday. Later, the accused cops were arrested by the police.

Police said a woman, on condition of anonymity, submitted an application to City Police Officer Ehsan Younus in which she stated that six people, including three constables of Seetal Mari police station identified as Safdar, Tariq and Zafar abducted and gang-raped her.

She added the accused not only sexually abused her but they also tortured her. She demanded of the CPO to take stern action against the accused.

On the directives of Multan CPO, a case was registered against Safdar, Tariq and Zafar at Seetal Mari Police station who were later arrested. Police are conducting raids to nab others involved in the incident.

The accused cops were sent on a four-day judicial remand on the orders of district magistrate.

Meanwhile, Ehsan Younus constituted a team to investigate the matter and ordered it to submit the report immediately.

Earlier in September 2016, a 17-year-old girl was abducted and raped by two men in Shujabad District of Multan.

Accused Jameel and Shahid entered the house of Akbar and abducted his sister who was later gang raped. Later, the accused threw the girl in front of her house.

Similarly in November 2016, a member of the transgender community Shehzad alias Chahat was sexually molested by five men and tortured in Muslim Town.

The victim was returning home after attending a wedding reception when she was abducted and raped.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1288509/criminal-offence-three-policemen-arrested-raping-torturing-woman/>

#### WOMAN MURDERED FOR 'HONOUR' IN SWAT

Dawn, January 10th, 2017

MINGORA: A married woman was murdered allegedly in the name of honour in Biyakan village of Matta tehsil late on Sunday evening.

According to Matta police, a resident of Biyakan village, reported to police station that his daughter, 24, was murdered inside her in-laws' house.

SHO Bakht Zada said that the complainant claimed that his son-in-law, who works abroad, murdered his wife with the help of his friends after accusing her of having illicit affair.

The police officer said that woman's father told police that a rift between his daughter and her husband emerged after a man showed fake photos of the woman to her husband in Saudi Arabia. "Later on the man who showed the fake photos was also found dead, and the accused and his wife were nominated in the murder case, and were under investigation," said SHO Bakht Zada.

The police, which termed the murder as caused by a domestic dispute, said that they had filed a murder case against four people, including the deceased's husband, and his three friends, and were searching for the culprits.

The murdered woman left behind four children.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307548/woman-murdered-for-honour-in-swat>

#### WHERE ARE THE WOMEN VOTERS?

Dawn, January 10th, 2017

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

AS we get closer to 2018 when the current national and provincial assemblies complete their five-year term, several election-related issues are attracting the attention of decision-makers and other stakeholders. As far as women voters are concerned, two issues stand out both in terms of their importance and urgency.

First is the registration of women voters. According to the last census held in 1998, the total population of Pakistan was a little over 132 million. The female population constituted 48 per cent of the total population. The latest figures of registered voters released by the Election Commission of Pakistan last month, indicate that Pakistan has a total of around 97m registered voters of which women voters are around 42.42m which translates to a little less than 44pc of the total number of voters.

Using the 1998 census composition, there should have been 48pc women registered voters, which corresponds to 46.58m and which means that around 4.16m women have not been able to find their way to the voters list.

Unfortunately, there has always been a gap between the number of women qualified to vote and the number of registered women voters.

In the controversial electoral rolls for the 2002 general election, women voters constituted 46.11pc of the total registered voters. This percentage went further down in the 2008 electoral rolls when registered women voters constituted about 44pc of the electoral rolls. The percentage of registered women voters improved to 46.62pc just before the 2013 general election. Sadly, the latest ECP figures indicate a significant dip in registered women voters to 43.73pc of the total registered voters.

Over a period of time and especially since the 2013 election, the registration of women voters should have improved but alarmingly this percentage has further gone down in the latest tally. The current percentage (43.73pc) of registered women voters compares very unfavourably with the percentage of registered women voters in India which is 47.78pc according to their 2016 electoral rolls.

Since the available time is short and the gender gap in registered votes — over four million — is significant, the ECP along with the political parties and civil society needs to take up the issue on an urgent basis.

Going by a report in this newspaper recently, it is encouraging that the ECP has already analysed the patterns of women voters' registration in various parts of the country and is concentrating on areas from where a low figure for registration of women voters has been reported.

It is even more admirable that the ECP has analysed the gender gap in registered voters down to the level of census blocks which is the smallest unit of population used for the purpose of both the population census and the electoral rolls. It has also identified some 26,000 census blocks where women voters' registration is below the 40pc mark.

It will be in the fitness of things that the ECP convenes a roundtable conference of all stakeholders including the local government representatives, political parties, civil society organisations, academicians and media to discuss the issue and devise urgent steps to bring the missing women voters into the electoral rolls. We have less than a year because the electoral rolls will need to be frozen around the first quarter of 2018.

Registration is the first step before women can actually vote in the next election. Although the 2015 local government election indicated some encouraging trends in women voting, there are signs of the continuing illegal and deplorable practice of stopping or discouraging women voters from exercising their right to vote in some constituencies especially during elections for members of the national and provincial assemblies.

Some days ago, this paper carried a disturbing story that 17 National Assembly constituencies saw less than 5pc women voters actually casting their votes during the last general election in 2013. Three of these constituencies lie in Fata where special circumstances including terrorist activities have disturbed the area over the past many years. Some other constituencies had experienced an overall low voter turnout, eg NA-152, where male voter turnout was a mere 2.13pc.

However, some of these constituencies have repeatedly shown a tendency of women being barred from voting and therefore it is important to focus on them. Two National Assembly constituencies in Upper and Lower Dir fall under this category. The ECP can hold special consultations with the political parties and the current elected representatives of these constituencies to persuade them to cooperate with the ECP in ensuring unhindered voting by women voters.

Our natural reaction to any such violation is to come up with a new law instead of going for a more effective but probably more challenging route of enforcing the existing laws. There already exists a law (Representation of the People Act, 1976; Section 81 'Undue Influence') which makes it an offence to "compel any person to vote or refrain from voting" but despite overwhelming evidence, such as the written and widely publicised agreements of local

political leaders on legal stamped papers, that women are not allowed to vote, the ECP or the local administration has hardly taken action against these political leaders.

Instead, the ECP is contemplating a law which will automatically make the election void in a constituency where the turnout of women voters is less than a certain threshold, say 10pc.

Apparently, this proposed law may not only prove ineffective, it could also be unfair. After all, there are several constituencies where overall voter turnout is less than 10pc. In fact, a number of National Assembly constituencies are identified in the same report carried by this newspaper where the male voter turnout is less than female voter turn-out. It will be far more effective if the ECP rigorously applies the existing laws and makes an example out of those who stop others from voting.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1307453/where-are-the-women-voters>

#### SISTERS ATTACKED WITH GRENADE FOR REFUSING MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

The Express Tribune, January 11th, 2017.

KARACHI: Two sisters, 19-year-old Samreen and 17-year-old Sanam, were injured when a hand grenade exploded in their house at Koochi Goth in Landhi within the limits of the Shah Latif police station on Tuesday.

They were taken to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre for treatment where doctors termed their condition out of danger. Their father, Qadir Buksh, told the police that the incident occurred when his daughters were asleep at a room on the roof of their single story house.

Buksh accused his relative, Sajid, of being involved in the incident. "Sajid has been interested in getting marriage with one of my daughters which we already refused," said Buksh in his statement to the police. The accused, according to Buksh, had also threatened the life of Buksh and his family before the incident.

"Sajid is a member of a gang war and also a drug addict," said police officials. The police have registered an FIR on behalf of Buksh against Sajid and initiated further investigation, said Shah Latif SHO Ikhlaq Ahmed, adding that police have yet to investigate the actual motive behind the incident. The police have yet to arrest the suspect.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1290512/targeted-sisters-attacked-grenade-refusing-marriage-proposal/>

#### MAN KILLS TWO SISTERS OVER 'PROPERTY ROW'

Dawn, January 13th, 2017

LAHORE: A man allegedly shot dead his two sisters over property dispute in Baghbanpura on Thursday.

Police said Noreen, 17, and Ayesha, 20, residents of Riaz Ahmed Road, were found dead in their house by neighbours who alerted police. A police team reached the spot and recovered the bodies, collected forensic evidence and recorded the statements of eyewitnesses. Later, police shifted the bodies to morgue for autopsy.

Police, quoting the neighbours, said the family consisted of three brothers and two sisters. Two brothers are mentally challenged as was one of the slain sisters, they said.

They said Aqeel wanted to sell the inherited property after the death of their parents but one of his sisters was not agreeing with him.

Baghbanpura Circle Deputy Superintendent of Police Qaiser Mushtaq said they were waiting for the heirs to file complaint for a case. He said that according to neighbours, the elder brother killed his both sisters over land dispute and fled the scene.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1308126/man-kills-two-sisters-over-property-row>

## SESSIONS JUDGE ACCUSED OF TORTURING MINOR GIRL MADE OSD

Dawn, January 13th, 2017

Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: A couple of weeks after the minor maid accused a serving additional district and sessions judge (ADSJ) and his family of torturing her, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday made the judge an officer on special duty (OSD).

Khurram Ali Khan, who was working as the ADSJ civil and district court division (East), has been transferred to the IHC as OSD, said a notification issued by IHC Registrar Raja Jawad Abbas Hassan.

“The IHC under the direction of its administrative committee is pleased to withdraw the services of Raja Khurram Ali Khan... and placed in this Court (IHC) with immediate effect, till further orders.”

The judge would be entitled to receive pay equivalent to that of a BPS-20 officer.

This is the second time ADSJ Khurram has been made an OSD. In September 2013, he was suspended for the misuse of authority for eight months.

The IHC withdrew his judicial powers after the then chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Nadeem Hassan Asif sent an official complaint against him to the IHC for providing relief to a party in a land dispute.

After the alleged torture on the 10-year-old girl surfaced through the social media, IHC Chief Justice Mohammad Anwar Khan Kasi ordered an inquiry on Dec 30.

The ADSJ, however, managed a compromise deal with the parents of the minor girl on the basis of which his spouse obtained a pre-arrest bail from ADSJ Raja Asif Mehmood on Jan 3.

The same day, another ADSJ, Atta Rabbani, handed over the custody of the maid to her parents.

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Saqib Nisar on January 4 took a suo motu notice of the case.

On January 11, the CJP observed that lawyer Raja Zahoor Hassan, who was the counsel for Tayyaba's parents, had played the key role in materialising the compromise between the accused and the father of the child.

Later, ADSJ Rabbani handed over the minor girl to her parents in “haste.” The advocate general Islamabad also told the apex court that as per police record Raja Zahoor Hassan “is a relative of the accused party.”

The apex court also summoned records of the entire proceedings from the district and sessions judge Islamabad.

According to the records presented to the Supreme Court, ADSJ Raja Asif entertained the pre-arrest bail of the judge's wife after the court time was over.

The SHO Industrial Area told the apex court that when he appeared before ADSJ Raja Asif, the latter had already granted an interim bail to the spouse of the judge.

In his order granting the bail, ADSJ Asif stated that the offence was bailable and “the matter has also been patched up between the parties and family members of the complainant who do not want to pursue the case.”

The judge accused the police of registering the case with “mala fide” intentions.

The record related to the handing over of Tayyaba to her parents showed that ADSJ Rabbani had passed a number of directions on January 3.

He directed the crisis centre to release Tayyaba and asked the SHO Industrial Area to produce her before the court the same day.

In the judgment, ADSJ Rabbani noted, “since the detinue is a minor girl and would be safe in the lap of her parents, not in the crisis centre.”

ADSJ Rabbani then handed over Tayyaba to her parents who had left her at the mercy of the ADSJ when she was just seven-and-a-half years old on a monthly salary of Rs3,000.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1308136>

#### CJP TAKES NOTICE OF JIRGA ASKING MAN TO PAY FINE OR ‘SURRENDER’ DAUGHTER

Dawn, January 13th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar on Thursday ordered the senior superintendent of police (SSP) of Ghotki to submit a comprehensive report about a jirga (tribal court) convened by some influential people, who allegedly ordered a man to pay a big amount of money as fine or hand over his three-year-old daughter into a marriage.

The order came on an application filed by a man, Ali Hassan, son of Shah Mohammad Mazari, through the Human Rights Cell.

The applicant stated that he was a resident of Ghotki district. He further stated that he was made to appear before a jirga convened by some influential people belonging to the Mazari tribe to settle a certain matter with him.

The applicant claimed that the jirga ordered him to pay a fine of Rs300,000 or else he would have to give his three-year-old daughter into a marriage.

Mr Hassan pleaded that he was not in a position to pay the fine. He appealed for protection to him and his daughter and action against those who convened the jirga.

Taking cognizance of the matter, CJP Mian Saqib Nisar ordered the Ghotki SSP to submit a comprehensive report about the matter within the next two days.

The judiciary in the past has been taking serious notice of the holding of jirgas and their decrees based on tribal customs like vani, swara etc under which women or underage girls are ordered to be handed over to the aggrieved side in a dispute. The guilty side is often made to pay a heavy fine or hand over a female member of the family to the other side to settle the dispute.

Pakistan is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that prohibits child marriages but the commitment is seldom honoured with the result that handing over of underage girls into marriage to someone as an alternative to fine money is common in the rural areas of the country.

On July 11, 2013, the Supreme Court had ordered the provincial law-enforcement agencies to remain vigilant and ensure through swift and strict action that girls and women were not exchanged to settle disputes through jirgas.

In its April 24, 2006 verdict, the court had ordered the federal government to introduce amendment to the relevant section of the Pakistan Penal Code or make an insertion in the Family Act of 1964 with the aim of getting the marriages held under *vani* dissolved. The apex court had also directed registrars of high courts as well as presidents and general secretaries of the district and tehsil bar associations to form legal aid committees that could provide proper legal assistance to victims of *vani* or *swara*.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1308080/cjp-takes-notice-of-jirga-asking-man-to-pay-fine-or-surrender-daughter>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2ND TO JANUARY 8TH 2017  
FEMALE JOURNALISTS FACE GENDERED FORMS OF SURVEILLANCE, STUDY FINDS  
Dawn January 2nd, 2017

Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Female journalists face more surveillance by their audience and readers than by the state and intelligence agencies, research on the ‘Surveillance of Female Journalists in Pakistan’ has found.

The pilot study of gendered surveillance, conducted by the Digital Rights Foundation (DRF), found that this surveillance begins when they start their professional careers, as audiences try to keep more of a check on female journalists than male journalists. The focus of this surveillance remains on their gender and appearance rather than their work.

Seven journalists from various media platforms were interviewed during the course of the study.

The research focused on the gendered forms and various sources of surveillance – from the state to the audience to political groups. Women interviewed by the study said they were surveilled by state authorities and subjected to constant social surveillance in the form of abuse on social media.

In addition to mapping the kinds of surveillance female journalists face, the report also explores the impact of this kind of constant monitoring in terms of its psychological toll, self censorship and retreat from digital spaces.

Saba Eitzaz, who works for BBC Urdu, said social surveillance online has had “a tremendous psychological effect [and] I felt violated”.

Award-winning journalist Kiran Nazish said: “It’s not just one person telling you that you don’t belong here, it’s a number of people, and that constant refrain can be very intimidating and one starts to feel cornered.”

Maria Memon, an anchorperson, said: “Even if I was told that I could tweet about anything without repercussions, I don’t think I would do it because I don’t think that surveillance is completely avoidable.”

Other journalists interviewed included Amber Shamsi, Sarah Eleazar and Ramish Fatima.

DRF Executive Director Nighat Dad said the study took around two months to complete.



She said: “Gendered surveillance is a free speech issue – it lets women know they are being monitored, and discourages them from reporting and participating in digital spaces.”

Luavat Zahid, one of the authors of the study, said: “The issue was very close to my heart because I have worked as a journalist and faced the same kinds of problems. People try to do character assassinations of female journalists, but male journalists are barely affected by character assassination.”

DRF’s study found that the experience of surveillance for female journalists is gendered, and therefore different from the experience of their male colleagues. While there is no conclusive evidence of whether women face more surveillance, the form the surveillance takes include sexualised threats and attacks on character and appearance. The report said this gendered form of surveillance is true for both state and social surveillance.

The report identifies the first form of surveillance as surveillance by the state, government institutions and intelligence agencies.

State surveillance is troubling given that it is backed by state machinery, which makes for effective, systematic and efficient monitoring.

On the other hand social surveillance, experienced by all the journalists, is carried out by the audience, political parties, non-state actors, fellow journalists and personal contacts. Some journalists reported that they experienced more social surveillance than state surveillance.

Many of the journalists observed that when it comes to controversial matters, both women and men face equal levels of surveillance, but the form tends to be gendered.

Some journalists said that when the state is attempting to intimidate or discourage them from publishing or reporting particular matters, sexualised threats and personal revelations are often employed.

DRF also found that surveillance has a profound psychological impact on journalists, leaving them paranoid and, at times, traumatised. Many of the journalists said they are guarded about what they say online for fear of surveillance, and thus had to self-censor their opinions and at times, their reporting.

The report recommended that the state and media houses take concrete steps to protect female journalists from particular kinds of gendered surveillance.

It also said that social surveillance needs to be identified as a serious issue, so steps can be taken to control it and to support journalists who face it on a daily basis.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1305891/female-journalists-face-gendered-forms-of-surveillance-study-finds>

## CHALLENGES WORKING WOMEN FACE

Hina Butt

The Express Tribune, January 2, 2017

The fact that women are increasingly joining the workforce is a source of satisfaction for many who have been advocating women empowerment for long. There is no denying that the trends in the society have changed considerably in the favour of women. Today women are not only accepted in as diverse fields as military or sports, but their achievements are also being celebrated.

The last decade alone has seen the first women fighter pilot as well as a girls' soccer team, both of which would have seemed a bit farfetched propositions in not so distant past. While all this is extremely attractive one must also take stock of the continued and persistent challenges that are still faced by many of our sisters and daughters as they try to play their rightful role in the growth and development of our country.

Arguably the biggest challenge with regard to women empowerment in our country is the longitudinal distribution of opportunities. The openings are not evenly divided. There are issues with localities, family setups, class and downright utter discrimination that prevent most of the women from realising their true potential. And even those who, by some stroke of good fortune, get these chances find out later that their family, as well as the society, has invariably attached some conditions to their working.

The definition of proper behaviour haunts every woman alike, whether she is a housewife or an economically independent individual. It is shocking but true. We are still far from realising that all efforts towards empowering women will remain futile if we do not change our attitudes towards the 'roles' that we think women ought to play within their homes and outside.

To ensure that women get the fair chance to excel we will also have to fight the perception that is still very much prevalent in our society that women who work are doing it at the cost of their God-given and socially-endorsed duty to serve their families. We need to help the domestically challenged working woman.

Although we have accepted that women need to get professional degrees we still have to make our collective mind to give them equal support to pursue their carriers like men. Take the example of the female graduates of our medical colleges. We all know that getting into one of the government sponsored medical colleges requires a lot of effort and only the brightest and the most hardworking of our students get admitted into them, majority of whom are obviously girls.

Imagine for a moment the standards of a society that a few years later judges these remarkably accomplished ladies by the roundness of their Rotes. And this is not a rhetorical exposition; the percentage of lady doctors opting not to practice is alarming. Sadly, it is true for other professions as well.

The primary reason why most of the girls opt for medicine instead of engineering as a profession is some archaic calculus in the mind of their families that starts to factor in the duties and responsibilities of the life after marriage. There are no prizes for guessing the future of a country that plans the career paths of half of its workforce with such a clear bias.

This mindset also mutilates the idea of positive discrimination. Women are allowed to work but some jobs are not deemed suitable for them. Some may argue that this is out of respect or courtesy but most of the times it is because of the reason that women are not considered competent enough. When a certain food inspector in Lahore started sealing restaurants left right and centre because of the poor hygiene of their staff and the general state of uncleanness, much of the wonder and surprise came not because of the unprecedented display of proactive-ness from a civil servant but because that civil servant happened to be a lady. It's a pity that the country that chose a woman twice at its chief executive still thinks that outdoor jobs are something that a lady ought not to do.

Giving time to family is important and it must always come first but women alone should not be made scapegoat all the time. I am in no way suggesting that we need to change our family structure but a little accommodation for the women who are trying to focus on their careers will go a long way in leveling the playing field in their favour.

Women do not always need positive discrimination; at times only fair and equal treatment would do. Having said this I still believe that we are headed in the right direction. At least we are making our girls doctors, engineers and lawyers. I am sure that the time will also come when we would start seeing them as doctors, engineers and lawyers first instead of duty-bound housekeepers assigned only to look after the daily chores within their homes and raise children.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1281270/challenges-working-women-face/>

## ALARMING RATE: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SURGES IN LAHORE

The Express Tribune, January 4th, 2017.

### LAHORE:

There has been steep rise in cases of sexual violence against women in Lahore in the past three years, according to data gathered by The Express Tribune.

As many as 3,275 cases, under Section 354 of the Pakistan Penal Code (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage the modesty of a woman), 376-A (rape) and 376-B (gang rape) were registered in the provincial capital from January 1, 2014 to December 24, 2016.

At least 943 cases were registered under these three sections in 2014, 1,088 in 2015 and 1,244 in 2016. An increase of 31.92% (301 cases) was observed when comparing 2014 with 2016.

Cases of assault increased 14.34 % (156 incidents) when 2015 is compared to 2016 and there is also a rise of 15.38% (145) when 2014 is compared to 2015.

Registered cases of rape increased by 50.2% from 245 in 2014 to 368 in 2016. In 2015, 338 cases were registered and this figure increased to 368 (by 8.55%) in 2016.

An increase of 36.17% (200 cases) was observed when 2014 is compared with 2016 as 553 and 753 incidents were reported, respectively.

Such cases increased by 23.85% (145 cases) when 2015 is compared to 2016 as 608 and 753 incidents were reported. When 2014 is compared to 2015, an increase of 9.95% (55 cases) was observed.

Cases of gang rape decreased by 15.17% (22 incidents) when 2014 is compared to 2016.

In 2014, 145 cases came to the fore compared to 123 in 2016. The number of incidents in 2016 also saw a 12% decrease from 2015 when 141 incidents were reported.

A senior police officer, while quoting the example of a stepfather assaulting his minor stepdaughter, said incest was rampant in society but often went unreported.

He said there was an overall trend of keeping silent in such cases to protect 'honour'. Besides incest, women victims choose to keep quiet to protect 'family honour' or 'integrity', fearing it might ruin the prospects of their siblings finding a decent match.

Punjab Commission on Status of Women Chairperson Fauzia Viqar, while talking to The Express Tribune, said society was becoming more violent and cases of assault on women were intensifying. "Different factors, including films, dramas, literature, and social media were contributing to this behaviour," she pointed out. Unlike the past, women no longer remain silent, she added. "They come forward and register these cases. Awareness among women, through campaigns by different organisations, has also been a reason for them speaking out."

Talking about the psyche involved, Fauzia pointed towards two factors. She said certain individuals derived pleasure through sexual assault and used it as a tool to exert pressure. She added sexual assault was used by male chauvinists to express power and control over women.

Aurat Foundation director Mumtaz Mughal said sexual violence was not only an issue faced by women, but society as a whole. Pointing towards the exploitation of children as labour, she said they were also assaulted and harassed despite being male.

Mumtaz continued that women were so vulnerable that even blood relations could not be trusted.

She added different factors contributed to the increase of violence against women, including a lack of state interest in provide protection, gaps the in the judicial, prosecution and policing system as well as the prevalent mindset. “Moreover, exemplary punishments are not awarded to criminals and conviction rate is extremely low.”

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1283639/alarmed-rate-sexual-violence-women-surges-lahore/>

## February 2017

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 20TH TO FEBRUARY 26TH 2017*

### *REDUCING INEQUALITIES*

Dawn, February 20th, 2017

Neil Buhne

DESPITE huge challenges and setbacks, Pakistan has indeed made progress towards promoting social justice in recent years. More women and girls have opportunities to realise their potential, and legislation is enacted to reduce violence against women. The evils of child labour are brought forward and debated with renewed commitment.

Politicians, policymakers and people are taking more initiatives to increase employment, and especially decent work. There is higher recognition of minority rights and the need to protect them, including the needs of the transgender community. But there remains a long way to go for Pakistan to become a society in which all persons can exercise their rights equally, free from stigma and violence.

For there to be social justice, we in Pakistan need to explore more often, and more openly, issues of ethnicity, gender, disability and other social inequalities.

If Pakistan is going meet the goals it has set for itself in Vision 2025 and the SDGs, there is a need for collective work on strengthening social justice. The categorisation of people into groups makes the hurdles they need to cross much higher if they are not to be ‘left behind’. Meeting the targets in SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 5 (gender equality) are necessary building blocks for all the development goals to be met. If Pakistan does not reduce inequalities, it will not be able to meet all the SDGs.

Ending such inequalities is a prerequisite for human development. Jinnah captured this 70 years ago: “No nation can ever be worthy of its existence that cannot take its women along with the men. No struggle can ever succeed without women participating side by side with men. There are two powers in the world; one is the sword and the other is the pen. There is a great competition and rivalry between the two. There is a third power stronger than both, that of the women.”

A good way to mark World Day of Social Justice today is to take stock of how far we have come in achieving what was envisioned by Jinnah.

Pakistan is ranked 121st of 155 countries by the Gender Inequality Index; the Global Gender Gap Index ranks Pakistan 144th of 145 countries; only 19.3pc of women in the country attain a secondary education, as opposed to 46.1pc of men; similarly, women’s participation in the labour market is a mere 24.6pc. Women earn 23pc less than men for equivalent work. Extremely few women (0.3pc) hold managerial positions.

The level of gender inequality is the most widespread human rights concern in Pakistan. It not only affects women and girls but also the well-being of all in Pakistan. There are several reasons for this, many social and cultural, but the primary one is inequality of opportunity for girls, especially from poorer families, whether in terms of health, education or voice.

The more than 40pc difference in income between men and women is because of gender stereotypes, lower levels of education among women, unpaid care work, and direct or indirect gender-based discrimination. Women bear a burden of unpaid work that is globally estimated to be three times greater than the burden borne by men. But in Pakistan it is 10 times greater, according to a study by UN Women Pakistan.

Despite progress on education for women and girls, and women's increasing involvement in political and administrative roles, Pakistan lags behind other countries in terms of substantially advancing women's rights. Though there are a number of women who have played a prominent role in Pakistan, including Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, they have generally been the exception.

So while there is progress (eg in 2002, 54 women ran for seats in the National Assembly, a figure that rose to 161 in the 2013 election), very few women serve in elected roles. Though Pakistan will soon be one of the few countries in the world with a woman serving as foreign secretary, we have among the lowest proportions of women in public service in South Asia, currently only 5pc. The overwhelming majority of public servants are men (95pc).

The year is 2017 and because we are so far only taking baby steps to address the pervasive inequalities across Pakistan, too many Pakistanis are missing out on the opportunities they have the right to have. Current good policies to end this social injustice are going in the right direction, but too slowly for those who continue to be discriminated against, and who live on the periphery.

But Pakistan can pick up the pace; with collective efforts by government, private sector and civil society centred on eliminating discrimination and violence, and empowering the disadvantaged with the tools to improve their lives. Ending social injustice is also about individual action: If we call out even one unfair act, we have contributed to a just society.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315745>

#### YOUNG WOMAN ALLEGEDLY RAPED AT GUNPOINT IN ISLAMABAD

The Express Tribune, February 21st, 2017.

Arsalan Altaf

ISLAMABAD: A woman was allegedly raped at gunpoint by a man who had broken into her house near Koral.

Police say they will be obtaining a warrant for the suspects today (Tuesday) and send a police party to his native town in Punjab.

The woman's husband\* told police that he had been invited by his work acquaintance, AZ\*, to his home to have tea on February 13. The tea, the husband said, was spiked and made him dizzy.

Upon returning home, he went to sleep.

Later that night, AZ and another unidentified man broke into their house.

“At 2am, AZ\* along with an unidentified man entered my house after scaling the wall,” the complainant wrote in his application.

“The unidentified man put a pistol to my wife’s head while AZ\* raped her,” he said, adding that the men threatened to kill the couple if they made any noise.

Later, the suspect’s father and brother approached the victim’s family, assuring them of action against the suspects.

They, though, urged the couple not to report the matter to the police.

However, a few days later they threatened the complainant.

Subsequently, the victim’s husband reported the incident to the police on February 18.

Police told The Express Tribune that the suspect hailed from Mandi Bahauddin in Punjab and was still at large.

“We will obtain warrants from a magistrate on Tuesday and go to his hometown [to arrest him],” a police officer said. He added that the other suspect had not been identified yet.

Meanwhile, Khanna police have arrested a man for his involvement in an alleged rape case.

Police said a 17-year-old girl had claimed that she had been raped after being intoxicated.

The victim maintained in her complaint that a couple took her to a plaza in Pindorian to get her a job but instead they handed her over to another man there who allegedly raped her.

Police have arrested a man who the victim claimed took her to the plaza.

“The suspect denies that he took her there,” a police officer said, adding that doctors had ruled out sexual assault after an examination of the victim.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1333603/young-woman-allegedly-raped-gunpoint-islamabad/>

#### IN A DAY: THREE WOMEN MURDERED FOR HONOUR IN PUNJAB

The Express Tribune, February 22nd, 2017.

MULTAN: At least three women were killed in suspected honour killing cases in different districts of southern Punjab.

In a case registered in Miranpur, a man killed his wife and nephew on suspicion of having an illicit relationship.

Police sources stated that Aslam doubted that his 26-year-old wife, Shareefan Bibi, was having an affair with his 22-year-old nephew Ismail.

According to details, Aslam, along with a friend Yousaf shot his nephew and hanged his wife to the ceiling fan till death.

Rojhan police has registered a FIR and investigation is underway.

In a separate incident in Rajanpur, a man has killed his daughter-in-law in the name of honour.

According to the police, Peeran Ditta, 55, beheaded his daughter-in-law Hassena, 22, on the suspicion of having an affair with a neighbour.

Police said the culprit fled from the scene, however an FIR has been registered against him.

In Basti Halkani, of district Rajanpur, Muhammad Baksh killed his 20-year-old sister Hafsa.

Baksh suspected that his sister was having an affair.

The police stated that the suspect used a sharp axe to kill both the victims and later fled from the scene. Investigation in the case is still under way.

Murders in the name on honour have increased in south Punjab in the last two years. On an average five women are murdered daily in the name of honour.

A week ago, female lawmakers from the PPP submitted a calling attention notice in the National Assembly Secretariat to discuss the alarming increase in the number of honour killing cases in the country.

MNAs Shazia Mari, Beelum Husnain, Mehreen Bhutto, Shazia Sobia, Shahida Rehmani and Surruya Jatoi on Tuesday submitted the notice.

“We would like to invite attention of Minister for Human Rights towards the alarming rise in the honour killing incidents ... especially the brutal incident ... in Khyber-Pakhtunkwa where a young girl Hina Shah Nawaz was barbarically murdered in the name of honour,” said movers of the notice.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1334997/day-three-women-murdered-honour-punjab/>

## THE PROVINCE IN THE LEAD ON WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

The Express Tribune, February 25th, 2017.

Aisha Sarwari

Divulging in to the state of affairs for women in Pakistan is an unsettling activity. Currently ranked at 143rd in the Gender Gap index among 144 countries, Pakistan is among the worst countries to live a life as a woman. Conditions here are worse than in Syria at 142 and slightly better than Yemen at 144.

Both these countries are at the epicentre of a global war against terror. It is an unfortunate fact for which the government is culpable and faces regular scrutiny. As we approach this international women’s day, introspection is even more necessary.

International women’s day was commemorated in the memory of 129 working women in 1908 who lost their lives in a factory while protesting for flexible working hours; equal pay and the right to vote. In 2017 our women are still fighting for those rights.

I feel the reason we have strayed is because we have not put in an onus where it needs to be — with the government. While I’ve often used this space to take down inaction, it is also important to acknowledge when governments do step up and make women’s rights a priority — albeit after a push from the conscientious civil society.

Despite the prevalence of gravest circumstances with regard to privileges and freedoms women enjoy in Pakistan, there is a strong commitment of the government, both at federal and provincial levels, to empower Pakistani women.

The prioritisation of women-friendly legislation at all levels indicates the general will of both the public and the government to address women's issues. At the least the compass is being fixed.

The best way to go about evaluating government action is to identify and characterise the policy tools employed to address the problem. Categorisation of these policy tools into key dimensions guides the progression of our current analysis. First, what is the nature of activity the government is currently engaged in to address the problem. Then, what is the structure of the delivery system being employed? Then, how centralised is this system? Lastly, does the program require detailed administrative action?

While there is a protest regarding the inactivity of the government to address women issues, particularly at the provincial level, the Government of Punjab has seemingly brought a renewed focus on the subject. They have delved right to a core issue and have come up with notable policy initiatives to empower women in the form of legal protections; outright grants; penalties for violators of women's rights and provision of key services for their health, education and mobility.

With the creation of a dedicated Women Development Department (WDD) the Government, of Punjab has established a sound institutional mechanism to transform its policies towards gender mainstreaming and equality. A model that ought to be adopted by others.

To tackle the issue of much needed legal protection for women, various amendments and legislations have been signed into law in Punjab. These protections cover the contentious issue of women's right to inheritance; the issue of harassment at the workplace; child marriages and crimes against women, which include but are not limited to acid burning.

Money disbursements to women contribute in improving the condition of economically disadvantaged women. With the establishment of the Punjab Working Women Endowment Fund Society there is a provision of financial assistance to working women, especially those residing in hostels.

This economically strengthens the women who face the worst of orthodoxy, patriarchy and pseudo-religious fanaticism on a daily basis. These contributions though meagre in their value provide a much welcome economic cushion to these women who compete with men in a very hostile environment.

Via this department, the province has made contributions for the provision of services needed to ensure women empowerment. Take for instance the 16 working women hostels that were operationalised to address the concerns of outstation working women in major cities. To address factors that restrict women from active participation in the economic activities the initiative to provide day-care services for working mothers has been launched.

With 61 operational day care centres at various public and private sector institutions there is a phenomenal change in the lives of working mothers in Punjab. We are told, 14 more day cares are in the pipeline. Punjab needs thrice that number and more, but it is, at least, a start.

To address violence and litigation issues the Government of the Punjab is establishing Violence against Women (VAW) Centres in Punjab to protect women from physical, economic, and psychological violence. Along with providing VAW centres a dedicated helpline has been established to support women accessing justice and litigation support. More data needs to come in to see if there truly is a follow through.

There is no denying the fact that a lot needs to be done for equality and empowerment of women in Punjab particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, universal primary education reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health, elimination of gender-based violence, mainstreaming of gender perspective in policies and programmes, enhancing training opportunities for women and girls and increasing the participation of women in leadership and decision-making.



It is critical that we garner public support behind government initiatives to improve women's rights, not to merely trumpet them, but give real support because the development sector can only go so far. Also real on-ground change will come when the government itself realises its mandate towards women and works within its existing infrastructure and system to provide for them.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1338218/province-lead-womens-empowerment/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 13TH TO FEBRUARY 19TH 2017  
JUI-F, JI OPPOSE MANDATORY 10 PC WOMEN VOTING  
Dawn February 16th, 2017

Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the sub-committee of the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms held in the Parliament House on Wednesday could not reach a consensus on the issue of 10 per cent mandatory participation of women in elections after the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam-F (JUI-F) and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) opposed the proposal presented by other parliamentary parties.

The JUI-F and JI stuck to their stance for only 5pc participation of women in the elections, although other parliamentary parties demanded at least 10pc participation for validation of polls.

“The parliamentary parties could not reach a consensus on the issue of women's voting,” Shazia Marri, a member of the committee, told reporters after an in-camera meeting.

According to the Election Reforms Package and the Election Act, 2017, it has been proposed that at least 10pc participation of women voters should be made mandatory for elections.

In case of less than 10pc participation of women in the elections in any constituency, the proposal says, the Election Commission of Pakistan should have the right to order re-election for the seat.

Talking to Dawn, JI leader Tariq Ullah said his party had some reservations on 10pc mandatory participation of women voters in elections. “One should not be forced to take part in polls, especially women,” he said.

He said that other issues were also discussed in the meeting, including MNAs' development funds and fee for contesting polls.

He said no decision had been taken on the issue of overseas Pakistani voters and biometric and e-voting systems.

“Most members of the committee have demanded that overseas Pakistanis be given the right to vote,” he said.

Referring to biometric and e-voting systems, he said the committee had been informed that the Election Commission required a hefty amount of Rs40-50 billion to introduce them.

Talking to reporters, the chairman of the sub-committee, Law Minister Zahid Hamid, said that 24 organisations and institutions had submitted 600 recommendations before the committee.

“The sub-committee will review these recommendations and present its report to the main committee,” he said.

The minister claimed that no restriction was being imposed on election observers and media.

“All fears of Fafen and other observers regarding restrictions on elections observers and media are baseless,” he said.

Recently, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) presented its election reforms package and demanded complete financial and administrative independence of the ECP to ensure that the next general elections were held in a better and more transparent manner in May 2018.

The PTI has also demanded that the budget of the ECP should be one-line budget on the pattern of financial autonomy of the Supreme Court and rules of the ECP should not be made by the government; rather the commission should have complete administrative autonomy to make its own rules and regulations for elections.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315097>

#### DIALOGUE HELD TO MARK NATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Dawn February 16th, 2017

RAWALPINDI: Women are active agents of change and without their participation it would be difficult to bring the country on to the path to development, MNA Tehmina Daultana said on Wednesday.

Ms Daultana was speaking at a dialogue on ‘Taking the women’s agenda forward between women activists and parliamentarians’, arranged by the Fatimah Jinnah Women University (FJWU) and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW).

“No country can become prosperous without the active participation of women, and there is and need to economically empower them while improving their education,” she said.

The dialogue was held in connection with National Women’s Day at the FJWU campus, and attended by the university’s vice chancellor Prof Dr Samina Amin Qadir, faculty and a number of students from various departments.

Ms Daultana said this was a day to commemorate the achievements of women and celebrate their extraordinary potential. “It is a time to reflect on the barriers that still remain there, and how they can be overcome,” she added.

She said Pakistani women face many issues that can be ended by educating women and giving them the opportunity to participate in the country’s economy.

Dr Qadir said true liberation comes with socioeconomic emancipation. She said: “Today, on the occasion of National Women’s Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to women’s rights, the inherent dignity and equal rights of men and women.”

Other speakers at the event also highlighted the role of women in the progress of the country.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1314963>

#### HONOUR KILLINGS ON THE RISE IN SWAT

The Express Tribune, February 17, 2017

Saba Rani

PESHAWAR: The passage of the Anti-Honour Killing Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 and the Anti-Rape Laws (Criminal Amendment Bill) 2015 last year has done little to curb the barbarism of murdering family members ‘honour’.

In Swat District alone, this year has already seen more than nine women murdered in the name of honour – including three who were murdered by their family members during the past five days.

The rapid rate of honour killings has horrified people in the country.

Last year, 1,096 women and 88 men were killed in honour crimes, according to the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. In 2014, the number was 1,005 women, including 82 children, up from 869 women in 2014.

The true numbers are believed to be higher, with many cases going unreported, activists say. Some human rights and women's rights activists believe the rise in numbers and brutality reflects an older generation digging in against creeping change.

A 14-year-old girl was killed by her uncle in Swat's Utror valley after he saw her talking to her cousin on a cellphone.

"He shot and killed her before burying her in the snow with the help of his family members," local journalist Mujahid Tanoli told The Express Tribune.

"She was offering morning prayers when her uncle Ajab Gul murdered her because he saw her talking to her cousin on her phone. He thought she was in a relationship with him."

"This has not happened in this area for the first time. The lives of women have no value here. Men kill them to save their families' 'honour', and families feel proud of carrying out this brutal act."

Two more women were murdered in the Matta area of Swat. Shabeena, 25, was killed by her husband Inamullah, and Shaheen, 37, was also killed by her husband. In both cases, the men killed their wives on suspicion of their having extramarital affairs.

SHO Bakht Sher told The Express Tribune that the police had lodged an FIR against the culprits and arrested them.

"The girl who was killed in Utror was buried in the snow, and when the police asked the family members for permission to conduct a postmortem, they refused, saying it was against their culture."

But in a relatively unusual turn of events, "The police then registered another FIR against them for interfering in police proceedings," Sher added.

Erfaan Hussein Babak, the head of a Swat-based NGO, said, "In the majority of cases, men killed their wives for having extramarital affairs."

He then criticised the limited implementation of laws protecting women.

"About 90 percent pro-women laws have not been extended to the Provincially Administrated Tribal Areas (Pata) and the government does not even bother trying to protect women in these areas, which gives the men a licence to kill women."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1330361/swat-seen-rise-honour-killing-cases/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 6TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH 2017

WOMEN'S FORUM CONCERNED OVER PASSAGE OF BILL

Dawn, February 6th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Women's Action Forum (WAF) on Sunday expressed concerns over the passage of a bill by the National Assembly to give legal cover to Jirgas and Panchayats.

In a statement, WAF reminded the legislators that Jirgas and Panchayats had been responsible for passing illegal judgments and inflicting inhuman punishments to women and poor people.

“Punishments against women have included women of the accused family being gang raped and little girls and women being offered as compensation for murder and other crimes to the aggrieved party. There have been several incidents when people were made to walk on burning coal to prove their innocence,” said the statement signed by activists Nasreen Azhar, Nageen Hyatt and Yasmin Zaidi.

It said Jirgas and Panchayats were traditionally composed of influential people and clerics with deep patriarchal biases and ignorant of the law and human rights norms. Jirgas are said to be preferred because there is a myth that they deliver prompt ‘justice’.

While attempts are being made to legalise these patently unjust institutions even though they were declared illegal by the Sindh High Court in 2005, little effort is being made to streamline the regular criminal justice system, the statement said.

Family disputes, dissolution of marriages and maintenance come under the purview of the family laws and family courts. There is absolutely no justification for including them in the Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Bill 2016. Family laws need to be strengthened, not emasculated.

“We are aware that ADRs have proved useful in some countries but ADRs in the patriarchal and socially unjust and unequal conditions that prevail in Pakistan are not acceptable. It is shocking that such an important bill has been passed by only 23 members in a house of 342,” the statement added.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312989/womens-forum-concerned-over-passage-of-bill>

#### MAN ARRESTED FOR TORTURING GIRL

Dawn, February 6th, 2017

KASUR: Khudian police on Sunday arrested a man who allegedly cut hair of a girl and inflicted injuries on her face.

Police said suspect ‘Y’, a quack, had an alleged affair with a girl of the locality and he wanted to marry her. Parents of the girl arranged her engagement to another boy.

On Saturday, when the girl was on her way in Khudian bazaar, the suspect allegedly cut her pigtail with a scissors, inflicted injuries on her face and managed his escape.

On the complaint of the girl's father, police have arrested the suspect and registered a case against him under section 337-V of PPC. Further investigation is under way.

RAPED: A woman was allegedly raped here on Sunday at Taragar village in Ganda Singh police precincts.

Police said the woman was alone at home when the suspect allegedly raped her and managed his escape. Police have registered a case and are conducting raids to arrest the suspect.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312996/man-arrested-for-torturing-girl>

## ASSEMBLY SESSION: FEMALE LEGISLATORS DEMAND PAY RISE

The Express Tribune, February 7th, 2017.

Lahore: Female lawmakers on the treasury benches of Punjab Assembly have demanded an increase in salaries in the light of the increment given to their counterparts from the neighbouring province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Speaking on a point of order, Dr Farzana Nazir put the demand in the House claiming the salaries of the K-P assembly members now stood at Rs150,000 per month, which was a handsome amount compared to their salaries.

Around 10 female legislators also stood up seconding the demand of their colleague while some were seen requesting their male counterparts to stand up to join their demand.

When the speaker tried to hush them up, Dr Farzana continued questioning why their salaries could not be increased.

Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah stood up to respond and said he did not know about the recent increase in salaries of K-P lawmakers.

He requested the speaker to direct the assembly secretary to look into the notification and if this was correct, then the matter will be taken to the Punjab chief minister.

Sanaullah said the CM had been asking the lawmakers not to take salaries above the salaries of other assembly members but it should be equal to them.

Despite clear instructions of Punjab Assembly Speaker Rana Muhammad Iqbal Khan in the previous session to start proceedings on time, most of the legislators did not arrive before 3:35pm against the scheduled time of 2pm.

The previous sessions held on February 3 had started at 10:16am rather than the scheduled 9am, upon which the speaker had warned the legislators the House proceedings would be started timely next time.

On Monday, the opposition benches boycotted the assembly session against the unfair conduct of the speaker for holding the session on the direction of treasury benches and snubbing the opposition benches.

Opposition leader Mehmoodur Rasheed strongly condemned the Haroonabad firing incident, in which PPP South Punjab's information secretary Shaukat Basra was injured and his secretary killed in a clash. He claimed the Punjab police had repeated the episode of Model Town.

However, the speaker sent Chaudhry Shafiq and Sher Ali Khan to persuade the annoyed legislators but their attempt failed as they did not turn up.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1318868/assembly-session-female-legislators-demand-pay-rise/>

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: WOMEN'S HELP DESK SET UP IN HYD COURT

The Express Tribune, February 7th, 2017.

A women's facilitation kiosk has been set up in Hyderabad court to provide easy legal access to victims of gender-based violence.

Establishing a women's facilitation kiosk to contribute to the protection of women's legal rights and strengthening of the district bar association was a project goal shared by Sindh Rural Partners Organisation's (SRPO) Zahida Detho. The event was jointly organised by SRPO, USAID and Aurat Foundation at Indus Hotel, Hyderabad, on Monday.

These activities are meant for the capacity building of lawyers and the provision of legal assistance to 70 female litigants, said Detho. Until justice is not provided to female victims, we cannot develop a balanced society, she added. Meanwhile, District Bar Association president Basharat Memon appreciated the efforts of the SRPO and assured his support.

Senior advocate Rehana Gujjar said that establishing a women's facilitation desk is a great step towards helping female victims. "Pakistani women have changed a lot in the past years and are more empowered but there is a need to work more on these issues," said Human Rights Cell incharge Najma Khero.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1318951/gender-based-violence-womens-help-desk-set-hyd-court/>

#### HONOUR KILLING CASES ON THE RISE IN K-P

The Express Tribune, February 10th, 2017.

Saba Rani

PESHAWAR: Violence against women has been on the rise in Khyber-Pakhtunkwa with more than 20 cases of honour killing reported in the province since the start of the year.

Three women have been killed in the past three days alone in the name of honour. Hina Shah Nawaz, 27, was killed for rejecting her cousin's marriage proposal.

The case has been highlighted on social media platforms. The victim was the sole breadwinner of the family and was supporting three families. The family is now receiving death threats.

A woman and a man were killed allegedly in the name of honour in Shangla district of K-P on Wednesday morning as they were found together in an objectionable condition.

S\*, 32, was allegedly found with a 65-year-old man R\* by her brother and husband who shot the man dead.

According to the police, first investigation report (FIR) has been lodged on the request of R's son.

"It was a planned murder because her brother and husband already knew about their affair and escaped after killing them both," the police stated.

DSP Headquarters Shangla told The Express Tribune that the police were raiding different places in search of the culprits.

In the same week, another 20-year-old girl was shot dead in the Tangi Khattak area near Nowshera Cantt.

Reportedly, a man shot a bullet through her head and threw her out of the car. The body was later shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital but no one has claimed the body yet.

Statistics obtained by the K-P Police Department show that more than 187 women were murdered last year. Of them 40 were killed in the name of honour. These are the cases that were reported to the police while the original figures are thought to be much higher.

As many as 140 cases of rape were reported. Similarly, 104 women were subjected to physical harassment at workplace in the same period last year. At least 24 women were beaten up and 85 others faced other forms of domestic violence across the province.

Manager capacity building of Aurat Foundation, Peshawar, Saima Munir told The Express Tribune that around 21 cases of murder and suicide were reported in the previous month alone but hastened to add that these were not the actual figures as many cases go unreported.

“It depends on the priorities of the government, the cases are increasing with every passing day but there is no proper legislation neither is any proper action taken against the culprits,” she added. Munir said that the ratio of murder and honour killing was higher in Malakand Division and Chitral as compared to other districts of K-P.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1322211/honour-killing-cases-rise-k-p/>

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE LAUNCHED

Dawn, February 11th, 2017

KARACHI: Under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) a women empowerment initiative has been launched which will involve special training for women in 55,000 BISP committees across Pakistan.

This was stated by Minister of State and BISP chairperson MNA Marvi Memon at the launching ceremony on Friday.

This initiative would target 1.38 million women inducted through the programme, the MNA said.

Held at State Life Building No. 2, the ceremony was attended by three World Bank representatives and women from various districts of Sindh.

It is aimed at educating and training women “to learn basic counting, use ATMs, biometric verification system (BVS) for payment, national socio-economic registry, nutrition, health and [awareness] of their rights.”

Senior director for gender at the World Bank Caren Grown and BISP DG Tariq Mahmood also spoke.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1314044/women-empowerment-initiative-launched>

## NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 30TH TO FEBRUARY 5TH 2017

### ELECTORAL PATRIARCHY

Dawn January 30th, 2017

Umair Javed

IN the 2013 general election, the three main parties (PML-N, PTI, PPP) fielded a combined total of 112 candidates for Lahore’s 38 national and provincial assembly seats. Only five out of these 112 individuals were women and none were initially elected. After the onset of several by-elections, finally one of the 38 legislators from the provincial capital turned out to be a woman — Shazia Mubashir.

In the 2015 local government polls, Lahore saw electoral contestation for 274 city council seats. Out of the 550-odd candidates put up for the chairperson slot by our three main parties, three were women. Only one of them, PML-N’s Rabia Faruki, was elected. In phase II, the city elected a mayor and nine deputy mayors, all of whom are men. Ms Faruki’s name was initially put forward as a possible candidate for either slot, but was withdrawn at the last minute to accommodate other candidates.

There are reserved seats for women in every elected tier, from the union council all the way to the Senate. Women nominated for these seats have outperformed their male elected peers on any number of legislative benchmarks.

However, as the example of Lahore shows, 15 years on from the allocation of these seats, one of their aims — growth in the number of women candidates in general electoral contests — is still largely unfulfilled.

Lahore provides a particularly stark example of electoral patriarchy because large urban centres have generally shown some progress in other measures of gender equality. Higher-education enrolment, for example, now exhibits male-female parity. In some degree-awarding disciplines, there are more women enrolled than men.

Similarly, women's participation in the non-farm labour force is higher in metropolitan centres, compared to smaller towns and cities. It is reasonable to expect that conservative notions of female immobility and gender-segregated public spaces will erode in more economically dynamic and cosmopolitan spaces. It is thus fairly puzzling why we don't see more women in the vocation of politics in a city like Lahore.

Existing analysis on the issue provides a number of generic reasons for the lack of women participating as candidates. One is that political parties are dominated by male politicians who exercise gender bias in ticket allocations. The other is that women themselves are reluctant to compete in what are often messy and violent political battles. What needs further explication in Pakistan's case is how gender imbalances play out in the specific domain of electoral politics.

To gain more precise answers, we need to trace where parties usually find candidates from. In countries with strong and entrenched political parties, candidates for local and national office come from within the party structure or from organisations associated with parties.

In the case of the UK, the Labour party trains potential candidates through its student wings, think tanks, and community-based organisations. At times, it draws its electoral candidates from affiliated unions and NGOs. Similarly, the Republican party in the US historically used GOP clubs on campuses and business associations, and nowadays uses conservative community groups (such as anti-abortion, anti-gay rights groups) to find future leaders.

In Pakistan on the other hand, candidate recruitment takes place outside of any well-defined feeder systems anchored with campuses and community organisations. Here two major criteria appear to crop up when party leaders pick candidates: first is perceptions about their electability, ie a potential candidate's social prominence. The second is their ability to finance their own election campaign, ie their financial prominence.

Given these restrictions, it is little surprise that most urban candidates over these past two decades have come from within the business and trading community. Candidates from this pool are individuals who fulfil both criteria: they occupy positions of financial prominence due to their lucrative occupations, and exercise a great deal of social prominence due to their dealings in public marketplaces.

These dealings include leading local market associations, investing in charitable enterprises, and helping build mosques and madressahs. Through such acts, local elites garner public acclaim and position themselves as prime candidates for political party recruitment at the time of elections.

The absence of women in urban politics, therefore, has a lot to do with the absence of women in spaces where political entrepreneurs emerge. The two main sites of public interaction in urban Pakistan are the marketplace and the mosque. Both of these are almost exclusively male-dominated spaces. In all my years living in this country, I have not yet encountered a woman-run business in a bazaar or a shopping mall. Women are seen as part of commerce largely as consumers, not as proprietors or entrepreneurs.

Similarly, mosques and madressahs give aspirational men an open site for public displays of charity and philanthropy. Plaques are put up with their names after donations and photo opportunities are arranged during every religious holiday. Women, on the other hand, who may exhibit similar aspirations for politics, have no such platform since there are no women-only mosques, and only a handful have women-only praying areas.



The patriarchal nature of electoral politics in Pakistan is worrying. Women constitute one half of the country's total population and face a number of unique governance and social issues. These issues require effective articulation in the political sphere, a task that male legislators are largely ill equipped to carry out.

A closer look at the trajectory of politicians shows that expecting effective women's representation to emerge organically is misplaced. The training field for future politicians is monopolised by men and will continue to remain this way for the foreseeable future. The only thing that can make a substantive difference is affirmative action on part of political parties themselves. Without such an intervention, the male-dominated status quo will persist indefinitely.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1311518>

#### WOMAN BURNT ALIVE IN MULTAN

The Express Tribune, February 1st, 2017.

MULTAN: A woman was burnt alive by unknown people in her house in Makhdoom Rashid area, Multan on Monday.

A police official said the accused tied Perveen Akhtar to a 'charpoy' and set her ablaze. As a result, she suffered fatal burn injuries and died on the spot. Before fleeing, the culprits locked the room and then the main gate.

After witnessing fire and smoke, the locals rushed to the spot and broke the door. They doused the fire and informed the police. The official added the victim was alone at her house at the time of the incident. He maintained, "The woman had a second marriage with Iqbal and had a dispute with her ex-husband's children."

Meanwhile, Perveen's husband Iqbal Shah told the police that children from his first wife used to quarrel with the deceased. She belonged to a well-off family and had retired from a government job about three months ago.

The police have shifted the body to Nishtar Hospital for autopsy and started investigation.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken notice of the incident and sought a report from Multan Regional Police Officer Azam Taimori.

Earlier in 2016, a woman was burnt alive after her husband sprinkled petrol on her in Multan over a domestic dispute. The heirs of the woman staged a protest demonstration outside the hospital and demanded the authorities to take action against the accused.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1313317/brutal-act-woman-burnt-alive-multan/>

#### 17-YEAR-OLD GIRL RAPED, MURDERED IN KARACHI'S SURJANI TOWN

Imtiaz Ali

A 17-year-old girl was raped and strangled to death in Surjani Town, an area in the suburbs of Karachi, police and hospital officials told Dawn.

The body was recovered from an under-construction house in Sector 4D of the area.

The corpse was shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for a post-mortem examination. The police surgeon, Dr Aijaz Khokar, confirmed the 17-year-old was raped and strangled.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Surjani Town Sohrab Meo told Dawn that the girl had been identified via a mobile phone found with her at the crime scene. She was a resident of the North Karachi area of the metropolis.

Meo said that it appeared the girl was choked to death with her dupatta, which was also found from the crime scene.

The victim's family members told police that she had left home on Tuesday to attend a beautician's course but never returned.

Karachi-West SSP Investigation, Akhtar Farooq told Dawn that an investigation is underway. He added that they have got some clues and were working on them to unearth the identity of the culprit(s) involved in the rape-cum-murder of the teenager girl.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312064/17-year-old-girl-raped-murdered-in-karachis-surjani-town>

NON-APPOINTMENT OF ANTI-HARASSMENT OMBUDS PERSON CHALLENGED IN PHC  
Dawn, February 3rd, 2017

PESHAWAR: A Peshawar High Court bench on Thursday issued a notice to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government seeking response to a petition against non-appointment of the provincial ombudsperson under an anti-harassment law for the last many years.

Chief Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Ikramullah Khan issued the order after preliminary arguments were held on the petition filed by an NGO, Da Hawwa Lur (Daughter of the Eve), through chief executive Khursheed Bano seeking the court's orders for the provincial government to immediately make the said appointment.

The petitioner said while ombudspersons were appointed at federal level by the federal government, and by the Sindh and Punjab government, the KP government had turned a blind eye towards such a crucial appointment.

He requested the court to declare the non-appointment of ombudsman illegal and based on the government's 'ulterior motives'.

The petitioner requests the court to issue directives for appointment of ombudsman and awareness program be initiated by the government through print and electronic media so the vulnerable class and women should come to know about the proper forum for the resolution of their complaints.

The respondents in the petition are KP government through its chief secretary; KP Assembly speaker; KP Assembly secretary; women empowerment and social welfare department through its secretary; law, justice and human rights ministry through its secretary, and the federal government through the relevant federal secretary.

The petitioner's lawyer, Saifullah Muhib Kakakhel, said parliament passed the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, in 2010 with an aim to check harassment of persons in public and private sector institutions.

He said under Section 7 of the said Act, the appointment of the federal and provincial ombudsmen had to be made by the relevant government.

"That section provides that a person shall be qualified to be appointed as an ombudsman who has been a judge of high court or qualified to be appointed as a judge of high court," he said.

The lawyer said parliament later passed another law, the Federal Ombudsman Institutional Reforms Act, 2013, to relax the criteria of the appointment of the anti-harassment ombudsman under Section 21.

“Now a woman with an experience of at least 10 years in the matter relating to protection of women against harassment shall also be eligible to be appointed by the President as ombudsman, under the Protection Against harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010,” he said.

Mr. Saifullah said until now, the KP government had not taken any step to implement the said law even though the representatives of his client’s organisation held meetings with the KP Assembly’s speaker, women empowerment minister and chief secretary, who had promised to appoint the ombudsperson within one month in 2016.

He claimed that so many cases were recorded and highlighted by the media of sexual harassment at the University of Peshawar, Khyber Medical College and other institutes but due to unavailability of the post of ombudsperson, they were dealt by a wrong forum and that later, things were patched up by pressurising students and harassment victims.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312440/non-appointment-of-anti-harassment-ombudsperson-challenged-in-phc>

## DNA TEST IN RAPE CASES MADE MANDATORY IN SINDH

Dawn, February 3rd, 2017

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: DNA test in rape cases has been made mandatory by the Sindh Assembly with the adoption of the government bill titled the Code of Criminal Procedure (Sindh Amendment) Bill, 2017 passed unanimously on Thursday to facilitate investigation and ensure dispensation of justice to rape victims.

Under the bill, which was one of three bills passed one after the other by the house with consensus, the DNA sample shall be collected from the rape victim by the police officer within 72 hours from the time of the incident for testing through government-recognised laboratories.

The DNA sample and its results shall be preserved in confidentiality.

The two other government bills passed unanimously after brief discussion are the Sindh Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2017, which pertains to issuance of arms licences to persons who are permanent residents of Sindh and also to federal government and autonomous bodies’ employees belonging to other provinces but posted in Sindh.

The third bill, which was piloted by Transport Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, was the Provincial Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2015 pertaining to the rates of compensation which were revised in case of death and injuries to a passenger in a stage-carriage or contract carriage by amending the Provincial Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1965.

By another amendment to the law the Sindh Bus Owners’ Cooperative Society was replaced with an insurance company to prevent the society from misuse/utilisation of the compensation funds as so far there was no example in which the SBOC society had ever paid compensation to the victim in an incident.

Syed Sardar Ahmad of the MQM opposed the amendment replacing the bank guarantee with insurance company as the victim or their heirs had to run for months to get compensation, but the motion was rejected when put to the house.

However, amendments suggested by Sumeta Afzal of the MQM about increasing the death compensation from Rs250,000 to Rs 500,000 and in case of loss of both eyes from Rs140,000 to Rs250,000 were approved.

Before reading out the order of acting Governor Agha Siraj Durrani at 2.40pm to prorogue the session sine die after completion of the agenda, the acting Speaker Syeda Shehla Raza gave the floor to PPP MPA Ghulam Murtaza Baloch to table his resolution by relaxing the rules under Rule 256.

Through the resolution the assembly recommended the Sindh government to approach the federal government for grant of 80 per cent subsidy on electricity bills for agriculture tube-wells in Sindh.

The resolution was supported by all parliamentary groups and when put to the house was carried unanimously.

Earlier, Senior Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Nisar Ahmad Khuhro speaking on the general principles of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 2017 after its introduction said that in rape incidents, the cases were filed but no results could be obtained for want of evidence.

He said now the world was taking advantage of scientific research and technology by which the culprits involved in the rape could be identified.

He said some time back PPP MPA Sharmila Farooqui had also submitted a bill. He said as the DNA test had a lot of importance in identifying the persons involved in targeting innocent children, women in particular, therefore the government thought to declare the DNA test mandatory in cases of rape.

Sharmila Farooqui recalled that in 2013 her resolution was passed by the assembly for declaring DNA test mandatory in cases of rape.

She said that earlier, the samples for DNA tests used to be sent to Lahore and Islamabad, while reports were received after several months.

Faisal Sabzwari of the MQM said that it was a forward-looking legislation which will assist in providing justice to victims of rape and excesses.

He appealed to ulema to back the legislation.

Mehtab Akbar Rashdi of PML-F, Heer Soho and Naheed Begum of MQM, Dr Seema Zia of PTI and Minister Shamim Mumtaz supported the bill.

Health Minister Dr Sikander Mandhro dispelled the impression of not having any laboratory in Sindh for DNA test by pointing out that in Liaquat Medical University, Jamshoro, a DNA test laboratory was operational where in one day 10 samples could be examined.

Responding to a call attention notice of Dr Zafar Ahmad Kamali about misuse of the biometric system in schools of Mirpurkhas for sudden transfer of teachers, particularly of Urdu-speaking teachers and after greasing officials' palms, they were restored, Education Minister Jam Mehtab Dahar denied the allegation.

He said there was no discrimination on the basis of ethnicity.

In reply to the call attention notice of Syed Anwar Raza Naqvi regarding illegal conversion of residential buildings into commercial use in F.B. Area/Buffer Zone, the local government minister assured the lawmaker he would initiate an inquiry and illegal constructions would be removed.

Diwan Chand Chawla of MQM complained about water shortage in Keamari through his call attention notice.

Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro said the government was making efforts to overcome the water shortage by installing RO plants.

Faisal Rafique of MQM through his call attention notice drew attention to increasing street crimes in which mostly women were being targeted.

Responding to the notice Senior Minister Khuhro said that the government had taken steps to overcome crimes.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312338>

## SU FEMALE STUDENTS ASSURED OF PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT

Dawn, February 3rd, 2017

Hyderabad: Speakers at a seminar on 'Women protection and laws against women harassment' held in Sindh University on Thursday in the backdrop of the Jan 2 suicide by its student, Naila Rind, encouraged women to move ahead with their academic activities without any fear and called for fair treatment of women by men in society.

Presided over by SU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Fateh Mohammed Burfat, the seminar was attended by Hyderabad Commissioner Qazi Shahid Parvez, Jamshoro Deputy Commissioner Munawwar Ali Mahesar and SSP retired Captain Tariq Wilayat, besides the faculty and a large number of women students of the university.

VC Prof Fateh M. Burfat emphasised the need for changing socio-cultural behaviour and trends in society towards women "who are found insecure even within their families for a variety of reasons". He said education, employment and empowerment were very important for women. "Woman signifies empowerment and is truly reflected in great Sufi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's folktales. There is no hero, all heroines, in his poetry," said the vice chancellor.

He said that Sindh University had already established a cell to address the issue of harassment of women. It would soon come up with a gender policy, he promised, and called for cooperation of the faculty and students in further developing this institution.

He observed that a particular feudalistic approach was responsible for mistreatment of women in the province. He emphasised the role of parents in bridging emotional, psychological and communication gap with their children.

This gap actually was largely responsible for major incidents involving women, he added.

However, the VC said, female student must continue their journey in quest of education and research at SU without any fear as being the vice chancellor, "I am like the father of all female faculty and students and will make sure that they stay safe and secure".

Commissioner Qazi Shahid Pervez observed that if Pakistan had poor ranking in terms of gender issues, this showed a huge disconnect between the state and its citizens. Society would also have to come forward to put things on track because the state alone could not do anything, he said, adding that human civilisation had entered the era of knowledge where physical strength did not matter. He said laws on women's rights existed and women must assert themselves.

Sindh Inspector General of Police A.D. Khowaja advised female students to use the social media honestly and write only such messages that they could share with father and brothers.

No one could dare blackmail them if they adhered to this advice, he said. He said it would be very unfortunate if parents stopped sending their daughters to educational institutions in the backdrop of the Naila Rind suicide case, which had shocked everyone.

He told women students not to be afraid of eve-teasers and not to consider themselves weak because they had to compete in society and lead it.

DIG Khadim Rind said that the anti-harassment cell for women victims was functioning in his office. Each and every complaint was investigated for which the cell formed committees, he said. This cell is also empowered to handle cases of domestic violence, according to him.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1312324/su-female-students-assured-of-protection-against-harassment>

## POLICE ADOPT 'HAM-HANDED APPROACH' IN HONOUR KILLING

Dawn, February 4th, 2017

Imran Gabol

LAHORE: Police are allegedly treating a recent honour killing case as an ordinary murder even though an anti-honour killing bill had been passed in October 2016.

Shazia, 40, the mother of three, was shot dead allegedly by her brother Akram in the name of honour in Lower Mall on Thursday. Police registered a case under sections 302 and 324 of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) without including the honour killing charges.

Initial investigation revealed that the woman had left her home on Jan 9 and wanted to marry a man after getting divorce from her husband. Her father-in-law Faqeer Muhammad lodged a kidnapping case against Gull and his three accomplices after which the Shafiqabad police launched investigation.

On Thursday, the woman along with Gull was going to court to record her statement that she had not been kidnapped by anyone when her husband Hassan and other members of the family approached her and asked her to settle the matter out of court.

Acquiescing in to the demand, she accompanied them to the office of UC-56 councillor Shahzad for negotiating a settlement. The family and the councillor were discussing the matter when the woman's brother stormed in and shot her dead. The suspect fled the scene without resistance.

Speaking to Dawn, Gull claimed that the woman was planning to seek dissolution of her marriage so that they could tie the knot. He said it was not acceptable to her family who took her to the councillor's office according to a plan and had her killed. He accused the woman's family and the councillor of being involved in the killing.

He said police should have registered an honour killing case on his complaint but they refused to do so stating that "you are not the legal heir of the woman". He said the family would pardon the killer after some time as is the practice in such cases.

LAW: A joint sitting of both houses of parliament had passed the Anti-Honour Killing Bill in October 2016. Under the law, if a woman is murdered in the name of honour by a close family member, he/she is liable to strict punishment even if pardoned by another family member. The law further calls for life sentence to "honour-killers" even if victim's family forgives them.

Advocate Aftab Bajwa, a criminal law expert, said the government had yet to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrCP) to include the anti-honour killing sections. He said police in this case could have included section 311 of PPC so that no member of the woman's family could pardon the killer(s) or they could have registered a case under 302(1) of PPC.

He said the case registered under these two sections could make the perpetrator go through a maximum 14-year imprisonment even if the family forgives the killer.

City Division Superintendent of Police (SP) Investigation Syed Karrar Husain told Dawn that they would include the honour killing charges in the case. He said after inclusion of Section 311 of PPC, the family could not forgive the killer. Police, he said, would investigate the case from all possible angles and arrest the killer.

Answering a question, he said police had registered a case on the complaint of victim's husband who is the legal heir.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1312612/police-adopt-ham-handed-approach-in-honour-killing>

OF COURSE, FAIR IS BEAUTIFUL

Business Recorder, 4 February 2017

Nargis Khanum

Of course, fair is beautiful. Unfortunately mothers-in-law demand 'gori larki' for their sons' brides. They have made girls with dark complexion afraid of being left on the shelf. In desperation, the girls use beauty products that promise to make them fair of skin. This has become a serious health issue as many local beauty creams which are skin whiteners have harmful steroids and toxic metals. This was highlighted by beauty experts at a briefing at the Karachi Press Club recently.

The problem has reached alarming levels and taken the form of an epidemic, they said. A specialist of skin diseases said she examined 12 to 15 cases daily involving patients whose skin was ruined following prolonged use of substandard whitening creams. It was a horror story of the harm these beauty creams can do. The face breaks out in acne, the skin becomes thin and sensitive to light causing sunburn. Treatment is long-drawn and the skin may never return to its original healthy condition.

The damage is not just skin deep (excuse the pun). Citing some studies the experts said toxic metals like mercury penetrate into the skin and over time its higher accumulation in the body could damage the heart and affect the foetus of a pregnant woman. Before hearing this, who would have believed a mere skin application of a beauty cream could cause such tragedy.

The experts who spoke included beauticians and doctors. They have approached the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) which seems unaware of the epidemic, hence shows no urgency to ban the beauty creams. No law exists to ban the sale of harmful cosmetics. A doctor, who belongs to the PSQCA, said notice had been taken by the authority but, as with any vital action affecting the masses, the ministries concerned, including those which deal with health and drugs, were dragging their feet on giving the go-ahead to PSQCA to impose a ban.

If you ask me, there seems to be a nefarious reason why no action is being taken. For one, these beauty creams are the most popular Pakistani cosmetic, earning millions for the manufacturers. Television advertising of the creams is not cheap, but you will have noted advertisements of beauty creams on every TV channel. That tells you how popular the skin whitening creams are. So who knows, but one may suspect, the manufacturers have bribed the ministries concerned to do nothing to initiate a ban on the cosmetic.

The experts at the KPC wanted people to change their social mentality that fair is beautiful. This will not happen because fair is beautiful. It is attractive not only to mothers-in-law, but to the bridegrooms, to storytellers who write love stories, the models on the catwalk, the heroines selected for TV serials and cinema. To look fair of skin is an obsession in our social order.

To change that mentality would need massive education. All skin colours are beautiful, but we do not see beauty in any except the white colour. Laila in the famous love story was dark; supermodel Iman is a black woman. Iman launched a cosmetic range for people who are not fair and whose skin colour could range from light brown to black. Would you believe it, these cosmetics though they became popular the world over, never reached Pakistan? Women

here plaster their face with pancake makeup meant for fair skins. The result is ghastly. Some of them do look like Japanese geishas. Most beauty parlors also paint the face of brides in this manner.

Fair has always been beautiful, but never before was it the chief criteria for selecting a suitable bride. The criteria used to be family background. Then it did not matter if the girl was dark and the boy fair or vice versa. Wealth was the second reason for colour-mix of the couple in the olden days. Today there are not many who are filthy rich, nor families with social, moral or culture antecedents of virtue. That has made the choice of a suitable spouse entirely superficial: the colour of the skin.

In Pakistan majority of marriages are arranged. Hence the demand for a 'gori larki' has virtually forced the use of skin whiteners. According to the experts at the KPC briefing, it is not always the girls (some boys even) who want to use the skin whiteners. They have been forced to do so by the parents. Society at large is not aware of the harm the cosmetic can cause. Ignorance leads them to urge their marriageable children to use the skin whiteners. There is only one way to end the epidemic: ban the cosmetics and ban the TV advertisements too.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/02/04/21-page/846824-news.html>

## March 2017

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 27TH TO APRIL 2 ND 2017*

### *HONOUR IN DISHONOUR*

The Express Tribune, March 27th, 2017.

Kamal Siddiqi

Three women and a man lost their lives in three separate cases of alleged honour killing in Sukkur and Matiari districts some days back. A woman was shot dead in Khuram village near Rohri, Sukkur by her husband, Akram Jagerani, who suspected her of having illicit relations with a man in their village. Jagerani also shot and killed another man in the incident. After committing the murders, Jagerani fled the village to avoid arrest.

In another incident, a mother of three was gunned down by her brother in Matiari. Madam Chandio was killed because her brother 'suspected her character'. After committing the murder, the accused surrendered to the police and confessed his crime.

In the third such case, Ursana Lashari, another mother of three, was shot dead by two cousins in Bahram within the limits of the Tamachani police station on Friday night. The accused, Mohammad Lashari and Nazal Khan Lashari, killed their cousin because they suspected her of having illicit relations with her brother-in-law while her husband, Feroze, was out of the house.

Like hundreds of other such cases, the perpetrators of these crimes will almost never be brought to justice. In 2015, parliament was told by the ministry of law that some 933 women were murdered across the country in honour killings. A total of 456 and 477 cases of honour killings were reported in Pakistan in 2013 and 2014, respectively, with the highest reported cases in Sindh.

Unofficial estimates put the number much higher. As many as 500 women and girls are murdered in honour killings each year making Pakistan one of the most dangerous countries for women. These victims are not just statistics: they are mothers, daughters and sisters and their deaths destroy families. In most instances unfortunately, it is close family members who kill them.

Honour killings occur all over the country under various names like kala-kali (Punjab), karo-kari (Sindh), tor-tora (K-P) and Siyakari (Balochistan).



In a presentation on a study he conducted, Dr Muazzam Nasrullah, a public health specialist in the US, tried to quantify the problem since data on the matter is hard to come by. According to HRCP data, 1,957 incidents of honour killings had been recorded over the past four years. This is higher than what the government reports. The average rate of honour killings in women between 15-64 years was found to be 15 per million women per year. This may be yet another dubious world distinction we have achieved.

My senior colleague, Amina Jilani, in a column last year commented that it is high time that the pernicious mendacious phrase 'honour killings' was expunged from the lexicon of what has become known as the 'Muslim world' and this particular Islamic Republic can take the lead. There should, in this 21st century, be no murders that are justified by the claim of upholding a non-existent 'honour'.

"The perpetration of such killings (reported regularly and sickeningly in our press) is pure and simple premeditated murder and must be treated as such," wrote Jilani. The killings of women (rarely men) are deliberate, planned and premeditated when men get together, claiming violated honour, and rid themselves of pesky female relatives. They are protected by the Qisas and Diyat law which similarly needs to be struck off Pakistan's statute books.

Mian Nawaz Sharif executed a great PR coup when he pronounced, following the Oscar nomination of the Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy short documentary (later a deserved second Oscar) on the subject of these premeditated murders, that "there is no honour in honour killings", echoing the views of the few commentators who have consistently clamoured for action against these murders since the 1990s.

But actions have to follow deeds. In the most honourable Senate sits Mir Israrullah Zehri, brother of the chief minister of Balochistan. He has the 'honourable' distinction and is on record in the honourable house in 2008 of having upheld the premeditated murder of two (possibly more) women of Balochistan, who were allegedly buried alive in his province in the name of 'honour'. Zehri's stance was that the premeditated murder of women who are suspected of 'immoral acts' are 'centuries old traditions', time honoured 'tribal customs' which must not be discontinued. Many parliamentarians share the same views but don't air them publicly. When will mindsets change?

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1366338/honour-in-dishonour/>

'ROLE OF WOMEN NEEDS TO BE PRIORITISED IN PAKISTANI SOCIETY'  
The Express Tribune, 28 March 2017

KARACHI: Women's rights and activism is the new order that prevails in the world today while historically, none of the leading countries of the world has given women their due rights.

This was the crux of the talk, 'Inclusion Panel Discussion on Gender Roles', held at the former residence of the American Consul-General in Karachi.

Human and labour rights activist Iqbal Dehto and human rights activist Madiha Latif shared their views on the issues faced by women during the talk on Monday.

"When I moved back to Pakistan, I came to know that women here are not taken seriously," Latif said, adding that in general, a woman is not considered to be a leader.

Dehto blamed the hierarchy in family life to be the cause of concern in this regard. "Females are told to contest elections, but urged not to hold a given seat," Dehto said.

He also said that sexual harassment at workplace is predominantly happening in the public sector, despite there being a law against it. "The law is only there on paper," he said.

Latif was of the view that the cultural mindsets need to be addressed. “The State narrative is also important,” said Latif.

“More than the cultural mindset, the ideologies need to be addressed as they stem from our core traditions,” said Dehto, citing an example of Tharparkar where the eldest born male of the household is served food first, then the elderly member of the family, then the children and lastly, the females of the household.

“History terms Pakistan’s Constitution as gender insensitive, however, the French constitution also was,” said Dehto, adding that issues of women’s rights, voting rights and sexual harassment are global concerns.

“Laws have disproportionately affected the women of Pakistan. From the Hudood Ordinance to the inheritance law, nothing protects their rights,” Latif said.

“Husbands and wives need to split their responsibilities and start a conversation to understand each other and their limitations,” asserted Latif while speaking about finding a solution to the problem.

Family as an institution has a central part to play, but the debate lies in giving women a better standing in a society where power lies with the men, believed Dehto.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1367086/role-women-needs-prioritised-pakistani-society/>

‘WOMEN CONTRIBUTE 50% OF AGENDA IN SINDH ASSEMBLY’

Dawn, March 31st, 2017

Ayesha Mir

March 29, 2017

KARACHI: The ceremony was organised by the Pakistan Press Foundation in collaboration with Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability- Free And Fair Election Network (TDEA-FAFEN).

From a total of 30 female MPAs out of the 168 members, nine were given awards at the ceremony, which included parliamentarians from different political parties. The legislators were Heer Soho, Rubina Qaimkhani, Rana Ansar, Soorat Thebo, Mahtab Akbar Rashdi, Naheed Begum, Ghazala Siyal, Aisah Khatoon and Shazia Jawaid.

The awards were given keeping in view a report compiled by TDEA-FAFEN on the representation and activities of women in the assembly.

Sharing details of the report, the manager of research and oversight at TDEA-FAFEN, Shehzad Anwer, said the overall contribution of women members’ to the parliamentary agenda from June 2013 to February 2017 was 50%. Meanwhile, despite being more in number than women, the contribution of men stood at 42%.

“We started compiling these reports in 2009 from the National Assembly and in 2011 from the provincial assemblies,” Anwer said, adding that each woman lawmaker, who is 18% of the total membership, contributed 34% of the agenda items on average while men, who are 72% of the membership, contributed only 6% of the agenda items on average.

Sharing some of the statistics in his presentation, Anwer said that of the 1,054 questions raised in the Parliament, more than 700 were by female lawmakers and were mainly relating to health, education, energy, social and excise and taxation issues.

Commenting on the tribute given to the women parliamentarians, Rashdi said the presence of women in the assembly is a symbol of what once was resistance. “We are playing our role and performing more than our male counterparts,” she added.

Sharing how Sindh has the lead in drafting of laws in the country, Qaimkhani said the women have played their part actively and their opinions were taken into account by different provinces while drafting bills.

“We have worked hard and proven ourselves in the House,” said Soho, adding that it was usual to hear comments on what female parliamentarians would do in the assembly but these women have proved everyone wrong and the statistics shared by FAFEN are proof of their hard work.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1367957/women-contribute-50-agenda-sindh-assembly/>

## POLICE HAVE NO BUDGET FOR DNA TEST IN RAPE CASES, COURT TOLD

Ishaq Tanoli

KARACHI: While the Sindh Assembly through a law passed last month made the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) test mandatory in rape cases, an accounts officer posted at the office of a senior superintendent of police informed a sessions court on Thursday that they had no budget for DNA testing.

At a previous hearing, additional district and sessions judge (Malir) Shafi Mohammed Pirzada observed that DNA was a very important piece of evidence in the cases of rape and unnatural offences and directed investigating officers in over 10 such cases for DNA test of victims after the suspects approached the court with bail applications.

However, the court issued a show-cause notice to the accountant posted at the office of the SSP (investigation) east zone II after one of the IOs told the court that the cost for DNA in each case was Rs30,000 and he had submitted an application for DNA test to the accounts office, but the same was not approved yet.

When the cases came up for hearing before the sessions court on Thursday, account officer Mohammed Aslam turned up and submitted that they could only entertain the applications involving an amount up to Rs10,000 after the approval of the SSP. The cases in which the amount exceeded Rs10,000 were sent to high-ups, he added.

The accountant further said that they had no budget for DNA analysis, adding that if an IO provided copies of a receipt which was received for the DNA test and charge sheet of the case, then the DNA bills were sent to the Accountant General of Sindh for approval.

It may be recalled that the Sindh Assembly on Feb 2 had made DNA test in rape cases mandatory by adopting a bill titled the Code of Criminal Procedure (Sindh Amendment) Bill, 2017 to facilitate investigation and ensure dispensation of justice to rape victims.

According to the bill, the DNA sample shall be collected from the rape victim within 72 hours from the time of the incident for testing through government-recognised laboratories.

Moreover, the parliament through amendments made in the Pakistan Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Qanoon-i-Shahadat in October last year had also made the DNA test in rape cases mandatory after the consent of victim’s legal and natural guardian.

A judicial magistrate extended on Thursday the physical remand of a policeman for one day in a case pertaining to a gun attack on a passenger coach.

Naseer Shah has been booked for allegedly opening fire on a coach in Nazimabad on March 27 that left three passengers wounded.

After the end of his three-day physical remand, the investigating officer produced the suspect again before the court.

The judge came down heavily on the IO when he, in the remand papers, sought 10-day extension in physical remand of the suspect and on the other hand prepared a so-called jail warrant.

A case was registered against the policeman under Section 324 (attempted murder) of the Pakistan Penal Code on the complaint of the coach driver at the Nazimabad police station.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1323895/police-have-no-budget-for-dna-test-in-rape-cases-court-told>

#### WOMAN STABS SIX-WEEK OLD DAUGHTER TO DEATH

The Express Tribune, April 2nd, 2017

Mudassir Raja

RAWALPINDI: A woman stabbed her six-week-old daughter to death on Saturday in her Rawalpindi home. Her family said that she was mentally unwell.

Civil Lines police stated that they received a call about 10:30 am that Mehwish had killed her daughter in their home in Tahli Morri.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Civil Lines Police SHO Imran Abbas said that investigators had seen at least three stab wounds to the girl's abdomen and chest caused by a sharp object. However, he said that police would wait for a postmortem report before confirming the cause of death.

Abbas added that the police had registered a murder case against the mother on the complaint of Adnan, the father of the deceased girl.

Moreover, he said that they had taken the woman into custody since she had confessed to her crime.

Abbas further said that police would send Mehwish for a complete medical examination to determine her mental state. Talking to the media, Adnan said that he was not at home when the incident took place. He added that she had previously tried to commit suicide as well.

Moreover, the woman's family, including her father Sultan and brother Shahzad said that Mehwish had been unwell since she gave birth.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1371847/woman-stabs-six-week-old-daughter-death/>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 20TH TO MARCH 26TH 2017

INCLUSIVE GROWTH?

Dawn, March 20th, 2017

Hadia majid

PAKISTAN'S Vision 2025 echoes the same commitment to inclusive and sustainable growth as is stated in the Sustainable Development Goals. Inclusive growth carries with it the promise that the material prosperity of high economic growth will be shared evenly among various groups.

For the vast majority, a paid job is the primary means to access many of growth's benefits. Moreover, differences in pay structure, contracts, and even prestige mean that the sector of work matters. In particular, paid work in the formal sector and status as a permanent employee carries with it the greatest possibility of having a real impact on economic and social outcomes. Especially for women, such employment has been linked with weakening restrictive gender stereotypes.

The growth performance of the three main sectors of the economy — agriculture, industry, and services — since 1990, and the associated changes in male and female employment, provide useful insights into the differentiated manner in which the genders have benefited from growth in Pakistan. Some key patterns immediately stand out.

Female industrial workers seem to be bearing the brunt of recessionary forces. While the first half of the turn of the millennium saw remarkable spikes in industry growth owing in part to a rise in demand due to increases in consumer credit services and reduced quota restrictions in textiles and clothing, the subsequent energy, financial, and law and order crises resulted in a substantial slump after 2007.

This slump saw women exiting industrial employment faster than men, suggesting that employers tend to lay off female workers before letting male workers go. This, along with the high percentage of women in casual contracts in manufacturing — 89pc for women as opposed to 47pc for men — that offer no social security, old-age, or health benefits, speaks about the inferior status of female workers in Pakistan's manufacturing sector.

This secondary status of female workers is reflected in services as well. Rapid urbanisation and overall lower investment requirements have seen services command an increasingly larger share of Pakistan's GDP over the years. Additionally, given the plethora of activities under the sector — from transport to communications to recreation — services, unlike manufacturing, demand not just skilled but unskilled and semi-skilled workers as well. It is perhaps unsurprising that there are more women concentrated in services as opposed to manufacturing.

Aside from the larger range of skill requirement, dominant gender roles also have a part to play. Services include occupations deemed more appropriate for women's employment, ie those perceived as extensions of 'caring' roles such as teaching, nursing, and domestic work. When it comes to gendered employment responses to growth, not only did men see larger increases in their employment fortunes when services' growth picked up after the turn of the millennium, but women witnessed a much steeper fall-off in employment when the sector's growth began to decline in 2007.

Interestingly, around the mid-1990s, when structural adjustment likely saw employment losses in the formal sector, services witnessed a boost in women's employment. This is consistent with women's work serving as a buffer during times of crises, supplementing fledgling household income. Such sale of labour signals vulnerability rather than long-term engagement with the labour market.

Turning finally to agriculture, despite the highest concentration of women in the sector — nearly 75pc of all employed women work in agriculture — as well as the larger share of female workers relative to male, post-2007 still witnessed a greater reduction in women's employment relative to men. Yet we also see that, as agriculture growth rates picked up in 2009, it was women who saw a sharper increase in their employment.

While this feminisation of agriculture means that there are more women working outside their homes, it is worrisome. Not only does agriculture typically have the lowest wage rates amongst the three major sectors, 76pc of women work as unpaid family help, ie they do not get paid at all.

Overall, although there have been positive gains in women's participation rates — that today are 85pc higher than they were in 1990 — we are still unlikely to reach the 45pc target for women's labour force participation included in

Vision 2025. Moreover, a closer look at women's employment responses reveals that their status within the labour market is typically inferior to that of men.

None of this augurs well for employment as a means for socioeconomic empowerment for women.

It could be argued that lower educational achievement, and by extension the skill level of women relative to men, could be a reason for their lower standing. Indeed, the incidence of casual contracts reduces as education attainment increases. Human capital accumulation of the labour force may allow both men and women to reap the benefits of increased material prosperity. However, this investment needs to set in far earlier than vocational skills' development. The provision of school meals, stipends for girls, safe transport and more flexible school hours are all attractive policy options.

But education alone is unlikely to address the root causes of the differences in growth's dividends. Increasing the visibility of women and their various contributions to the economy and wider society may be a crucial step. This concerns a role for the media, government and private sectors. Affirmative action, but also the provision of childcare facilities, are relevant policy options.

Finally, access to paid employment alone is not enough to ensure improvements in women's status both within and outside the home. Employment must be coupled with guarantees of a minimum income, and affordable and quality public services. While the establishment of income support programmes such as the Benazir Income Support Programme are a step in the right direction, paradigm shifts regarding social protection in Pakistan are yet to come.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1321526/inclusive-growth>

#### WOMEN'S STRUGGLE IN WAR-TORN SOCIETIES

Dawn, March 25th, 2017

LONDON: When members of militant Islamic State group brutally invaded her hometown of Kobani in Syria, Shorash didn't initially see it as a career opportunity.

Grabbing only what she could carry, Shorash and her family trekked on foot across the Turkish border. After months of sleeping rough in parks and bouncing from one refugee camp to another, they eventually settled near Erbil, in Iraq's relatively stable Kurdistan region.

"I had been looking for work without any success, and was feeling rather bored and frustrated," said 23-year-old Shorash, who did not disclose her surname for security reasons.

One day, her husband told her about a local women's centre, run by non-profit group "Women for Women International" (WfWI), that offered training to help women establish businesses.

A law graduate, Shorash was a diligent student and attended all classes, even giving birth to her daughter just hours after her final exams.

She developed a plan to establish a greenhouse construction business — in demand in the region as a modern way to grow fruit and vegetables.

"The programme changed my life — I no longer feel lonely and isolated as before," she said.

Gender equality and empowerment of women are among the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals designed to tackle poverty, inequality and climate change by 2030.

Nowhere is support for women more important and urgent than in post-conflict situations, experts say.

“We believe that women survivors of war are agents of change, (and) that through empowering women we will actually empower the entire community,” said Mandana Hendessi, WfWI’s director for the Syria crisis response and Iraq.

The WfWI centre, one of three in Iraq, enables women to rebuild their lives after conflict, to meet in a safe space, and to learn new skills.

“People do have a very distorted view of refugee life,” Hendessi said. “They think everybody is just sitting there in a tent waiting for food to arrive or for medicine... but we’re talking about women who back in Syria were incredibly resourceful, generally quite educated and losing all of their identity once they became a refugee.”

Some 4.9 million Syrians the majority women and children are refugees in neighbouring states, according to the UN refugee agency UNHCR.

The WfWI programme in Iraq supports around 400 mainly Syrian and Yazidi female refugees, and also works with men to ensure social cohesion.

As is common in post-conflict societies, many of the women have lost their male relatives to war, and find themselves thrust into the position of sole breadwinner. One in four Syrian refugee families is now headed by a woman, according to WfWI.

Projects like that supporting Shorash encourage women to grasp entrepreneurial opportunities, nurturing start-ups from wedding services and hair-salons to bakeries and sweet shops.

Research suggests men often do not adapt as well as women to new roles in times of conflict, said Nicola Jones, principal research fellow at the London-based Overseas Development Institute.

“Often women have been more flexible,” she said.

Rather than waiting for institutions to be rebuilt after wars, which can take generations, women’s informal networks are an increasingly powerful tool for driving forward economic and social recovery, she added.

In northern Nigeria, a region under the shadow of Boko Haram militants, Fatima Adamu is working to equip young women to become midwives and healthcare practitioners.

In patriarchal rural communities, Adamu negotiates with local leaders to nominate a young woman to train in the city who will then return home to help close the village healthcare gap.

“The reality is nobody is coming from the city to fill that space for you, (so) you must provide,” said Adamu, explaining how she persuades villages to participate.

The “Women for Health” programme, led by Health Partners International, aims to train more than 6,000 female workers and deploy them to rural health facilities in a region where up to 90 per cent of women deliver their babies without a skilled birth attendant present.

On graduating, the young women are usually employed by local governments, and must work for a minimum of three years in their villages before they can move elsewhere.

The programme has faced some resistance, however.

At least a handful of women have been divorced during their absence or returned home to find their husbands have taken another wife, said Adamu.

In some cases, the community has rallied to pressure the husband to support his wife's training, knowing the village will benefit in the long term.

The women often take up leadership roles when they return and are more able to negotiate power structures, said Adamu.

Educating women and girls is "the surest way to address the challenges of extremism, poverty and... break the cycle of inequality", she said, in the region ravaged by Boko Haram, a religious group whose insurgency has killed 15,000 people and forced some 2 million from their homes. Historically, conflicts can accelerate women's rights and social opportunities, as seen after World War Two in Europe, while working women can help pick up the pieces and contribute significantly to rebuilding war-torn communities, experts say.

"Often post-conflict there are real opportunities to rethink the social and political contract with citizens," said ODI's Jones.—Reuters

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322647>

#### 'FLAWED POLICIES, MALE DOMINANCE PUT WOMEN AT RISK OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN PAKISTAN'

Dawn, March 25th, 2017

Hasan Mansoor

KARACHI: Researchers, lawyers and activists on Friday discussed the findings of a new study which said fragmented policies against domestic violence, patriarchal household dynamics and harmful perceptions about gender roles left women in Pakistan at risk of aggressive behaviour from men close to them.

The speakers gathered at a two-day seminar at the Aga Khan University to have a closer look at the study — Intimate partner violence and men in South Asia: From research to action — which explored the individual, family and community drivers of violence in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal and proposed policy interventions to protect women in the three nations.

The seminar was organised by AKU's working group for women and the Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health in partnership with London-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the Nepal Institute For Social and Environmental Research, the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, USA, and UK Aid.

The speakers said intimate partner violence (IPV) was when physical abuse was committed against a person by those close to them such as spouses, partners and relatives. The report found that conservative social norms about women's rights were commonplace in the three countries. It also pointed out Pakistan had a range of social groups propagating views that condoned violence against women and also had 'highly fragmented' social and legislative protection for women.

Speaking about the relevance of the study's findings, Dr Fiona Samuels, senior research fellow at the ODI said: "IPV in South Asia is a major public health and human rights issue, situated in a wider context of very high levels of gender inequality.



“Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan rank 111th, 108th and 121st out of 152 countries in the United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Inequality Index. We encourage public and private stakeholders in these three countries to take the findings seriously and to assess how these insights can be incorporated into policies and specific programmes.”

Dr Nargis Asad of the AKU’s working group for women said there was a great deal of evidence of the harm that IPV caused to women’s health, peace of mind and prospects of their children, but there was little analysis on why men and boys turned violent against women.

“This study evaluates how the ideas of Pakistan’s adolescent boys and young men as well as the institutions and interest groups in our society are leaving women vulnerable.”

She said understanding reasons behind the violence was essential to protect women and ensure they were treated as equals.

The speakers said researchers conducted in-depth interviews and focus group meetings with men, boys and survivors of violence in three neighbourhoods of Karachi — Lyari, Shah Faisal Colony and Deh Chohar. Leading figures in the health and education sectors as well as officials in the police and social affairs departments were consulted.

At the individual level, the researchers found several participants described violence against women as “extremely common” with abuse being a result of jealousy, suspicion or man taking offence to a woman not “listening” to him.

They said being exposed to norms that accepted male dominance or violence made young men nearly five times as likely to justify IPV. They noted a son was more likely to be violent against women if he saw his father beating his mother.

#### Key factors

Factors such as poverty, substance abuse and a lack of education were found to increase the likelihood of men being violent against women.

Besides addressing structural triggers such as lack of education and jobs, the researchers recommended engaging with adolescents at an early age through youth groups and school-based activities where they were more likely to be receptive to positive social messages.

Within families, the study found marital conflict tied to a woman’s perceived role in maintaining the household and the expectation of following decisions made by men led to many incidents of violence.

Worryingly, many of the men interviewed described violence as being necessary to “control” women and cited various interpretations of religion to justify their actions.

The study said family members often caused tensions in the household by taking sides against women who were expected to obey their husbands. To address these problems, they called for targeted programmes designed to make husbands, fathers-in-law and brothers-in-law reflect on their behaviour and to expose them to alternative forms of masculinity.

At the community level, the study found incidents of IPV were seen as a private matter to be settled within families and noted approaching police or courts was considered ‘bad’.

To help tackle the problem, the researchers called for awareness activities about IPV to be conducted through health clinics, community activists and women’s networks to challenge existing norms in communities.

The discussion found 12 specific laws related to the protection of women. They regretted those policies were poorly implemented with each province differing in their approach to the laws.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322617/flawed-policies-male-dominance-put-women-at-risk-of-domestic-violence-in-pakistan>

## WORKING MOTHERS

Dawn, March 26th, 2017

Nadia Agha

IN a recent positive move, the Indian parliament has approved a bill that extends maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks and directs employers to provide nursery facilities to female employees. This landmark step has three purposes: to ensure improved health outcomes for newborn children, to enable women to return to work after childbirth and, most importantly, to narrow the gender gap in the labour market.

Globally, women's employment is supported through different policies and systems that help to not only ensure smooth childbearing but also a smooth transition back to work. Provisions like paid extended maternity leave, child benefit allowances and childcare support are some popular measures to encourage women to join — and stay in — the workforce.

Article 37 of the Constitution directs the state to ensure maternity benefits to employed women, for which there are four laws addressing the issue. But are our existing laws enough to benefit all employed women, or do we need to take further steps?

According to the West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance, 1958, every employed woman is entitled to 12 weeks of paid maternity leave. However, this fairly old law has major loopholes and has been unsuccessful in reaching all working women. The ordinance does not bring public and private organisations on the same policy page, and the 12 weeks leave benefit is only available to women in certain occupations, particularly those working in the government sector.

Twelve weeks paid maternity leave is not available to the majority of women in the private sector, where the period is reduced to only 45 days. The concept of paid maternity leave in the informal sector, where the majority of women work, is non-existent because their work is unregistered. Moreover, the ordinance does not take into account the larger benefit to the mother's and child's health let alone childcare provisions, which are almost non-existent.

Pakistani society has been going through a transition; women in the cities have entered the public sphere and have greater control over their lives, yet gender roles have not changed as much as expected. Women's familial duties are still stressed upon regardless of the nature of work they are engaged in.

This dual burden of household responsibilities and formal work puts immense pressure on them, particularly after childbirth, because women are considered solely responsible for their children's care. Such a situation compels women to choose between their jobs and motherhood.

The absence of any concrete and practical policy seriously affects women's work. Working women must spend a good amount of money to avail such support if it is not available at home. Day-care centres are becoming increasingly popular in the larger metropolises, but women working in smaller cities still depend upon support from their extended families — or by hiring maids, thereby spending a major chunk of their income on childcare and increasing the chances of child abuse occurring.

Paid and extended maternity leave is strongly associated with the health of both mother and child. Mothers who avail such extended leave are more likely to afford healthcare and have their children immunised. Longer leave periods also ensure exclusive breastfeeding, which is essential as it improves babies' immune systems' ability to resist various infections. Studies show that full-time working mothers are at risk of ceasing to breastfeed too early if they have shorter maternity leave periods.

The ordinance also does not grant enough paid maternity leave to women, and the absence of childcare support further complicates women's lives. As a result, we find women missing from various places of work. Therefore, Pakistan's maternity benefits legislation needs revision. A uniform policy of paid maternity leave that applies to all public and private sectors, and to both formal and informal sectors, should be introduced. In this regard, all organisations should be taken on board and it must be made mandatory to provide childcare support at the workplace.

Amendments to the existing law must be framed while taking the mother's and child's health into consideration, and should address the problems faced by mothers and newborn children. Extended paid maternity leave will not only allow women to return to work, but will also enable them to invest in their wellbeing as well as that of their children.

Given Pakistan's poor standing in the 2016 Global Gender Gap Index, we need to follow in our neighbour's footsteps and ensure women's inclusion in the workforce by developing a more supportive environment for working women. These gaps will not shrink in the near future unless concrete measures are taken to ensure women's socio-economic mainstreaming. Closing the gender gap will boost our economy, but this cannot be done without such essential provisions.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322904/working-mothers>

## PAKISTAN JOINS WORLD TO MARK EARTH HOUR

Dawn, March 26th, 2017

Shazia Hasan

KARACHI: "My cousins and I were enjoying the cool breeze in the park when we saw some activity here so we came to see what was going on," said Amna Noonari, at the Frere Hall on Saturday evening.

"I am not sure what is going on. Maybe that gentleman in the panda shirt knows something," said Ahmed Ali, who also said he was at the park with his family but was drawn to whatever was going on at Frere Hall.

None had heard about Earth Hour or had any idea about what it meant. The messages, such as 'Shine a light on climate change' being projected on the stone walls of the building puzzled them. The little lamps placed on the floor to form '60+' intrigued them even more.

But as soon as the time came to switch off the extra lights there and everyone's eyes opened wide, they started appreciating the shadows and the flame of the little lamps. That's when they realised what was really going on.

Earth Hour is the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) global environmental movement, which started from Sydney, Australia, in 2007 to inspire people all over the world to stand in solidarity for climate change.

At 8.30pm sharp, Pakistan joined 184 nations around the world to celebrate the 10th edition of World Earth Hour. Landmarks across the country in Karachi, along with Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar switched off their lights and joined WWF-Pakistan's call to stand with millions of people shining a light on climate change.

Participants of the event at Frere Hall included Mayor of Karachi Wasim Akhtar, former environment minister Shaikh Mohammad Afzal, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency chief Naeem Ahmed Mughal and other senior officials of organisations partnering with WWF-Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Mayor Akhtar said it's high time that we act against the adverse impacts of climate change and promote alternative energy options in the country.

He said although the earth was facing serious climate change with threats including sea level rise, increase in temperature, melting of glaciers, heavy floods and widespread rainfall, they could be addressed if industrialised countries took practical measures to reduce greenhouse gases and adopt environmentally sustainable practices.

He urged that there is also a need to take efforts for conservation of water and energy resources at the local level.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322774/pakistan-joins-world-to-mark-earth-hour>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 13TH TO MARCH 19TH 2017  
THREE-DAY CONFERENCE ON WOMEN'S ROLE IN POLITICS BEGINS TODAY  
Dawn, March 13th, 2017

Shiza Malik

ISLAMABAD: Women parliamentarians from 17 countries are arriving in Islamabad on Monday for a conference on the role of women lawmakers in strengthening democracy and social justice. The three-day conference has been organised by the Women's Parliamentary Caucus.

The women's caucus, set up in 2008, is a multi-party forum dedicated to discussing issues facing women in Pakistan. Muttahida Qaumi Movement lawmaker Dr Fouzia Hameed said that the women's caucus has been working across party lines to pass various pieces of legislation which ensure the protection of women's rights in Pakistan.

Laws protecting the rights of women in Pakistan have been passed in recent years addressing violence against women, workplace harassment, the criminalisation of acid-related violence and electronic crimes.

Dr Hameed said international conferences allow women legislators to learn from their counterparts in other countries. "Whether women live in the developing world or the West, they often face similar challenges and there is much to be learnt from the experiences of others. Lawmakers, themselves, face a myriad of challenges," she said.

"While reserved seats have increased the presence of women in assemblies in Pakistan, women elected to these seats often serve as proxies for family members and are not allowed to play their role as public representatives," she added.

The conference will discuss women's role in politics and share ideas about improving the cooperation between women parliamentarians across the globe.

PML-N lawmaker Shaista Pervaiz Malik said meeting lawmakers from other countries allows best-practices to be shared. "We hope to learn how women in other countries are overcoming boundaries and breaking the glass ceiling," she said.

Pakistani women stand at a crossroads, she said. Historic laws protecting the rights of women have been passed but implementation remains a challenge.

"The conviction rate for crimes against women remains low and there is much work to be done to be done by women parliamentarians to improve it. Such conferences can bring an international perspective to our work," she said.

PML-N lawmaker Shaza Fatima said parliamentarians will share ideas about ensuring social justice for women in their countries. “Social justice includes economic and political justice for women, especially in developing countries. We will be discussing violence against women, harassment in work-places, early marriage, child labour, as well as ways to improve the representation of transgender people in politics,” she said.

Ms Fatima said the conference will conclude with a session on creating and improving cooperation between lawmakers from various countries.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320135>

## WOMEN IN HAZARA DIVISION CONTINUE TO FACE VIOLENCE

Muhammad Sadaqat

ABBOTABAD: Even as International Women’s Day was observed across the country last week, with a host of public figures and officials pledging to respect the rights of women, the situation on the ground in Hazara division shows that violence against women continues unabated.

Despite the introduction of women specific laws and organisations, the uphill battle against patriarchal mindset continues.

Data gathered from police records, civil society organisations based on media monitoring, show that during January and February there have been around 29 cases of violence against women reported in six districts of Hazara division.

The district-wise record of gender-based violence showed that most cases were reported from Abbottabad with 14. Mansehra was right behind it with 10 cases reported, while four were reported in Haripur and only one in Torghar.

According to a breakdown of the data, validated by police records, seven women were murdered while one was killed in the name of honour. At least one woman was injured during a murder attempt.

Further, six women were kidnapped while two, according to police records, had committed suicide. At least another woman attempted suicide.

Moreover, at least five women were reported to have been raped, two were gang raped, while two were given as vani and two reported that they were facing domestic violence.

Last year, Hazara division witnessed gross human rights violations targeting women.

As many as 43 women were murdered last year, while seven survived murder attempts.

Moreover, at least three were given as vani to settle tribal disputes. Separately, 32 women were kidnapped.

At least 27 women committed suicide and five survived their suicide attempts. Moreover, 14 women were killed in the name of honour.

As many as 16 women complained of facing domestic violence including a woman whose private body part was chopped off by her husband, while two were stripped and their heads shaved off.

During 2016, 12 women were gang raped, while five were raped and the noses of two were allegedly chopped off by their spouses.

Among those gang raped, one was allegedly sexually assaulted by policemen in Mansehra. The case is still being probed on order from the Abbottabad bench of the Peshawar High Court.

Data relating to violence against children showed that as many as seven children were murdered while at least 22 had been sodomised. At least two minor girls were also raped, three were gang raped. As many as 13 children were reported as kidnapped while one case of child marriage was reported in 2016.

Dr Sahira Khan, a psychologist at the Human Development Organization (HDO) said that the main challenge towards curbing violence against women remains the psyche which considers women and girls as inferior to men.

While she hoped that the introduction of women-specific legislation, different departments such as the National Commission on Human Rights, provincial directorate of human rights and creating awareness through these and other civil society organisations, things would improve.

However, Dr Khan suggested that drastic steps such as implementing laws in letter and spirit and counselling of men from an early age were the need of the hour.

Gulnaz Rasheed, a lawyer and a human rights activist and regional president of Pakistan Peoples Party's women's wing said that tribal customs which continue to extend their reach to the urban centres were the key obstacle towards creating space and respect for women.

She said that the incumbent government needs to do a lot more to give women equal opportunities for development and a role at the national level. Rasheed lamented that while Islam had given immense respect to women, there were still elements who opposed it and have misinterpreted the teachings of Islam for this purpose.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1353639/human-rights-violations-women-hazara-division-continue-face-violence/>

## ECP FINDS LARGE GENDER GAP AMONG REGISTERED VOTERS IN CENSUS BLOCKS

Dawn, March 15th, 2017

Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has identified 53 census blocks in the federal capital with significant gender disparity among registered voters.

The trend is not limited to rural areas, and residential sectors such as the F-6, F-8 and F-10 have an abnormally low number of women voters.

The statistics recently prompted a senior official at the ECP to remark that literate people need to be educated.

According to an official document available with Dawn, two census blocks in Kathar, Chattar and Rakh Banigala, Kurri have one registered voter each, both men.

There are a total of eight registered voters in a block in Chunri, Jandala, and only one of them is a woman – 12.5pc of the voters in the block are women.

In Sorain (I-11), 17.9pc of voters are women – there are 84 registered voters in the block, 69 men and 15 women. In F-6 Markaz, women voters make up 20.7pc of voters – out of a total of 58 voters, 12 are women.

Out of a total 78 registered voters in the F-8/1 census block, 61 are men and 17 women, making up 21.8pc of total voters in the block.

In I-16, there are three times more men voters to women voters – out of a total of 168 registered voters, 126 are men and 42 are women.

In a census block in Kotha Kalan, Humak, 55 registered voters include 15 women (27.3pc). A block in Blue Area has 46 voters – 33 men and 13 women (28.3pc).

There are only 41 women (31.5pc) registered voters in a block in I-11, where the total number of voters is 130. Similarly, in a block in H-8/2 and H-8/3 there are 129 women voters and 273 men – bringing the percentage of women voters to 32.1pc.

In a block in Alipur, men nearly double the number of registered women voters – there a total number of 59 voters, of which 20 are women (33.9pc) and 39 are men.

In Gora Baz, Mohrian, there are 56 registered voters – 37 men and 19 women (33.9pc).

In another block in Mohrian, 204 out of a total of 590 registered voters are women. In a block in Sorian, 60 out of 171 registered voters are women.

The identification of areas with remarkably low percentages of women voters is part of a voter's education campaign that has been launched by the ECP to increase voter turnout in the next general election, by bridging the gap between men and women voters that has widened to over 12 million.

The campaign has identified over 26,000 census blocks with less than 40pc women voters across the country.

Various activities are underway to motivate women, young people and marginalised groups in urban and rural areas to actively participate in the electoral process.

District voters' education committees have also been set up to this end.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320587>

## PRIME MINISTER PROMISES BUSINESS-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Dawn, March 15th, 2017

Habib Khan Ghori

KARACHI: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on Tuesday the government is devising policies that are in favour of the business community.

Talking to a group of businessmen at Governor House, the prime minister said global financial institutions and credit rating agencies have lauded Pakistan's economic performance.

He said that Pakistan is now perceived to be an investment-friendly country where global firms and institutions are keen to invest to capitalise on opportunities it offers, the prime minister added.

He said the government will provide investors with all facilities and protection. He termed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a game-changer, noting that its completion will strengthen the economy and generate employment.

The prime minister said that in 2013, the law and order situation was bad while the country faced multiple challenges, like terrorism, energy shortage and poor economic conditions. However, the government handled the challenges and put the economy on the track of progress.

The CPEC is a symbol of economic progress and the government will not tolerate any obstacle to the project, he noted.

The pace of economic growth in 2016 was 4.8 per cent, which was the highest in the last eight years, the prime minister said.

He stated that loadshedding will soon be eliminated as the government is working on low-priced and environment friendly energy projects.

The prime minister told the businessmen that he is aware of the problems confronting the city's business community. He said the federal government will extend full cooperation to the Sindh government in the implementation of mega projects in Karachi.

Earlier, business leaders informed the prime minister about their problems.

Before meeting businessmen, Mr Sharif met Sindh Governor Muhammad Zubair and Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

They exchanged views on the overall law and order situation in the province. The prime minister assured them of full cooperation with regard to the ongoing operation against criminals and completion of mega projects.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320525>

‘WOMEN’S ACTION SHOULD NOT REMAIN CONFINED WITHIN ARBITRARY BORDERS’

Dawn, March 16th, 2017

Shiza Malik

ISLAMABAD: Spirits were high on Wednesday as the three-day international conference of women parliamentarians ended with the resolve to continue building alliances between women parliamentarians across borders.

The conference on ‘The Role of Women Parliamentarians in Strengthening Democracy and Social Justice’ was organised by the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus. Lawmakers from Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Jordan, Australia, Romania, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Maldives, Indonesia and Nepal were in the capital to attend the conference.

Addressing the participants at the closing ceremony, caucus patron MNA Dr Fehmida Mirza emphasised the importance of collective action for women’s empowerment. “Patriarchy is not confined to borders so women’s collective action should not remain confined to arbitrary borders either,” she said.

Dr Mirza called upon the women in the audience to work together to end systemic injustice against women and other marginalised groups. “Nothing about us, without us,” she declared, drawing applause from the audience.

PML-N MNA Dr Attiya Inayatullah reminded the audience that Pakistani women’s struggle for empowerment is a great success story which has resulted in major legislative changes.

Today, Pakistani women have achieved innumerable successes in civil society, media, academia, arts, sports and almost all other fields, Dr Inayatullah said.



“We deliver much more than babies,” she quipped.

Echoing the views of many participants at the conference, Dr Inayatullah underscored the importance of cooperation among women to achieve shared goals.

“Alliances have been central to feminist movements everywhere. Evidence shows that alliances help generate best practices, spot abuse and build pressure,” she said.

These alliances, Dr Inayatullah said, must also be built with men. She argued that no jobs should be gender-specific.

“We must bridge the distance between men and women but also between male and female tasks,” she said.

Cautioning against antagonistic feminism, she argued that the struggle for women’s empowerment should not aim to gain power over men. “The aim is for women to gain power over themselves,” she said.

Women’s Parliamentary Caucus Secretary MNA Shaista Pervaiz Malik thanked the participants, organisers and supporters of the conference and read out the conference resolution drafted by the participating lawmakers.

She said the women’s caucus is determined to continue building alliances with women parliamentarians all over the world.

Ms Malik expressed hope that the event is organised annually and can transform into a proactive network of women leaders which can ensure the economic empowerment and political participation of women all over the world.

Speaking to Dawn, Romanian MP Mara Mares said the conference had been an ‘inspiring experience’ and congratulated the organisers for bringing together women from so many parts of the world.

“The discussions at the conference were very fruitful and we realised that we face some common issues in our respective countries,” she said.

Myanmar MP Cho Cho Win told Dawn this was her first experience attending such a conference and stressed the importance of continuing such initiatives.

“Women’s rights can no longer be ignored. Women are a vital part of not just families and communities but also democratic politics. Social justice and democracy are meaningless if women are not empowered within nations,” she said.

Iranian MP Masoomeh Aghapor Alishahi said women parliamentarians are agents of change and alliances across borders are important for achieving shared goals.

She stressed the importance of economic empowerment and suggested that in the future, representatives of international finance institutions such as the IMF are also invited to attend such conferences.

Earlier, Ms Alishahi took the podium to suggest making March 13, the first day of the conference, the official day of women parliamentarians working for social justice and democracy.

Similar views were expressed by Indonesian MP Ammy Amalia Fatma Surya who said that conference had left her inspired and given her many new ideas to take back to her country.

“I am inspired to improve women’s participation in politics in Indonesia and work on legislation to protect women and children from abuse, violence and social injustice,” she said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1320773/womens-action-should-not-remain-confined-within-arbitrary-borders>

## GOVT TO INCREASE JOB QUOTA FOR WOMEN

Business Recorder, 16 March 2017

SIALKOT: Secretary Punjab Commission on Status of Women Muhammad Usman has said the government is committed to provide equal opportunities for development of all citizens particularly women.

Addressing a function held in connection with ‘International Women Days’ with the theme “Women in the Changing World of Work: Plant 50/50 by 2030” was organised by Baidarie Sialkot and UN WOMEN country office Islamabad here last evening, he said the government’s commitment for the advancement of women clearly manifests itself through promulgation of the protection against harassment of women at workplace act 2010 and 2012, the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016 formation and functioning of the Punjab Commission on the status of women, he said.

He said special quota for women in job opportunities at government offices is being increased from 5 to 15 percent of the total lot.

Speaking on the occasion Jamshed M Kazi country representative UN WOMEN said UN WOMEN aims to empower women to be owner of their own destiny and enable them to lead their lives in a self-reliant way in social, economic and political terms.

He appreciated Sialkot based corporate sector to be forward looking and progressive in providing job opportunities to women in a non-discriminate, harassment free and gender responsive environment. He referred to the fact that 17 leading industrial setups in Sialkot have already signed CEO statement of pursuance to “Women Empowerment Principles”. He made a special reference to Benetton supported project “Empowerment of women garment workers in Sialkot” and hoped that it will link 1,500 women workers to job opportunities in the formal sector after equipping them skill training relevant to the needs and requirements of the industry.

Addressing the function Arshid Mehmood Mirza Executive Director Baidarie stated that according to the Punjab Development Statistics more than 51 percent and 48 percent women constitute the population in the province. Gender inequality index rates Pakistan standing at 122 of the global ranking.

According to UNDP, women workforce’s participation rate in Pakistan stands at 22 percent. All these indicators not only tell the story of the deprivations of Pakistani women but also reinforce the need of special paying focused attention for taking up meticulously designed initiatives which may tangibly lead to socioeconomic empowerment of women.

He stated that as of now 1,534 corporate entities have signed “Women Empowerment Principles” jointly framed by UN WOMEN and UN Global Compact. Nineteen (19) business concerns in Pakistan have so far signed these principles and 17 out of these are from Sialkot.

He added that in the near future, 15 more business entities in Sialkot will become signatory to the women empowerment principles.

President Baidarie Hina Noureen while addressing the function said that an overwhelming majority of women workers is engaged with the informal sector of economy and share double burden of completing job related assignments and taking care of domestic duties.

Hina added that in collaboration with UN WOMEN and the support provided by Benetton, Baidarie is implementing the project titled "Empowerment of women garment workers in Sialkot." The project will not only succeed in enabling 1,500 trained women workers to get jobs in garment/textile sector industrial units in Sialkot but will also set trends to open the job market for women for pacing the process of their economic empowerment. She demanded that govt should immediately proceed to provide social protection coverage of the women workers as well. This sort of coverage is legally available to the dependent families of the men workers but women workers are not so privileged till now.

The ceremony was largely attended by women workers, govt. officials, legal fraternity, academia, intelligentsia, political and social activists, trade union functionaries, religious leaders, civil society organizations and media.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/03/16/13-page/858032-news.html>

ONE WIDOW'S RESOLVE TO BREAK TRADITION CHANGED THE LIVES OF HUNDREDS OF WOMEN  
The Express Tribune, March 17, 2017

Sarfraz Memon

Sukkur: Born and brought up in an environment where women, even preteens, were not allowed to go out without wearing a white shuttlecock burqa, Zubaida Janwri, a widow and mother of five children, decided to disregard these old traditions and change the lives of hundreds of women.

Today, she is equally respected by men, women and children for the role she has played to make the women of her area self-sufficient, thus pulling them out of extreme poverty.

Janwri lives in Roshanabad village near Kandhra, some 15 kilometres away from Sukkur and is the president of the Local Support Organisation, which serves more than 14 villages of the area. Speaking about her past, she said like other girls of the area, she was married to a man 20 years older than her at the age of 12. "My husband was no different than other men of the village and thus I was not allowed to go out and was confined to the four walls of my house," she said. Janwri was initially sent to the village's primary school but was taken out after she completed class two, as girls were not allowed to seek education beyond this.

While sitting on patchwork quilts, the lively woman told The Express Tribune for her it was the end of the world when her husband died of a heart attack 10-years-ago. Seeing no way out and fearing a bleak future for her children, Janwri decided to fight the archaic customs. "One day I went to the office of the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) in Sukkur and volunteered my services as a community worker," she said. "The SRSO people welcomed me and trained me and from that day on, I have never looked back," she explained.

"At first, people objected to my work, as they believed that if a woman succeeded it would end their rule, but I refused to succumb to their pressure and continued my journey," said Janwri. At the time, our area had been turned into a no-go area due to a feud between the Janwris and Shaikhs and cases of karo-kari were rampant, but, defying all the odds, I continued with my mission, she said.

"After being trained as a community worker, I managed to convince around two dozen women of my village," she said, adding that she also convinced the men to let their women go out as men and women together can bring about positive change. "Slowly and steadily I succeeded and today not only women, but men of more than 14 villages are standing with me," she said proudly.

Janwri said that in 2015, the SRSO offered interest-free loans of Rs4.5 million to 250 women of different villages, all of which have been repaid. More than 100 normal deliveries and 25 caesarean sections have been performed free-of-charge, she said, adding that the women and their husbands are getting insurance cover of Rs15,000 each.

Community health worker (CHW) Farzana Shaikh said around 150 CHWs are looking after around 150,000 women and children of the area. Lauding the role played by Janwri, she said that due to the awareness campaign run by her cases of karo-kari have reduced by 90% and people have stopped marrying off minor girls.

SRSO District Manager Nasreen Noonari said, “This year we have provided poultry to these women, which includes four hens and a rooster”. Due to the untiring efforts of Janwri and other women like her, people are now sending their girls to the village’s primary school, which earlier was forbidden to them, she added.

“No doubt the SRSO is providing training and financial assistance to the women, but the credit goes to the women who have put their energies into bringing prosperity not for their own families, but for others as well,” praised Noonari.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1357257/one-widows-resolve-break-tradition-changed-lives-hundreds-women/>

## WOMEN’S DAY, AFGHAN STYLE: HEAD SCARVES AND FLOWERS

International New York Times, March 15, 2017

Zahra Nader

KABUL, Afghanistan — In Afghanistan, women are not celebrated on just a single day like the rest of the world. International Women’s Day starts March 8, and is celebrated here day after day through the end of the month.

Judging by the quantity of Women’s Day events here — parties, awards ceremonies, conferences, panel discussions and concerts — it would appear that women in Afghanistan were doing quite well.

But Afghanistan has one of the world’s highest maternal mortality rates, according to United Nations Women. And the United Nations Development Program gender equality index ranks Afghanistan at 152 out of 155 countries.

Women are allowed to work, study and go out of the house — all of which was completely prohibited during the Taliban era. But in practice, in most places outside big cities, such freedoms are still very limited or even nonexistent.

This year International Women’s Day began a week before March 8 with a speech by the first lady, Rula Ghani. “I am happy to be a witness of women’s empowerment in different aspects of their lives: social, political and economic,” she said. “We are joyful that day by day and slowly, Afghan women are relying economically on themselves.”

Last Wednesday, some of the Western embassies held parties to celebrate the day, and on Thursday and again on Saturday there were events for Afghan women organized by everyone from the presidential palace to the Afghanistan journalists council. Our bureau received at least 10 invitations to different events and there were many we were not invited to. Parliament held its own Women’s Day event on Monday.

One of the invitations I received was from a group I had rarely heard from, the Afghanistan journalists council, which was honoring 30 women — mostly journalists, including me. The council does not have a website, just a not-very-active Facebook page, but it holds occasional conferences.

The ceremony was a little disappointing; the presenter could not pronounce the name of my news organization or the names of many of the female journalists. Many of the “honorees” did not attend. The organizers handed out red flowers and head scarves, though few women in Afghanistan need more.

Nooria Ashraf, in charge of women's issues for the council, complained about how hard it was to raise money to buy the head scarves, and how concerned she was about people on local television who she said sometimes dress "inappropriately."

Zahra Nader, a Times reporter in Kabul, Afghanistan. She said women who were honored on International Women's Day were given head scarves, something that few women in Afghanistan need more of.

The Afghan Journalists Safety Committee, which does important work advocating for the security of Afghan reporters, also wanted to honor me — and 99 other women in journalism. They gave us red flowers as well, along with notebooks instead of scarves.

Few people in Afghanistan know about the real meaning and history of Women's Day, which is meant to acknowledge the long history of women's struggle for emancipation. Many here think that it is a day like Mother's Day and that they should give gifts to their mothers, wives and even their female colleagues — especially head scarves.

For many women in Afghanistan, the day is a reminder not so much of how far they have come, but how much further there is to go.

The other day I was on the street reporting on a suicide bombing. Policemen and even some of the male journalists at the scene kept asking what I was doing, as if I were engaged in work unbecoming of a woman. The nicer ones were worried I would be scarred by the experience, and couldn't handle it. The ruder ones felt I was stepping out of my lane.

One official suggested that it was dangerous for me to be out that late at night.

It isn't easy being a woman journalist in Afghanistan; it isn't easy being a woman here, for that matter.

But for many Afghan women, that is not what comes across in all these celebrations.

It often appears that many institutions use Women's Day to show a liberal face, but just for a day.

"On every International Women's Day, I keep thinking more of how suppressed we are within this patriarchal society," said Sahar Fetrat, a filmmaker and women's activist. "The symbolic celebrations, flowers, gifts and some words of empathy and sympathy are always given to women every 8th of March while on the same day, sexism, inequality, harassment and violence against women screams from all the streets and corners of this country."

Women's activists say that donors find it easy to give money for celebrations, which no one criticizes, while it's much harder to support programs that produce real — and therefore controversial — change.

"We do not want to get flowers and head scarves," said Zubaida Akbar, an advocate for women's rights. "Instead, respect us as humans."

Nearly a billion dollars of foreign aid to Afghanistan, maybe more, has gone into programs meant to make women's lives better. But according to a new report by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, violence against women has increased 8.6 percent this year.

Still, while many women scoff at the gift of head scarves, at least, they acknowledge, they are not being given burqas.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/15/world/asia/the-worst-place-to-celebrate-international-womens-day.html>

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CENTRE GETS POLICE STATION STATUS

Dawn, March 18th, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The country's first Violence against Women Centre (VAWC) in Multan has been accorded the status of a police station by the provincial home department and the inspector general of police (IGP), empowering it to exclusively register and investigate cases of crimes against women.

This centre and others later are being established in the province by the Chief Minister's Strategic Reforms Unit.

Officials said on Friday that the Multan centre had been assigned the status of a police station on the request of the Strategic Reforms Unit to support the project's main idea of bringing together all justice delivery departments under one roof.

As many as 135 cases of violence against women have been registered in different police stations so far this year. These include cases of domestic violence, honour killing, acid throwing, burning, abduction and forced marriages. Officials said the rate of such crimes was believed to be much higher than the reported data, which is kept low by male-dominated police stations.

With a police station inside a women-run facility, there will be real-time data integration with audio-visual recording in terms of evidence collection, and even during rescue operations.

This police station will be headed by a senior superintendent of police. A toll-free helpline and transport service will facilitate victims. The centre has its own women police officials and women protection officers who will rescue victims in grave cases, and provide them shelter at the centre while registering their complaints, collecting any form of evidence, and carrying out investigation. This will facilitate the medico-legal examination to be carried out by the medical staff and prosecution department of the centre.

The Violence Against Women Centre in Multan will be a 24-hour facility that will streamline investigation-prosecution case flow process by bringing all justice delivery services together, including first aid, police reporting and investigation, prosecution, medical examination and treatment, collection of forensic and other evidence, psychological evaluation and counselling as well as post-trauma rehabilitation.

These centres are aimed at addressing issues such as low conviction rate for cases of violence, disconnected evidence collection, lack of sensitisation to gender-based violence, passing of moral judgements and absenteeism of relevant personnel.

The Multan centre is the pilot project under the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016, and is scheduled to be inaugurated by the chief minister by the end of March. Such centres are planned to be established across all 36 districts of Punjab.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1321224/violence-against-women-centre-gets-police-station-status>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 6TH TO MARCH 12 TH 2017

## BILL TO BAN DOWRY

Dawn, March 6th, 2017

Tradition is often used as a pretext to justify some regressive practices that perpetuate the low status of women in society. If the KP Assembly goes the distance, one of these customs, dowry, may soon be banned in the province. For on Wednesday, the Jamaat-i-Islami MPA Rashida Riffat tabled a bill to ban the giving or taking of dowry.

Those violating the law will be punished with up to three months' imprisonment and a Rs200,000 fine. Anyone pressuring the bride's family into giving dowry will also be liable for legal action. Some of the other provisions of the law are that any gift to the bride by her parents or other family members should not exceed Rs10,000; only beverages are to be served at the nikah; expenditure on any wedding ceremony should not exceed Rs75,000; and marriage functions must wrap up by 10pm.

Weddings in South Asian cultures are often an occasion to showcase one's wealth; this spawns such an unhealthy competition at all levels of society that to host a daughter's wedding within one's means can mean a loss of 'face' for the parents. That is one reason why families see daughters as a burden, for whose marriage they will have to one day beg, borrow or steal. Meanwhile, for the families of young men, a bride can be a passport to acquiring cash and material goods.

The lack of a 'sufficient' dowry can thus become a catalyst for violence against women, if not physical then at least a recurrent cause for mental torture. While there have been restrictions brought in from time to time to control unreasonable extravagance at weddings, only lip service has thus far been paid to the pernicious effects of the dowry system.

However, in Pakhtun society, 'bride price' or walwar, an amount paid by the groom to the bride's family in return for her hand, is a common custom. This too, perpetuates the commodification of women by putting a 'price' on her and must be addressed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318621>

WOMEN FACE DISCRIMINATION IN LEGISLATURE: PA DY SPEAKER  
Dawn, March 7th, 2017

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Deputy Speaker Dr Mehr Taj Roghani has said that legislation is needed to do away with discrimination and violence against women.

Addressing a function here on Monday in the presence of provincial assembly speaker and senior minister, she highlighted as to how women in government and legislature were faced with inequality and discrimination.

"What to say of big things, basic facilities like restrooms and retiring rooms for women are missing in government offices, civil secretariat. Even in provincial assembly and Chief Minister House washrooms for women are very few or missing," she told the function, organised by Provincial Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW).

The function was held in connection with upcoming International Women's Day, being observed on March 8 all over the world to celebrate and recognise achievements of women and highlight their struggle for rights.

Dr Mehr Taj said that domestic violence and psychological torture, which seemed invisible to many, were quite huge issues but even something as basic as a washroom or retiring room or even feeding room for working women was missing at government offices.

She also highlighted as to how young women officers were deprived of field postings by the government as they were considered incapable of performing their duty. "Thanks God the salaries are equal to that of men but often single women officers are deprived of a government residence as they are considered incapable of living alone," said Dr Mehr Taj.

The deputy speaker said that legislation was needed to do away with discrimination and violence against women but she sounded unsure as she thought mindset needed a change and that seemed a bit difficult.

Speaker Asad Qaiser promised to facilitate legislation to ensure women's rights but went on to speak on how much he loved his mother and daughter. He said that women brought satisfaction to a man's life and world was a happening place because of women.

Senior Minister Sikander Sherpao also appreciated women as daughters, mothers, sisters and wives and specially paid tributes to those women, who lost their men in the war against terrorism. He went away after fulfilling the ceremonial requirement of the function.

PCSW chairperson Neelam Turo said that the commission was going to push for Domestic Violence Bill and Acid Throwing and Burning Bill to protect women in the province against violence.

She said that honour killing law would be reviewed and women's trafficking bill would be worked on by the commission.

Amina Ilahi, representing Asia Foundation, said that although significant progressive legislation was passed during the past decade, Pakistan was second lowest performing country in the world in terms of gender equality according to World Economist Forum 2015 gender gap report.

Legislator and chairperson of KP Assembly Women Caucus Meraj Hamayun, spoke about the efforts of women legislators to make their voice heard in the assembly and work for legislation on women issues.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318900/women-face-discrimination-in-legislature-pa-dy-speaker>

#### PAKISTANI WOMEN IN UK PAID LEAST COMPARED TO MEN Dawn, March 7th, 2017

LONDON: Pakistani and Bangladeshi women in Britain are paid the least compared to men while white Irish women have overtaken male peers in terms of salaries, according to a study of the gender pay gap by ethnicity on Monday.

The study released by women's rights group Fawcett Society found women from almost every minority ethnic group experienced a pay gap with white British men.

Research by the University of Manchester found Pakistani and Bangladeshi women hardest hit, earning 26 per cent less than white British male peers, while black African women had made little progress since the 1990s and earned 20pc less.

Figures from the UK's Office of National Statistics show on average women earned about 18pc less than men in Britain in 2016.

The women who had seen the most progress since the 1990s were white Irish women who are now paid 17.5pc more than white Irish and British men.

"But this is largely due to generational factors as they are more likely to be older, working full-time or in senior or managerial roles," Sam Smethers, chief executive of the Fawcett Society, said in a statement.

Chinese women have also managed to reverse the pay gap in the past 20 years and are now earning 5pc more than white British men when working full-time. But they still earn less than Chinese men.

Indian women have seen the gender pay gap with white British men narrow to about 6pc from 26pc in the 1990s for those working full-time.



Smethers said the charity's breakdown of the gender pay gap by ethnicity — released ahead of International Women's Day on March 8 — tracked progress over a 25 year period with largely negative results but some positive.

Smethers said black African women have been largely left behind in terms of closing the pay gap and Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are today “only where white British women were in the 1990s”.

“For these groups this is a story of low labour market participation and low pay when they are in work together with high levels of unpaid caring work,” Smethers said.

“But it is important to consider how that gender inequality is experienced by different ethnic groups to ensure that all women in Britain see their gender pay gap closed.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318814>

## TWO LADY HEALTH WORKERS ATTACKED

Dawn, March 7th, 2017

MIRPURKHAS: A lady health worker (LHW) and her colleague were beaten up allegedly by a drunken person here on Monday in Adam town.

Reports reaching here said that a polio-eradication campaign was launched on Monday in the morning. Many polio teams were visiting their respective areas to administer polio drops to children under five years of age when suddenly a person, reportedly in inebriated condition, attacked a polio team.

He beat two LHWs while issuing threats of ‘dire consequences’.

The situation led to panic in the area and immediately Mirpurkhas district health officer (DHO) Dr Anwer Ali Palari and police arrived at the scene. Victim Perveen Akhtar and her colleague Sitara informed the police and DHO about the whole episode.

Gharibabad police conducted a raid and arrested the suspect. On the complaint of Ms Akhtar, a case has been lodged against the male suspect.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318848/two-lady-health-workers-attacked>

## PREGNANT AND FIRED: A PAKISTANI WOMAN'S WORKPLACE DILEMMA

Dawn, March 8th, 2017

Atika Rehman Fahad Naveed

KARACHI: Many working Pakistani women feel discriminated against despite the increased participation of women in the workforce. Karachi-based civil litigant Naz\* is on the way to starting a family. But the dread of sharing this news with colleagues at her respective law firm is giving the pregnant 30-year-old sleepless nights.

“I haven't told them that I am pregnant because I'm anxious my [expected salary] raise won't come through if my boss finds out,” she said, requesting anonymity out of concern for her job. “I also worry that my pregnancy announcement will influence the kind of work assigned to me... that I will be given ‘less important’ cases,” she added.

Although she is confident that her education at top UK law schools coupled with seven years of experience make her a good candidate for a raise, the young lawyer's fears about being side-lined are not unfounded.

Conversations with dozens of women for this report turn the spotlight on a lazy corporate approach in Pakistan which perpetuates discrimination against women in the workplace — especially when it comes to small and medium-sized organisations. “This culture is not limited to [working mothers], it also targets married females,” said one respondent, Gill, in response to a survey on workplace discrimination conducted by Dawn.com to mark Women’s Day on March 8.

Mahum Siddik, an employee at a large bank in Karachi, shared a similar story. “When I was getting married I had been with the bank for five years and everyone kept asking if I would keep working. They just would not believe me no matter what I said. A man will never be asked this question when he is getting married,” she said, adding that the questions did not stop for the first year of her marriage even though she continued working.

Although Article 37 (e) of the Constitution of Pakistan directs the state to ensure “maternity benefits for women in employment...” many organisations get away with violating rules surrounding maternity leave.

According to The West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance, 1958, women working at an establishment for four months or above are entitled to 12 weeks paid maternity leave. Under Pakistani law, the company is liable for providing paid leave for six weeks prior to and six weeks after the delivery.

Yet, with limited checks and balances, implementation remains sporadic across workplaces in the country. A basic three-month paid maternity leave is a luxury.

“[Employers] are not called to account for violating the law. The beneficiaries of this law are women who are some of the most vulnerable workers, so if their rights are taken away they are in less of a position to go and [challenge] somebody stronger and more powerful,” said Sara Malkani, a Karachi-based lawyer working on reproductive healthcare.

The outdated penalties for the contravention of the law are in desperate need of an upgrade and reflect the casual approach of the state towards the law. A 2010 report by the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan noted that the “...sums mentioned as fine i.e. rupees 500[clause 11] is too inadequate to deter an offender from committing a break of the law”.

“Most of these laws were drafted in times when it was hard to imagine women working in the public sphere,” Dr Javaid Iqbal Gill, a representative of the Labour Department, noted at an event in 2014.

The Maternity Benefit Ordinance also states that it is unlawful for an employer to dismiss a woman during her pregnancy period.

But despite the legislation, many workplaces do not have a concrete policy at all and appear to be either violating the law altogether or making calls on an individual basis.

Several mothers also feel that they had to “prove their worth” to employers during a pregnancy.

A woman employed as a project engineer in Karachi for a steel group recalls how harshly she was treated when she broke the news of her pregnancy at her former workplace back in 2013.

Sara\* submitted a maternity leave application, confident of a favourable response as she had been employed there for five years. The response — a letter of termination.

“I was the first-ever woman employee to get [pregnant] and apparently [they had no maternity leave policy],” she explained.

Although several companies have internalised lax approaches towards maternity policies, a handful of large companies operating in Pakistan have managed to successfully enforce rules that make it possible for women to thrive professionally.

Two years ago, when Faiza Immad walked in for her interview — visibly pregnant — at Telenor Pakistan, she had considerable doubts on her prospects of securing the job.

“Usually employers discourage bringing on board a candidate when they discover that she is expecting and is therefore set to take a break soon,” she told Dawn.com.

But Ms Immad, who is now working for HR at Telenor, got the job. Telenor, an international company operating in markets across Europe and Asia, said its maternity leave policy had undergone changes over the years and since September 2015, the telecommunications company has a policy which allows female employees globally to take salaried leave for six months during the maternity period.

Another multinational to have successfully incorporated a six-month leave policy is Unilever.

“I worked till the last week of my pregnancy as I was given support and enjoyed the work I was doing. Returning to work post maternity leave was exciting and I had a seamless transition,” said employee Sarah Karamatullah.

Textile brand Khaadi, too, strives to maintain an environment that is conducive to working mothers.

Khaadi provides 12 weeks paid maternity leave to employees.

The company’s head office employs about 275 staffers, 30 per cent of whom are women.

“I had a very difficult pregnancy and was required to be on bed rest relatively early on. I stopped working at Khaadi in January 2015 and re-joined in September the same year,” recalled Sharmin Raza, head of HR at the design firm.

For these companies enforcing the policy means systems are in place to share the workload. Similarly, many larger NGOs also give three months paid leave, “as they are externally and internally audited for their gender policies,” said Saima Munir, a programme manager with the Aurat Foundation.

While it is worth noting that the government sector has a very small percentage of women in civil service (almost 10pc according to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2015-2016), they follow the state-approved maternity leave policy.

The Civil Servants Rules state that maternity leave is admissible to a female civil servant on “full pay for up to three months”.

Since government jobs also offer health benefits, unlike many of their private counterparts, the employers also foot hospital bills.

“The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has a policy of giving three-month paid leave to women employees,” Robina Riaz, deputy secretary women development, told Dawn.com.

Masooma\*, a lawyer who worked at Suparco, shared a rare pleasant experience of a supportive employer.

“Suparco had a lovely day-care centre for kids. They even ran a shuttle during tea break and lunch times from the main building to the centre, so mothers could visit their kids. There was a dad who used to drop off his toddler in the mornings, since his wife was in med school,” she said.

However, she maintained the situation would have been starkly different at a law firm. According to our survey, 66.4pc of respondents find their offices unsupportive of staffers bringing their children to work, while 77.3pc said that their offices do not offer day-care facilities.

Yet larger companies are making room for more progressive policies.

“Upon my return, an office was converted into a nursing room for me while our new nursery was under construction and the support I received to balance life as a new working mother was par none,” said Ms Raza.

Telenor too provides additional support to employees once the baby is born, including work-from-home arrangements and flexible working hours along with in-house day-care facilities.

Unilever also provides on-site day-care. The day-care centre allows parents to bring their new-borns and young children (of up to six years) to work. It comes equipped with cameras so parents can monitor their children on laptops through specialised software accessible only to them.

In addition to the Karachi head office, Unilever has also recently started a day-care at its Rahim Yar Khan factory.

“It’s a question of changing workplace culture and changing mindsets. I think people need to get more comfortable [with] the idea that women are in the workforce, and they are here stay,” said Ms Malkani.

\*Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Additional reporting by Munnazzah Raza, Zainab Shumail in Islamabad and Sadia Qasim Shah in Peshawar.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319160>

## PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ELECTORAL PROCESS URGED

Dawn, March 8th, 2017

QUETTA: The newly appointed Provincial Election Commissioner, Balochistan, Mohammad Naeem Majeed Jaffar, took over the charge of his new assignment and started discharging his duties.

Speaking at a meeting of the officers of the Provincial Election Commission on Tuesday, he said that all steps would be taken to increase the ratio of women participation in the electoral process.

Expressing concern over the low participation and registration of women as voters, Mr Jaffar said no leniency would be shown in this regard and that every officer should demonstrate responsibility.

He further said that female staff of the ECP would be mobilised to encourage women at community level to take their part in the election process.

He ordered senior officials to visit district offices and submit reports regarding performance of officials at district levels and that the participation of women members be assured to increase the registration of women as voters.

“No negligence will be tolerated in the discharging of duties,” the Provincial Election Commissioner said, adding that with joint efforts, the maximum participation of women in the electoral process would be ensured.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319148>

Antonio Guterres

Women's rights are human rights. But in these troubled times, as our world becomes more unpredictable and chaotic, the rights of women and girls are being reduced, restricted and reversed.

Empowering women and girls is the only way to protect their rights and make sure they can realise their full potential.

Historic imbalances in power relations between men and women, exacerbated by growing inequalities within and between societies and countries, are leading to greater discrimination against women and girls. Around the world, tradition, cultural values and religion are being misused to curtail women's rights, to entrench sexism and defend misogynistic practices.

Women's legal rights, which have never been equal to men's on any continent, are being eroded further. Women's rights over their own bodies are questioned and undermined. Women are routinely targeted for intimidation and harassment in cyberspace and in real life. In the worst cases, extremists and terrorists build their ideologies around the subjugation of women and girls and single them out for sexual and gender-based violence, forced marriage and virtual enslavement.

Despite some improvements, leadership positions across the board are still held by men, and the economic gender gap is widening, thanks to outdated attitudes and entrenched male chauvinism. We must change this, by empowering women at all levels, enabling their voices to be heard and giving them control over their own lives and over the future of our world.

Denying the rights of women and girls is not only wrong in itself; it has a serious social and economic impact that holds us all back. Gender equality has a transformative effect that is essential to fully functioning communities, societies and economies.

Women's access to education and health services has benefits for their families and communities that extend to future generations. An extra year in school can add up to 25 per cent to a girl's future income.

When women participate fully in the labour force, it creates opportunities and generates growth. Closing the gender gap in employment could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025. Increasing the proportion of women in public institutions makes them more representative, increases innovation, improves decision-making and benefits whole societies.

Gender equality is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the global plan agreed by leaders of all countries to meet the challenges we face. Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls specifically for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and this is central to the achievement of all the 17 SDGs.

I am committed to increasing women's participation in our peace and security work. Women negotiators increase the chances of sustainable peace, and women peacekeepers decrease the chances of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Within the UN, I am establishing a clear road map with benchmarks to achieve gender parity across the system, so that our organisation truly represents the people we serve. Previous targets have not been met. Now we must move from ambition to action.

On International Women's Day, let us all pledge to do everything we can to overcome entrenched prejudice, support engagement and activism, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1348874/empowering-women-girls-everywhere/>

## WOMEN'S RIGHTS: AN INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT

The Express Tribune, March 8th, 2017.

Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif

The world celebrates the International Women's Day 2017 today with a focus on Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030, a theme that makes a case for greater inclusion of women. Traditionally, women have been involved in jobs that are marked by income inequality.

However, the professional world has been undergoing massive transformations thanks to technological advancements and globalisation with significant implications for men in general and women in particular. Our workforce needs to be reflective of this change.

Gender equality in the world of work is a sine qua non for sustainable development. The world is moving towards the idea of gender equality in many spheres. Though the challenges for women remain, there is thankfully a greater awareness about women's rights and the need for mainstreaming their role.

Women represent a huge opportunity to transform their potential into an engine of sustainable development through a right set of policies and affirmative action.

Our history bears witness to the fact that our women have historically played a wonderful role in the socio-economic development of the country. The freedom struggle of the Muslims of the sub-continent, for a separate homeland under the inspiring leadership of the Quaid-e-Azam is a worthy example.

How can we forget the role that great women like Mohtarama Fatima Jinnah, Begum Shahnawaz, Salma Tassaduque Hussain, and Begum Liaquat Ali Khan played in the creation of Pakistan?

The above-mentioned and countless other women dedicated their lives to translating Iqbal's dream into reality under the leadership of the Quaid-i-Azam. Theirs was a parallel story of courage, dedication and sacrifice that made it possible for us to live in a free land and enjoy all the fruits that come with the freedom.

The Quaid-e-Azam paid a befitting tribute to the women in his speech at a women's gathering in Karachi in late 1947 in the following words: "Half of Pakistan is yours because you have put in no less effort to achieve it than the men."

In line with the vision of the great Quaid, my Government is zealously committed to empowering the women of Punjab. I believe that their participation is crucial to the socio-economic growth of the province.

Islam discourages discrimination against women on the basis of gender. It allows them full opportunities to take part in national life. It obligates parents to educate their daughters. Those who oppose women education and bomb girls' schools are the worst violators of Islamic teachings.

Islamic history bears testimony to the fact that women played a leading role in all walks of life. They were mohadis, legislators, doctors, business women, jurists, preachers, educationists and ambassadors. Discrimination against women weakens society. No society can move forward without undoing the discriminatory attitudes regarding women.

Government of the Punjab has introduced numerous facilitative steps and legal amendments to provide enabling environment for safe and non-discriminatory platform for women.

Safety and protection at workplace, public space and at homes would be available to the women. There would be increased number of educated, skilled and healthy women as the ongoing efforts unfold in future. There is already a significant presence of women in top positions as provincial ministers and administrative secretaries to the Government of Punjab.

Safeguarding women's rights for social empowerment and the targeted expansion of economic opportunities for women's economic empowerment are also areas of special concern.

A number of legal steps were taken to provide significant empowerment to women. Major initiatives were as follows: Inheritance laws were amended; Punjab Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2012 was passed and resultant Office of Women Ombudsperson was created to address complaints;

Punjab Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2014 led to creation of an independent Punjab Commission on the Status of Women; The Punjab Fair Representation of Women Act 2014 was passed providing up to 33% representation for women; and under the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act, 2016, the government is establishing Violence against Women (VAW) Centres in Punjab to protect women from physical, economic, and psychological violence.

In addition to the legal recourse, various actions led to provision of enabling environment for women to work and pursue their careers.

A dedicated Women Development Department (WDD) was created with a mandate to implement Punjab Women Empowerment Packages and to align government policies towards gender mainstreaming and equality.

Any social change is not manifested overnight, however, efforts to make women aware of their rights would continue. The agenda of women empowerment has strong political and personal commitment. I am going to make sure that this agenda does not get derailed. Women empowerment is key to national progress.

Punjab government is working to strengthen women's decision making power within households. This plays into the work of inclusion of women within the electoral process. More women need to come out and be part of the political process.

When it comes to pushing this agenda forward, I take my inspiration from the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam who goaded women into playing an active role to take the country forward.

The agenda of women empowerment is a national agenda. On this International Women's Day, let us resolve to work together to enable and facilitate our women to play their full part in national life. I would like to end the article with a beautiful quote:

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1348890/womens-rights-indigenous-movement/>

WOMEN MNAS GO 'UNHEARD' ON WOMEN'S DAY  
Dawn, March 9th, 2017

Hassan Belal Zaidi

ISLAMABAD: Even on International Women's Day, women lawmakers from the opposition were kept from raising the matter of discrimination in the award of development funds to those elected on reserved seats on the floor of the National Assembly.

After the conclusion of question hour on Wednesday, Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Dr Nafisa Shah was not allowed to introduce a privilege motion on the subject, which has been in the works since the previous sitting of the lower house and was signed by nearly the entire opposition.

Deputy Speaker Murtaza Javed Abbasi insisted on proceeding with mundane house business, which included the introduction of two constitutional amendment bills, despite an earlier commitment from Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq to allow women ample time to speak their minds.

Mr Abbasi's refusal to allow Dr Shah to introduce her privilege motion ahead of other business prompted an opposition walkout and the contingent then converged on the dais outside Parliament House to air their grievances.

Meanwhile, the deputy speaker struggled to keep the house in order after a lack of quorum was pointed out by PPP's Abdul Sattar Bachani. Upon realising that they didn't have the required numbers, Mr Abbasi suspended proceedings, allowing the treasury to call in reinforcements.

By the time the session resumed 45 minutes later, the government benches were brimming and the opposition had also been cajoled back into the house. Dr Nafisa Shah, however, was not among those who returned.

She told Dawn after the session that she did not agree with the larger decision to return, stressing that women needed assurances from the speaker that lawmakers on reserved seats wouldn't be subjected to "parliamentary apartheid" in the house.

On the floor of the house, PPP's Azra Fazal Pechuho summed up the dilemma of women lawmakers in the National Assembly.

"Pakistan still is a patriarchal society; women in the public sphere are still facing a lot of problems and we have to change men's mindsets. They have to give us due respect and regard and acknowledge our efforts."

She said women led the assembly in terms of contributions to legislative business and attendance, but regretted how those elected on reserved seats had yet to receive their rightful share in MNAs' development funds under the current government.

Paying tribute to historic women's movements, such as the suffragettes who secured the right to vote for women worldwide, and the Women's Action Forum that stood up to the "tyranny" of the Zia years, she regretted that women did not have equal rights, even in parliament.

"If we do not speak for our own rights in parliament, we cannot stand for the rights of [Pakistani] women outside parliament," she concluded.

From the treasury benches, Tahira Aurangzeb, Tahira Bukhari and Shaza Fatima Khawaja only had more platitudes to offer. There was a palpable sense of apathy — both on the house floor and in the press galleries — while women lawmakers were speaking.

Most government members read from prepared remarks, rendering their speeches devoid of the emotional appeal that comes with impromptu speaking.



Apart from the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) Nafeesa Inayatullah Khattak and Jamaat-i-Islami's Aisha Syed, no one forcefully made a case for equal rights for women.

Despite being the forum that had enacted historic laws for women's protection, Ms Khattak asked "what protection do women who work in parliament have against harassment at the workplace?"

She recalled how working women were not being given the maternity leave they were entitled to, in spite of the passage of laws ensuring this right.

In a passionate speech, Ms Syed recited verses from the Holy Quran and recalled that female infanticide had been strictly prohibited in Islam.

"Why can't we raise a voice for the woman who dies giving birth in Adiala Jail, or the one who is killed by her cousin for demanding her share of inheritance, or the one who is burned alive for not possessing sufficient dowry, or the one who is sentenced to die by a jirga?"

"If we are not given equal rights in parliament, we cannot be the voice of the millions of Pakistani women who we represent," Ms Syed concluded, alluding to the issue of development funds.

"Laws are being made to support women, but we need to keep a check on their implementation," said PML-N's Shaista Pervaiz, who heads the Women's Parliamentary Caucus.

"When our votes are counted, when we run the business of the house and fill the quorum requirements, then we need a share in everything. No matter which side of the house we may be on, we speak with one voice," she said, calling on her male colleagues to support them in their struggle.

But for all the verbosity on display, when time came to pass a resolution in connection with International Women's Day, only 25 members were left in what had been a packed house just hours ago. In the end, only 15 women and 10 men voted on a resolution, which was signed by at least 15 lawmakers.

In stark contrast, when debate on International Women's Day was initiated in the upper house on Wednesday, Senate Chairman Raza Rabbani abdicated his seat, allowing Awami National Party's Sitara Ayaz to chair proceedings.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319363>

#### 'DAY WITHOUT A WOMAN' CELEBRATES FEMALE POWER

Dawn, March 9th, 2017

PHILADELPHIA: American women are staying home from work, zipping up their wallets, wearing red and attending rallies across the country to show their economic strength and impact on society as part of International Women's Day celebrations happening across the globe on Wednesday.

"A Day Without a Woman" is the first major action by organisers of the Women's March since the day after President Donald Trump's inauguration, when millions of women poured into the streets in protest of misogyny, inequality and oppression.

The event coincides with the UN-designated International Women's Day. German airline Lufthansa had six all-female crews flying from several cities in the country to Berlin. Sweden's women's football team replaced the names on the back of their jerseys with tweets from Swedish women "who have struggled to gain ground in their respective field." Finland announced plans to create a \$160,000 International Gender Equality Prize. Women also held rallies in Tokyo and Madrid.

In the US, spokeswoman Cassady Findlay said organisers for “A Day Without a Woman” were inspired by the recent “Day Without an Immigrant” protests held last month. She said the action is aimed at highlighting the effect of women on the country’s socio-economic system and demonstrating how the paid and unpaid work of women keeps households, communities and economies running.

“Throughout history, the strikes that have the biggest impact are the ones when people who are already the target of oppression participate,” Findlay said. “It’s when women of all backgrounds strike and stand together that we’re really going to see the impact.”

Trump took to Twitter on Wednesday and asked followers to join him in “honoring the critical role of women” in the US and around the world. He tweeted that he has “tremendous respect for women and the many roles they serve that are vital to the fabric of our society and our economy.” Ivanka Trump echoed her father’s sentiments, tweeting: “Today, we celebrate women and are reminded of our collective voice and the powerful impact we have on our societies and economies.”

Unlike the Women’s March, Wednesday’s US protests focus on the absence of women, who are being steered to local rallies and community groups and away from work or shopping in stores or online. Organisers also asked women to wear red to signify love and sacrifice.

A group of feminist activists was detained in Moscow on Wednesday after protesting inside the tightly guarded Kremlin with banners calling for an end to male rule.

Seven people were detained including two journalists and taken to a police station for questioning, wrote OVD Info, a website that monitors the detention of activists.

The Novaya Gazeta opposition newspaper, whose journalists witnessed the demonstration, published a photograph of two protesters standing on a balcony of one of the Kremlin towers holding smoke flares and a banner saying “Feminism is our national idea”.

The protesters were able to sneak slogans written on skirts and scarves through the tight security, the paper reported.

Police later released the protesters without charge, activist Yelena Tishchenko told the Echo of Moscow radio station.

The protest resembled those by feminist punk group Pussy Riot, who in 2012 lit flares and sang a song about President Vladimir Putin on a platform on Red Square. Frontwoman Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and fellow member Maria Alyokhina were sentenced to two years in prison in 2012 for performing an anti-Putin anthem on the altar of a Moscow church.

March 8 is a public holiday in Russia but is mainly celebrated by giving flowers and chocolates to women rather than stressing the need for gender equality.

In a video address to the nation’s women, Putin said that he and other men “will do all we can so that our beloved women are lavished with care and attention and smile more often”.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319374>

HYDERABAD: Marches, rallies, seminars and workshops were organised by different governmental and non-governmental organisations across the province on Wednesday to mark the International Women's Day.

The Institute of Gender Studies of the University of Sindh took out a rally in Jamshoro campus to mark the day. It started from the mausoleum of the university's founder and first vice chancellor Allama I.I Kazi and was led by VC Prof Dr Fateh Mohammad Burfat and senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party Moula Bux Chandio.

The VC said in his address to the participants that women needed to be socially and economically empowered. Goals of development could not be achieved without educating women as equal partners, he said.

Mr Chandio said that his party would resist any attempt to isolate and marginalise women. Sindh government was doing its best to assign key positions to women in the government, he said.

Dr Azhar Ali Shah, SU teacher, talked about the state's failure in ensuring women's empowerment and said that celebrating the day was a gesture to applaud women's global struggle for empowerment.

Dr Arfana Mallah, rights activist, said that more and more women were coming forward and proving their mettle in the fields of politics, economics, public administration and other fields, but still their representation was low in public offices and decision-making bodies.

Amar Sindhu, columnist, said that Pakistani society discriminated against women and referred to women's physical, psychological, sexual and social violence.

Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam, organised a programme at the institution to mark the day where speakers urged women to learn entrepreneurship and explore markets in urban centres to get empowered economically.

The programme was followed by a walk jointly organised by the university, Aurat Foundation and USAID.

Dr Qamar Wahid, a noted scholar and educationist, urged girls to become educationists and researchers and act like 'change-makers' in society.

Prof Mohammad Ismail Kumbhar cited examples of some elements, who deprived elderly women of their gold earrings in some areas, and said that such incidents did not show true picture of women-friendly history of Sindh.

Aftab Memon, a member of the Sindhi Association of North America, said that women needed to fight for their rights as the government would not give them their rights.

Zulfiqar Halepoto, a writer, said that Sindhi society was backward as compared to 'civilised' societies.

The Society for Environmental Action, Reconstruction and Humanitarian Response organised a dialogue on women's issues at its office. The participants said that women still faced discrimination in rural and urban areas.

The Sindhi Nari Sangat Sindh staged rallies in Hyderabad and Tando Mohammad Khan to mark Women's Day.

The Awami Workers Party also organised a programme in its office to mark the day. It was attended by housewives, students and women peasants.

The gathering adopted a number of resolutions, calling for an end to forced conversion, kidnapping of girls and justice for the heirs of slain rights activists.

Sindh Aurat Tanzeem held a programme in Awami Jamhoori Party's office.

**LARKANA:** Activists of Pirbhat Women Development Society held a march from Qubo Saeed Khan to Shahdadkot town, to mark Women's Day. The participants, led by Rubina Chandio, covered 25km distance in seven hours to express solidarity with women.

In Shahdadkot, Sardar Akhtar Mengal, chief of Balochistan National Party-Mengal, joined the marchers and saluted the courage of women in fighting for their rights in his brief speech.

He expressed solidarity with the participants and condemned inhuman treatment meted out to women in society. Women's victimisation could not be tolerated, he said.

Ms Chandio said the march would turn out to be a milestone in women's struggle. The black custom of branding a couple karo and kari, which had haunted women in tribal areas, must be eliminated and women should be freed from the tribal yoke.

**KHAIRPUR:** The Institute of Gender Studies of the Shah Abdul Latif University held a seminar on 'gender gap' to mark Women's Day.

Barrister Shahida Jamil, former provincial minister for education and a women's rights activist, said at the seminar that the 1860 British laws on the protection of women were justified.

She said that discriminatory laws were introduced and implemented against women during dictatorial regimes.

Sadiqa Salahuddin, executive director of the Indus Resource Centre, said that gender gap prevailed in education. During the last couple of years, the Sindh government had taken some positive steps for bridging the gender gap by introducing law against violence against women at the workplace and different other projects initiated to empower women, she said.

Ruqayya Laghari, regional programme manager of SRSO, said that women had played a central role in the war of independence, Hur movement and Hari Tehreek.

Prof Dr Parveen Shah, Vice Chancellor of SALU, said that gender equity was not just about economic empowerment, it was a moral imperative. Fairness and equity included political, social and cultural dimensions, she said.

**BADIN:** Several organisations held programmes in Badin, Matli, Talhar, Tando Bago and other towns of the district to mark Women's Day.

The speakers at the events urged the government to make laws, which could guarantee rights of women.

**MITHI:** Speakers at a workshop organised by the social welfare department to mark Women's Day urged the government as well as other organisations working for women's rights to focus on backward areas like Thar.

They said that Thari women were among the worst sufferers of droughts and other calamities. The frequent disasters had caused a steep decline in the literacy rate among women in Thar, which was very alarming, they said.

**NAUSHAHRO FERROZE:** The Sindh Educational Movement organised a meeting to observe International Women's Day.

The meeting said that several pro-women laws were passed but none was implemented. 'Evil eyes' were still following women in government departments, said the participants of the meeting.

MIRPURKHAS: ARTS Foundation, an NGO, organised a family fair and 'Meena Bazaar' at Satellite Town and the social welfare department held an awareness programme in Mashal School to mark the day.

The speakers said that Islam had given rights to women and did not stop them from reaching assemblies and holding ministries.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319278/marches-rallies-seminars-across-sindh-mark-international-womens-day>

## PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES: KU CELEBRATES HOME-BASED WORKING WOMEN

Yusra Salim

KARACHI: To appreciate the hard work and acknowledge the efforts of home-based working women on the occasion of International Women's Day, University of Karachi's Center of Excellence for Women's Studies (CEWS) gave a chance to these women to share their stories and experiences at an event organised on Wednesday.

More than 15 stalls were set up at the parking area of CEWS which donned purple flags and tents to celebrate the colour of women. Women from Landhi, Korangi, Orangi and other marginalised areas, where the ratio of home-based working women is high, had set up stalls to sell their handmade items.

Nafisa Begum, 50, who has been weaving carpets since 25 years, took one month to complete a three-feet-long and five-feet-wide carpet. "The carpets I make are sold for about Rs6,500 in the market. But, since I work for a third party, I only get Rs2,400 per carpet," she lamented while weaving red wool in the khaddi she had set up at the ground.

While printing colour on bangles, Naseem Khan who lives in Korangi, narrated how she completes printing of around 10 packets of bangles daily with a 1,000 pieces in each packet for a meager Rs250 per day.

"We are labour and our seth [owner] brings this work to us. If we demand more money, then they ask us to leave the work and we cannot afford to do so," she explains.

Khan has been putting up her stall at the institute since four years. The department pays the women who set up stalls, which are free of charge, their one-day wage in lieu of not being able to work at home on that day.

The event was organised to celebrate International Women's Day and to spread awareness among women about their rights. While inaugurating the event, the dean of faculty of social sciences, Prof Dr Ahmed Qadri appreciated the efforts of the women's department. "This [department] has set the trend for other institutions by celebrating women's day since many years," he said.

This day is more than just a seminar, workshop and wearing of specific-coloured dresses, he said, adding that the kind of researches being conducted by the institute should be promoted and adopted.

"The day is not far when the United Nations will adopt one of the researches conducted at the institute for women's rights," said Qadri.

The dean also emphasised that more practical work for women needs to be done in Pakistan instead of drawing room politics. He extended his support to the department students and faculty in their efforts to conduct seminars and research work.

CEWS director Dr Nasreen Aslam Shah was of the view that girls need to be empowered and that everyone, from government institutes to education institutes, should join hands to empower them. "We alone cannot make the difference until everyone will agree to the criteria we work on," she said.

Talking on the issue of home-based working females, Shah pointed out that the country does not have any data of how many females work as home-based workers. “There is a dire need of a policy for [home-based working women] so that the middleman who is earning from their hard work should be eliminated and the women can earn better for their labour,” she said, pointing out that other than that, domestic violence against women and child abuse are also major issues that need to be addressed

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1349714/providing-opportunities-ku-celebrates-home-based-working-women/>

## NEED TO CREATE AWARENESS ABOUT BREAST CANCER, PA TOLD

Bhagwandas

Dawn, March 11th, 2017

KARACHI: Only 235 mammography tests were conducted in the Sindh Government Hospital Liaquatabad in three years, showing that a majority of women, probably owing to social and cultural taboos, were unwilling to undergo the test, said Health Minister Dr Sikander Mandhro.

He was responding to questions during Friday’s Question Hour in the Sindh Assembly that pertained to the Sindh health department.

Responding to a question raised by Muttahida Qaumi Movement legislator Naheed Begum regarding mammography machines’ availability in only four hospitals — three in Karachi and one in Hyderabad — in the province, the minister agreed that there was a need to have more machines at other hospitals, but added that it was also necessary to create awareness among masses, particularly women, about such tests for early detection of cancer.

Responding to a question asked by Pakistan Muslim League-Functional legislator Nand Kumar regarding the availability of such machines in remote parts of the province, the minister said that seven machines had been procured and these were installed in mobile units so that these could travel all over the province, but it transpired that the electricity requirement of machines was high and could not be provided by the generators, so now efforts were being made to install these machines in divisional headquarters’ hospitals in Sukkur, Mirpurkhas, Nawabshah, Larkana, etc.

Responding to a question, the minister said that the test was expensive, but it was done free of charge and patients did not have to pay any fee or charges.

Stressing the need to create awareness of the disease and the tests, the minister said prevalence of cancer was high in the country. He said only 235 tests were conducted in a Karachi hospital in three years because patients could not be forced to undergo the test as they had to come forward voluntarily.

He agreed with Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf legislator Samar Khan that known women personalities be approached to give an impetus to the awareness campaigns, especially by delivering public interest messages through the media.

Responding to a question asked by MQM legislator Kamran Akhtar about why diabetes test strips were not being provided to diabetic patients in hospitals, the minister said that the strips were not to be provided to patients, but were available at hospital labs and technicians there conducted the tests to check the sugar level of patients.

He said that keeping in view the importance of these strips the government had directed that at least 10,000 diabetes test strips should always be available at hospitals and when the number goes below that figure the hospital chief could purchase these locally without seeking permission from high-ups.

Responding to a question raised by PTI legislator Khurram Sherzaman regarding providing house jobs to doctors, the minister said all doctors passing out of government colleges were provided house jobs in hospitals attached with the relevant colleges with stipend of around Rs50,000.

He said that stipend was fixed according to funds available in the budget, and earlier it used to be only a few hundred rupees; over the years the amount had been increased.

Replying to another question, he added that the doctors graduating from one college but doing house jobs at the hospitals that were not attached to their college were not paid stipend, because the government preferred that the doctors did house jobs in the hospitals of their colleges concerned.

Responding to a question asked by MQM legislator Naheed Begum regarding handing over of basic health centres to People's Private Healthcare Initiative (PPHI), the minister said that 1,137 basic health facilities in 22 districts under an agreement had been handed over to the PPHI in 2013 and their performance — being monitored regularly on a monthly basis — was satisfactory.

Further extension in tenure would be considered in 2018 when the agreement would end, he added.

Responding to a question raised by Mr Akhtar regarding nursing teaching institutions, the minister said 13 such facilities — nursing schools, nursing college, etc — were operating and no fees was charged from nursing students, who were also not paid any stipend during the studies either.

He said that as the hospitals were facing shortage of nurses all the graduate nurses were recruited. The degrees were recognised internationally as well.

The written answer to a question says that 25 people died owing to dengue in Karachi during 2010, but the area-wise details of where these people lived was not available.

Written answer to another question says that only one child died owing to nutrition deficiency in Tharparkar between February 2014 and March 2014.

Answer to another question says that 374 children died between November 2013 and March 2014.

MQM legislators Sardar Ahmed, Qamar Rizvi, Sumeeta Syed, Amir Pirzada, Naila Muneer, and others also participated in the Question Hour.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319674/need-to-create-awareness-about-breast-cancer-pa-told>

‘OVER 40,000 DIE OF BREAST CANCER EVERY YEAR IN PAKISTAN’

Dawn, March 11th, 2017

Faiza Ilyas

KARACHI: With 90,000 breast cancer cases being annually reported in the country and over 40,000 deaths caused by it, Pakistan has the highest rate of breast cancer in Asia, though early diagnosis can save lives and make a difference.

These figures were highlighted at a fundraiser held here on Friday with an aim to build the country's first dedicated hospital for breast cancer in Lahore by Pink Ribbon Pakistan (PRP).

Speaking at the event that also marked the launch of Friends of Pink Ribbon's Karachi chapter, Dr Rufina Soomro, a leading breast cancer specialist who is currently heading the surgery department of Liaquat National Hospital, said that myths and misconceptions, cultural beliefs, taboos and lack of awareness mainly hindered early diagnosis.

“As compared to other types of cancer, breast cancer has over 90pc chances of complete cure if diagnosed at an early stage. Yet the sad part of it is that most cases are reported late,” she said.

Citing LNH data, she said only 2.3pc breast cancer patients had reported at an early stage some two decades ago whereas the percentage was still less than 10pc. Since cancer doesn't cause pain, it doesn't receive attention until health conditions got serious, she explained.

“The situation is just the opposite in the West where a majority of patients reported at an early stage of the disease,” she said.

Besides, Dr Soomro added, mostly patients diagnosed with breast cancer were in their 40s in Pakistan, whereas mostly breast cancer patients reporting at hospitals in developed countries were in their 50s.

Referring to her experience at LNH, she said every year 10pc to 20pc new cases of breast cancer were reported at the hospital. “Back in 1994, I had 58 patients, now some 1,823 patients are registered with me. Among other things, this rise is also linked to increased awareness and availability of diagnosis and treatment facilities, which I believe are still very few given the high level of prevalence of the disease,” she said.

PRP chief executive Omar Aftab underscored the need for creating awareness about the disease, recalling past instances when it was impossible to use mass media for public education on the disease as people had a problem with the word 'breast'. Unfortunately, the problem still existed, he said.

“The hospital being established in Lahore will offer free screening facilities while the needy would be treated from Zakat funds,” he said.

Mariam Malik, a breast cancer survivor, talked about her battle with the disease and urged women to have regular self-examination and screening tests for the disease.

The programme also featured live music, a photo booth, a silent auction and gifts and prizes for the participants.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319675>

## THE EXTINCTION OF THE PAKISTANI WOMAN

The Express Tribune, March 12th, 2017.

Shahzaib Khan

If you were a member of an oppressed minority what would you want? Rights? Representation? A voice? An end to persecution? That new lawn print?

The biggest oppressed minority in Pakistan dreams of week-long extravagant weddings, overpriced designer couture and blissful ignorance.

At this earliest of junctures, I hereby qualify that this piece is in no way meant to be an attempt to belittle the commendable, growing feminist discourse in Pakistan and I admit that the piece is in fact an exercise in arbitrary opinionating. However, that should not stop me or anyone else, from voicing their, at least personally, valued opinion. The piece is also aggressively stereotypical in its approach and possibly inadvertently misogynistic at places. There



are obviously laudable and significant exceptions to the following view, both women (some found these days commendably reclaiming public spaces such as dhabas) and men. The identification of a macro trend without caring for the micro intricacies however does not render an opinion instantly invalid.

The biggest minority in Pakistan are Pakistani women; and yes, they are an oppressed minority.

Unlike, in 1983 Lahore, where throngs of women charged into burly armed guards of the state to raise their voices, Pakistani women today are not fighting. Content with finding out the predeterminedly unfortunate fate of that burden of a woman on her favourite television soap, the Pakistani woman is taking it easy. This is of course not true for all Pakistani women.

Pakistani women, much as the same as Pakistani society in large have disintegrated into very specific groups of social classes. When a species is about to go extinct it is categorised into different groups depending on its likelihood of extinction. A near-threatened species is one that is likely to be threatened with extinction in the near future but does not face that immediate threat at this time.

A critically endangered species, on the other hand, is one which has been categorised as facing a very high risk of extinction. The near-threatened Pakistani woman is excruciatingly upper-middle class and so as to put it objectively is complacent, because she is safe. This woman is less likely to be shot dead on account of not making the chappati round enough, as compared to the critically endangered woman.

The critically endangered woman, by the way, is the woman who cooks, cleans and cares for the near-threatened woman. The critically endangered woman is pre-disposed, on account of her lack of finances and her resulting incapacitations, to have a higher than normal likelihood for being shot in the back of the skull on account of a slight misdemeanor and is so preoccupied with striving to exist, that she rather understandably does not have the time to pen an article, share an inspiring tweet, or lead a protest on the road, to claim her rights.

Pakistani society has transcended an already deplorable debate on women's rights to stir up another debate. The question we find ourselves asking today, much to the dismay of all conceptions of humanity, is not whether a Pakistani woman should, have equal employment opportunities, equal representation in Parliament or be duly recognised for her contribution in domestic capacities but whether Pakistani women have the right to live or not?

It is beneath me, as it should be beneath any human being, to even consider such a question. The problem is that apparently it's not. It's not beneath Pakistani men and most ironically Pakistani women to entertain a debate where the right of women to live is construed through the paradigm of ill-defined social acceptability.

Pakistani women are found formulating ever new arguments to give credence to their right to live. And that is where the near-threatened women and their striking failure comes into play. The movement for the rights of Pakistani women has been confined to albeit commendably brave tweets and Facebook posts that act as voices of protest every time a woman is shot dead, stabbed or burnt.

The foremost blame for this decadency and degradation in the feminist discourse in Pakistan rests with the women of Pakistan, especially the near-threatened. The critically endangered woman is already, as aforementioned, teetering on the edge of existence, she cannot reasonably be expected to come onto the roads when the same costs her next meal. The contribution of the Pakistani man to the current state of women rights in Pakistan is second to none but at the same time they can't realistically be expected to pioneer its rectification, the majority of the same at least, however justified such an expectation may be.

Pakistani society draws a clear distinction between men and women and as such one is not pre-disposed to care for the other. This is by no means a reason to disavow the Pakistani man of the responsibility of fighting to change a situation that he has helped create.

But, expecting the average Pakistani man or for that matter the critically endangered woman to lead the movement for the rights of the average Pakistani woman is unrealistic, idealistic and frankly, lazy, however unfortunate this may be.

Often, when a case for legal action is lodged against a party, the petitioner has to establish his or her bona fide as an aggrieved party for the action to be maintainable. Such is the recognition afforded to the idea, that only when you are aggrieved, will you seek change. Pakistani men are not aggrieved.

Pakistani women, the near-threatened, the privileged and the educated, therefore, have a pro-active and pre-disposed responsibility to ask questions, the right questions. They are the ones primarily aggrieved, able and thus mandated with forming the discourse on women's rights in Pakistan. But if this discourse today is centered around the question of the right of Pakistani women to be allowed to live, the women of Pakistan have been failed, completely and utterly, admittedly by the men first, but ultimately and more importantly by the women of Pakistan themselves.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1352954/extinction-pakistani-woman/>

‘FEMINISM IS NOT A WESTERN CONCEPT’

Dawn, March 12th, 2017

Aamir Yasin

RAWALPINDI: South Asian feminism activist and writer Kamla Bhasin on Saturday said patriarchy placed restrictions and imposed violence on women but it also affected men by stealing them of their humanity.

She said men were not born with ideas of male privilege but were socialised into patriarchy by the society.

“I do not consider a man who hits a woman or who rapes a girl to be a human,” she said.

She said in its essence feminism was about viewing the world from the point of view of women rather than just men, and that this was essential to establish equality and democracy in society.

“India and Pakistan both claim to be democracies but there is little democracy inside people's homes when it comes to gender relations,” she said.

Ms Bhasin was speaking at an event organised by the Awami Workers Party (AWP) in connection with the International Women's Day.

A large number people attended the event to listen to the visiting Indian activist about feminism in South Asia.

Speaking in Punjabi at the start of her talk, she said she was born in a village near Mandi Bahauddin just prior to the partition of the subcontinent.

The talk began with questions from AWP Punjab deputy secretary general Alia Amirali and Tooba Syed, and was later opened up to questions from the audience.

Ms Bhasin negated claims that feminism is a Western concept and pointed out anecdotes from Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic history showing that ideas related to gender equality had existed long before the emergence of feminism in its formalised shape in Europe.

When asked why women had been unable to claim their rights despite making up half of the world's population, she compared it to the condition of the working class of the world who had been largely unable to claim their rights despite making up over 90pc of the world's population due to a lack of organisation and unity.

“In the case of women, they live far from each other in separate homes with little mobility which adds to the obstacles in organising,” she said.

“Boys are taught from a young age that when they come home from school they can drop their bags and expect their sisters to pick it up for them.”

Ms Bhasin ended the talk by leading an exuberant series of chants calling for the freedom of women and all oppressed people.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1319842/feminism-is-not-a-western-concept>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 27TH TO MARCH 5TH 2017 VARSITIES OUT OF AMBIT OF WOMEN HARASSMENT ACT

The Express Tribune, February 28th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Human Rights rejected on Monday the proposals for inclusion of educational institutes in the Harassment of Women at Workplace Act.

MNA Babar Nawaz Khan chaired a meeting of the committee at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Studies. And it was the first time that 14 women members of the committee turned up at the meeting.

The Ministry of Law and Justice, citing Article 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code, agreed with the parliamentary panel that educational institutes did not fall under the women's harassment act ambit.

The committee members expressed serious concerns over multiplying number of harassment cases in universities across the country as “nobody from those involved in this crime are penalised”.

MNA Asiya Nasir moved a bill seeking an amendment to the Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010 to inculcate penalties into the law for those found in harassment at educational institutions and of domestic workers.

As the discussion started on the first agenda item, Nasir stated harassment at the universities was the worst and on the rise and institutions responsible to address the issue had failed while those at the helm of affairs at campuses were passing the buck to others.

“Women cannot come out to speak against the crime especially in the areas where law is not that effective,” she said.

When Khan asked, the Ministry of Law and Justice's draftsman said the law could not be amended as it did not apply on the universities because the law covers relationship of the employee and the employer.

“That is why any student or domestic worker does not come under any of the two entities,” he said sharing Article 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code. He said the said article of the Constitution already covered any such harassment of women anywhere in the country.

Another lawmaker Munaza Hassan suggested that women ‘student’ or domestic worker be mentioned.

National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) chairperson Khawar Mumtaz also opposed the suggestion of a few members to repeal the law and promulgate a new one to cover the issue. She suggested that a desk could be

formed at the NCSW with assistance of Ministry of Human Rights and intimate police stations on how to handle such cases without making them public.

Interestingly, Nasir proposed the said amendment in 2014 and she protested after the rejection of her proposed amendments that “it took the law ministry three years of deliberations”.

To back their contention, the official of the law ministry also stated that on the same grounds President Mamnoon Hussain had rejected a complaint filed by a female student of Quaid-i-Azam University in 2014 that the existing law against harassment was not applicable on cases which included students.

The committee was also told that the student had appealed to the president, and the chancellor of the university and the president had sought the law ministry’s input on the issue, which suggested that students were not protected under the harassment act.

NCSW chief also stated that after the formation of a desk there should be close monitoring of the cases of harassment as such cases were on the rise and needed to be addressed accordingly.

The committee’s chairperson at the end rejected amendments of Nasir, saying that since the law already covered all such harassment acts against women there was no need to amend the law. He further suggested that the NCSW should inform federal ombudsman about harassment of women at workplace and the Ministry of Human Rights should closely monitor such cases and suggest improvements in the mechanism and system.

While the parliamentary panel rejected amendment to the law of harassment of women at workplace to bringing education institutions in its ambit, the Ministry of Law and Justice also contends that the law is applicable to universities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1341139/varsities-ambit-women-harassment-act/>

#### ‘SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAN PLAY ROLE IN WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT’

Dawn, March 3rd, 2017

ISLAMABAD: “Legislators cannot do much regarding women’s empowerment; women will be empowered when the mindset of men is changed. However, this may take a few generations,” Senator Mohsin Laghari said at a seminar on Thursday.

He said women will be empowered when people let their daughters decide what they want to study, instead of forcing them to, for example, become doctors.

“Legislation cannot change the mindset. A large number of men still believe women can only do household chores. We have to start trusting women,” he said.

The senator said women in Pakistani society face discrimination, and are not considered to have decision-making power. He urged well-educated men to play their role in the empowerment of women.

“I belong to a family in which women were not allowed to pursue graduate or postgraduate [studies]. When my sister decided to take admission to Lums, I was the only one who supported her,” he said.

Sehar Afsheen, a social entrepreneur, said she has been working in rural areas to raise awareness among women and support them in pursuing social entrepreneurship.

“I have observed that when women from rural areas who become social entrepreneurs are more vulnerable to violence because they cannot give as much time to household work,” she said, adding that this needs to be considered during planning for the economic empowerment of women.

Another social entrepreneur, Samar Hasan, said NGOs are dependent on funding, and must follow a donor-driven agenda.

“So systematically, there is an issue because their projects end after a year or a year and a half. Social entrepreneurship can create more jobs and play an important role in the empowerment of women,” she said.

Mansoor Malik, a business professional and social entrepreneur, said it has been observed that women and girls who secure the top positions at educational institutions do not join the workforce, and there should be an effort to ensure they can pursue social entrepreneurship from their homes.

SDPI researcher Ahad Nazir, during a briefing earlier in the seminar, said a comprehensive social entrepreneurship policy strategy is needed at the national and provincial levels.

He said the government and government departments should encourage social entrepreneurship by introducing a one-window system in this regard.

“Moreover, the purchase of equipment and technology, especially for women who want to start businesses, should be subsidised,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318042>

#### NA PANEL ASKS GOVT TO BAN SETTING UP OF SUGAR MILLS

Dawn, March 4th, 2017

Mubarak Zeb Khan

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly’s Standing Committee on Textile Industries recommended to the government on Friday to ban establishment of new sugar mills, especially in cotton growing areas.

The recommendation came at a time when the cotton acreage has shrunk by 22 per cent over the past 10 years because of low yields, according to the textile ministry.

Another major reason for the downward trend in cotton growing is better returns in growing sugarcane because of policy incentives offered by the government for the crop.

The country aims to cultivate cotton on 3.2 million hectares annually — 72pc (2.6m hectares) in Punjab, 27pc (600,000) in Sindh and less than 1pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Unlike cotton, the government’s support for sugarcane crop has helped increase its cultivation by 14pc.

The price of sugar has also gone up to Rs68 per kg in 2016 from Rs31 in 2005-06. The price of sugar in the domestic market is 80pc higher than the international market.

Moreover, the number of sugar mills went up from 56 in 1995-96 to 84 in 2015-16.

Of them, 45 mills were in Punjab, 32 in Sindh and eight in KP. Almost 70pc of the mills are located in core cotton zones of the country, especially in Punjab.

Analysts say that this unexplained protection and unprecedented expansion of sugar industry was posing a serious threat to cotton and other crops.

The committee, headed by its acting chairman MNA Haji Akram Ansari, appreciated the efforts by the ministry concerned for encouraging cotton growth by using modern techniques and methods.

It, however, recommended that cotton growers and farmers should be given incentives to increase growth.

As per law, the provincial government is empowered to issue a no-objection certificate (NOC) for installation of a new sugar mill or enhancing the crushing capacity of existing mills.

At the end of the meeting, the committee approved all budgetary proposals relating to the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) of the ministry for the next fiscal year.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1318349>

## **April 2017**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 24TH TO APRIL 30TH 2017***

### ***RADICALISED WOMEN***

Dawn, April 24th, 2017

Huma Yusuf

TWO young Pakistani women, two different trajectories. Within days of Malala Yousafzai being named UN ambassador of peace, Naureen Leghari was arrested in Lahore before she could carry out a suicide bombing against the Christian community on Easter.

From Nobel Prize and Oscar winners to sportswomen and scientists, we have become accustomed to high-achieving women symbolising Pakistan's progress and progressiveness. But there is another side to the story, embodied by women such as Aafia Siddiqui, Umme Hassan and now Leghari — the daughter of an academic, herself a medical student, radicalised online, married to a militant and willing to murder dozens.

The ISPR released Leghari's confessional video, presumably to showcase the efficacy of the intelligence and security forces in preventing militant attacks. But what the clip — showing an articulate and self-possessed woman speaking matter-of-factly about a suicide attack — truly highlights is the degree to which Pakistani society has become vulnerable to radicalisation.

Leghari's example will be used to reiterate the fact that Pakistan's university campuses, far from being spaces of enlightenment, are ideological battlegrounds, dominated by violent extremist voices — a fact also driven home by Mashal Khan's brutal lynching and Saad Aziz's conviction for the Safoora Goth bus attack. A recent Sindh Counterterrorism Department survey of 500 'hardcore' militants found that 64 had Master's degrees, and 70 had Bachelor's degrees.

This should come as no surprise. Our campuses are stifling environments that do not foster critical thinking or debate. University-age youth are meant to be fired up by ideological issues, political questions, and perceptions of injustice. These should be addressed through scholarship, discussion and student activism. In the absence of productive channels, it is no wonder that students are radicalised or willing to participate in mob violence.

Leghari's case will also spur a regressive debate about social media and calls for stricter controls regarding internet access. That would be hugely counterproductive. The state's obsession with online censorship and surveillance has

prevented progress towards media literacy, digital safety and inculcating critical consumption skills among youth to enable them to better contextualise and resist violent extremist propaganda.

What we will not have is a broader conversation about a society in flux, one in which a medical student wants to escape to the land of khilafa rather than pursue a career and retain her familial and social links. How did we come to this?

The phenomenon of female radicalisation in Pakistan has not yet been seriously considered. Some scholarship aside, the Al Huda enthusiasm was perceived to be a joke or a nuisance. Many families welcomed the growing conservatism of their women, making them easier to control.

This benign view assumes that women are not part of the same political and ideological landscape that men are; that they are not capable consumers of media and political discourse; that they cannot be moved to action.

But they can be, particularly as they are overwhelmed by the mixed messages and competing demands of a society in the midst of an identity crisis. Pakistani women are subject to a resilient patriarchy in a society that increasingly requires them to be educated and contribute to double-income households. They must juggle expectations of their social role and behaviour generated both by Bollywood and religious talk shows.

They must navigate a world in which Junaid Jamshed could both profit off women as consumers of his fashion brand and appear on a morning talk show (hosted by a woman) and argue against women being allowed to drive. Such an environment inevitably engenders feelings of alienation and confusion, without giving women the skills or space to process and channel those feelings.

In the midst of the contradictions and hypocrisies, the simplicity of the messaging of the militant Islamic State group holds appeal. And it offers what women are seeking: dignity, purpose, protection. Research on the so-called 'brides of IS' has shown that women are radicalised by the same issues as men: a perception that the ummah is under attack, frustration over the international community's indifference to Muslim suffering, a sense of religious duty, the desire to meaningfully contribute to a utopian society, a craving for comradeship.

To prevent more Legharis from emerging from our campuses, our political parties — and educators, media personalities, and civil society representatives — must take up the issues that really affect modern women: access to education, workplace equality, freedom of movement, physical safety. Tackling these issues will help women manage the frustrations our society presents, and undermine the appeal of radical narratives.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328884>

## MARVI JOINS WB COUNCIL ON GENDER EQUALITY

Dawn, April 25th, 2017

WASHINGTON: The Benazir Income Support Programme's (BISP) Chairperson Marvi Memon has been appointed to the World Bank Group's Advisory Council on Gender and Development for two years, the Pakistan embassy announced on Monday.

Earlier, the World Bank Group and Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) awarded funds to a Pakistani team from The Urban Institute and Information Technology University to investigate the environment that perpetuates the harassment of women on public transit systems in the country.

The proposed study will try to find solutions to reverse this trend. The winners will spend 18 months in a cross-disciplinary approach and focus on the Lahore Metro Bus System to inform transit systems countrywide.

The Pakistani team is one of 10 teams from around the world awarded competitive funds totalling \$1.14 million for innovations to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The World Health Organisation estimates that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Beyond the devastating personal costs, gender-based violence inflicts a steep economic toll: estimates of resulting lost productivity run as high as 3.7pc in some economies.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1329071>

#### GIRL FOUND DEAD IN WELL, POLICE SUSPECT BROTHER KILLED HER FOR 'HONOUR'

The Express Tribune, April 26, 2017

Riaz Ahmad

PESHAWAR: A teenage girl was found dead in a well at her home in Arbab Tapu area on Wednesday and police suspect that her brother murdered her for 'honour' and dumped her body there.

An officer at the Mattani Police Station told The Express Tribune that Kainaat, 17, was shot dead by Qaisar Khan, her brother. Later, Qaisar threw his sister's body in a well at their home.

"The body is extremely decomposed as several days have passed since the murder. A Rescue 1122 team fished it out of the well after a lot of effort," the officer added.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1394169/girl-found-dead-well-police-suspect-brother-killed-honour/>

#### HONOUR' KILLING: WOMAN GUNNED DOWN BY COUSIN

The Express Tribune, April 26, 2017

Riaz Ahmad

A resident of the area said the girl had gone missing when she was 12. He added that the girl was kidnapped by her relatives and sold several times.

She was then forced into prostitution in Lahore. Her father kept searching for her and was finally able to find her.

The Mattani police had rescued the girl and returned her to her village.

The resident said after the girl was rescued, she had identified the relatives who had kidnapped her when she was a child but they were never booked.

The police said Qaisar had accused his sister of having illicit relationships with some men and that could have been the motive behind the murder.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1394169/girl-found-dead-well-police-suspect-brother-killed-honour/>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 17TH TO APRIL 23RD 2017

#### OVER HALF A MILLION WOMEN IN BALOCHISTAN NOT REGISTERED AS VOTERS

Dawn, April 20th, 2017

Saleem Shahid



QUETTA: Over half a million eligible women have not registered themselves as voters with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in Balochistan as they do not possess their Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs).

Provincial Election Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Jaffar said on Wednesday the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) had no record of women belonging to far-flung areas of Balochistan. However, he added, the commission was taking measures to ensure maximum participation of women in the electoral process.

“The Election Commission selected various areas for registration of women voters,” said Mr Jaffar.

“We have been receiving encouraging reports for the past six months in this regard and will make all efforts to fill the gender gap in Balochistan before the next elections,” he said.

Nadra has held out an assurance that it will send mobile teams to remote areas of the province for issuing CNICs and other legal documents to women, said Mr Jaffar.

In Balochistan, presently over 3.7 million voters are registered with the Election Commission and 1.5m of them are women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328120>

## ENFORCEMENT OF WOMEN PROTECTION LAWS URGED

Dawn, April 20th, 2017

Saher Baloch

KARACHI: Despite legislation to protect women from violence, women are still suffering either at the hands of their own families or by the community at large, with perpetrators largely remaining unpunished and unidentified.

This was stated by former senator Javed Jabbar at an event organised by the Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO) on Wednesday where the findings of their recent report titled State of gender-based violence response services in Sindh were shared.

Mr Jabbar elaborated that such practices can be seen in India as well. The point is to implement the law in such a way that perpetrators, that often go unpunished, are brought before courts of law.

Women representatives from the provincial welfare departments pointed out how the role of the concerned department remains limited due to a lack of understanding and clarity regarding their duties.

National manager SPO, Shazia Shaheen, shared that the research conducted by the organisation in four districts of Sindh found that there is lack of clarity regarding the role of the women welfare department and the social welfare department.

She said the findings make it clear that law enforcement authorities understand violence against women to be limited to rape, abduction and domestic violence. Stakeholders, including the departments that are given authority to work for the welfare of women, are not aware about the recently passed legislation and its role in ensuring justice. She pointed out how female workforce in welfare departments as well as law enforcement remains visibly low.

Advisor to the Chief Minister on Social Welfare Shamim Mumtaz added that cases of violence against women that reach the courts through the Darul Aman face delays due to lack of evidence and timely reportage.

Chairperson of the Sindh Assembly's Standing Committee on Women Development, Naheed Begum, spoke about the budgetary issues facing the ongoing schemes.

Muttahida Qaumi Movement MPA Heer Soho suggested that all three departments — the social welfare department, women welfare department and human rights — should be merged so that they can work effectively.

The event was attended by representatives of various social welfare departments such as health, planning and development and human rights.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1328036>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 10TH TO APRIL 16 TH 2017  
CM APPROVES PUNJAB WOMEN PROTECTION AUTHORITY ORDINANCE  
Dawn, April 10th, 2017

Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE: The chief minister has finally approved the Punjab Women Protection Authority Ordinance which is going to be promulgated in the next few days, providing for a management structure for the innovatory women protection centres in Punjab.

One such centre has already started functioning in Multan, providing under one roof for the first time in the history of the country all sorts of protection and legal and medical assistance to women who are victims of violence. The government intends to establish such centres in every district.

The centres and the ordinance have been initiated and designed by the Chief Minister's Strategic Reforms Unit.

According to a copy of the draft ordinance obtained by Dawn, the authority will be headed by a chairperson to be appointed by the government. Its members will include three MPAs, including two women, additional chief secretary or the home secretary, IGP, social welfare, women development and prosecution departments' secretaries, four non-official members including two women and a director general.

The authority shall establish, maintain, monitor, govern, operate and construct women protection centres in Punjab, initiate, maintain and execute a continuous process of comprehensive planning for the protection system, formulate and ensure minimum standards, code of conduct and standard operating procedures to be followed by the persons engaged in the protection system.

It shall ensure that a case of violence registered with a police station in the province and the victims are referred to the protection centre, if not in the district concerned to a nearby one, for medical examination, collection of forensic, investigation, prosecution and protection.

It shall enlist women volunteers and organizations and assign roles to them in terms of advocacy, raising awareness, mediation and referring the victims to the protection centres, carry out administrative affairs and monitor and evaluate establishment or construction of protection centres and provide them funding for their functions.

The authority or its officials will approve annual budget, make regulations and policy decisions.

The director general shall be appointed by the government. The authority shall appoint officers, advisors, and employees, also having powers to acquire their services on deputation.

The ordinance provides that the authority may seek assistance of police in the discharge of its duties and performance of functions.

There shall be an additional IGP Women Protection, a woman officer, whom the authority shall authorize to supervise the working of police officers posted at the protection centres, report to the IGP on a bi-weekly basis all the cases at the centres, supervise and monitor prosecution of cases and oversee and monitor prosecution on gender-based crimes and performance of police officials at the centres.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326052>

DOMESTIC DISPUTE: SET ABLAZE BY IN-LAWS, TEENAGE GIRL DIES  
The Express Tribune, April 12th, 2017.

Mudassir Raja

RAWALPINDI: A teenaged girl, who had allegedly been set on fire by her husband and in-laws in Kahuta almost two weeks ago, died at a Rawalpindi hospital on Tuesday.

Following her death, Kahuta police inserted murder clause, section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code, to the FIR.

According to available details, 19-year-old Hameeda had allegedly had a domestic dispute with her husband and in-laws in the Darankot area of Kahuta. Following the dispute, her family allegedly doused her with kerosene and set her on fire.

As a result, the girl sustained severe burn injuries. She was taken to the Burns Unit at the Holy Family Hospital (HFH) in Rawalpindi for medical treatment.

The girl received treatment at the facility for 12 days. However, she succumbed to her injuries on Tuesday.

Her body was later handed over to her family by doctors after the completion of formalities.

Kahuta police had initially booked four people, including a woman, for setting the girl on fire on March 31.

A police officer said investigators had inserted section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code in the case.

He added that police had already arrested the girl's father-in-law and a court had sent him to jail on judicial remand.

A gang of unidentified robbers, dressed in the uniform of anti-terrorist commandoes, looted jewellery, cash and other valuables from a family which had recently returned from England in the Rawat area.

According to details, Zafar Iqbal Mirza told Rawat police in his complaint that he had arrived at Islamabad airport from the UK along with his family.

He was travelling towards his home in a car when four robbers, wearing ATS uniforms intercepted them near Rawat.

He said the robbers snatched around 125 grammes of gold ornaments, 1,500 British pounds and two mobile phones before fleeing.

Police said they had lodged a case against the robbers and had started investigating the incident.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1381062/domestic-dispute-set-ablaze-laws-teenage-girl-dies/>

## IN CUSTODY: SUSPECTS ROUNDED UP OVER RAPE OF A GIRL IN MANAWAN AREA

Rana Tanveer

The Express Tribune, April 13th, 2017.

LAHORE: As Easter approaches, several Christians were arrested after one of the members of their community was accused of raping a Muslim girl in the Manawan police area.

One woman and 13 men were released from the custody of police through a court bailiff, while a family of four, including a man, his mother, sister and his brother in-law had been in police detention for two days, The Express Tribune learnt on Wednesday.

Amir Masih, his mother, sister and brother-in-law remained in police custody.

The police lodged an FIR on the complaint of brother of Saima\* under Section 376 (Rape) and 201 of the Pakistan Penal Code against the four detained people.

He said Amir, in connivance of his family members, raped the victim and kept her detained at their house. The brother said they had been looking for the girl since 11am and came to know by evening that she was being detained at the neighbour's house. He stated the girl was found tied with a rope and the residents had fled by the time.

A relative of the alleged rape victim, requesting anonymity for fear of a reaction, told The Express Tribune that the girl used to visit the house of Amir as the two had relations. He suspected the two were waiting for dark to elope and the girl's family ultimately accused their neighbours to save honour.

Advocate Naseeb Anjum, belonging to the same area, told The Express Tribune that the police had arrested his sister, his brother-in-law, four of his nephews and eight other Christians who had nothing to do with this incident.

He said after the filing of a petition in court, a bailiff was deputed and he recovered 14 detainees from the Manawan police station.

Investigation In-Charge Inspector Tariq Pervez of the Manawan Police Station told The Express Tribune that none of the accused have been arrested.

He said the police party did not see the girl tied with ropes, but eyewitnesses had informed them of the incident. They said the victim was sent for a medical examination and it managed to establish that a rape was committed.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1382060/custody-suspects-rounded-rape-girl-manawan-area/>

## UNITED STATES' FIRST MUSLIM WOMAN JUDGE FOUND DEAD IN HUDSON RIVER

Dawn, April 14th, 2017

Masood Haider

New York: A trailblazer black jurist who became the first Muslim woman to serve as a US judge in a high court, was found dead in New York's Hudson river in Harlem on Wednesday. She was 65.

Sheila Abdus-Salaam's body showed no obvious signs of trauma and a medical examiner was set to try to determine what killed her. Police sources, however, told New York Post tabloid her death appeared to be a suicide.

Abdus-Salaam, a native of Washington DC, became the first African-American woman appointed to the court of appeals when Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo named her to the state's highest court in 2013.

"Justice Sheila Abdus-Salaam was a trailblazing jurist whose life in public service was in pursuit of a more fair and more just New York for all," Governor Cuomo said in a statement.

"As the first African-American woman to be appointed to the state's court of appeals, she was a pioneer. Through her writings, her wisdom and her unshakable moral compass, she was a force for good whose legacy will be felt for years to come."

A graduate of Barnard College and Columbia Law School, Ms Abdus-Salaam started her law career with East Brooklyn Legal Services and served as a New York state assistant attorney general, according to the court of appeals website.

She held a series of judicial posts after being elected to a New York City judgeship in 1991, a report said.

The Princeton Encyclopedia of American Political History said Ms Abdus-Salaam was the first Muslim woman to serve as a US judge. She was also the first black woman appointed to the state's highest court.

AFP adds: Her husband had reported her missing on Tuesday, US media said. Abdus-Salaam was born into a working class family in Washington DC in 1952 and educated at public schools.

While researching her family history as a child she discovered that one of her great-grandfathers had been a slave in Virginia, US media said.

She studied at New York's Barnard College and Columbia Law School, where she was a classmate of Eric Holder, the first black US attorney general, who served under former president Barack Obama.

Abdus-Salaam began her legal career at East Brooklyn Legal Services, which works against poverty, racial and social injustice, before serving as a lawyer for the New York state government and city's office of labor services.

She was appointed to the Court of Appeals by Cuomo in 2013.

"Her personal warmth, uncompromising sense of fairness, and bright legal mind were an inspiration to all of us who had the good fortune to know her," the court said. She lived in Harlem.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1326845/united-states-first-muslim-woman-judge-found-dead-in-hudson-river>

## WOMEN, MINORITIES HAVE LIMITED PARTY ROLES

The Express Tribune, April 16th, 2017.

Asma Ghani

ISLAMABAD: Like the society at large where there are few public spaces for women, political parties of the country are also similarly restrictive for women.

During the session on 'Women and Excluded Groups in Political Parties and Legislative Bodies' at the Islamabad Literature Festival (ILF), speakers agreed that while there had been a marginal improvement and some token representation, women and minorities largely remain sidelined.

Women and minorities commonly remain sidelined despite the token representation of these excluded communities in the central executive bodies of various political parties,” said Marvi Sirmed, an activist and columnist.

Presenting a detailed analysis of political parties, she said that women and minorities were hardly represented in key political forums such as the ticket awarding committees, manifesto making committees and think tanks in all the parties of the country.

The exception, Sirmed said, was the Awami National Party (ANP) which, while not having separate wings, ensures their inclusion in the party structure and decision-making process.

Talking about the Pakistan People’s Party, one of the largest parties and which had given the country its first female prime and foreign ministers, Sirmed said that there was a glass ceiling which did not allow women leaders to be at the helm.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1384903/women-minorities-limited-party-roles/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 3 RD TO APRIL 9 TH 2017

MAN ‘BURNS’ WIFE, DAUGHTER OVER FAMILY DISPUTE

Dawn, April 3rd, 2017

MUZAFFARGARH: A man allegedly burnt his wife and daughter over some family dispute at Chowk Sarwar Shaheed on Sunday.

Muhammad Yunis told the police that when he went to his daughter Rashida Parveen’s home in Chak 589/TDA, he found smoke billowing from her room while Rashida and her daughter Eman Fatima were lying unconscious. With the help of neighbours, he took them to the rural health centre where doctors referred them to the burn unit of the Nishtar Hospital, Multan. In his report to the police, Yunis alleged that Rashida’s husband, Sajid, had put his daughter and granddaughter on fire.

Station House Officer Muhammad Idrees registered the case against Sajid who is reportedly on the run.

KILNS: Deputy Commissioner Saif Anwar Jappa has warned the brick kilns and factories against using husk or used tyres for heating.

In a meeting, he said the monitoring teams along with the environment officials would make surprise visits to the mills and brick kilns. Those found violating the relevant regulations would be sealed and cases would be registered against their owners, he added.

The deputy commissioner said 1,400 Khidmat cards had been distributed among the brick kiln workers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1324483>

WHEELING AND DEALING: WORKING WOMEN TO REV THEIR WAY INTO THE FUTURE

The Express Tribune, April 5th, 2017.

LAHORE: Punjab’s working ladies are all set to rev their way into the future as the government plans to provide a Rs90 million subsidy on motorcycles under its Women on Wheels programme.

The objective is to increase women’s mobility and access to transport.

Chief Minister's Special Monitoring Unit (SMU) Senior Member Salman Sufi told The Express Tribune that a pilot project is being rolled out initially across five districts of Punjab, including Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Sargodha and Rawalpindi. Depending on the success of the pilot project, the initiative will be extended to other districts of Punjab, he added.

In collaboration with City Traffic Police and Punjab Transport Department, Sufi said the SMU already provided motorcycle riding training to some 3,000 women from selected districts. He hoped these motorcycle riders would hit the roads in the next couple of months as the procurement of motorcycles, paperwork and other formalities is underway.

Project proposal documents indicate the government will pay Rs86.88 million on account of an upfront subsidy, two months' markup and finance the media campaign during the current financial year. Rs3.11 million will be paid on account of the markup subsidy over the next financial year.

Documents show the government will procure 3,026 Honda CD-70 motorcycles for the pilot project for which it will provide Rs26,435 subsidy per unit. In addition, Rs10 million has been earmarked for an extensive media campaign for the promotion of the scheme.

As per the proposed payment plan, an applicant has to provide 30% down payment (Rs20,050) of the motorcycle cost (Rs67,500), while the government will pay a 37% upfront subsidy (Rs24,975) and the remaining 33% (Rs22,275) will be financed through the Bank of Punjab. A successful applicant will have to pay a monthly installment of Rs2,110. The applicant will also have to pay Rs3,375 as registration fee, Rs3,375 for insurance cover and Rs3,000 for documentation.

As per the project proposal, the government will provide capital subsidy and successful applicants will pay the remaining cost of the motorcycle in installments with zero mark-up on the amount being financed by the Bank of Punjab. Helmets, leg guards and canvas carrier bags shall also be provided for safety and convenience of the riders.

All beneficiaries of the Women on Wheels initiative should have a Punjab domicile and be aged between 18 and 40 years.

To obtain motorcycles under the project, beneficiaries have to produce parent/guardian consent, a valid CNIC, driving license, education qualification (minimum matriculation) and salary/income statement showing a minimum income of Rs20,000.

Though the Punjab government is heavily investing on transport infrastructure, the Women-on-Wheels project document policymakers accept that existing facilities do not cater to the travel needs of women commuters.

Women from all walks of life are facing challenges with respect to accessing their desired locations.

Policymakers believe the project will also have positive impact on the environment as women's dependency on other modes of transport, such as tri-wheelers or four-wheelers will be reduced. Though the project is little delayed already, implementation is scheduled for between March 2017 and February 2018, documents indicate.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1374447/wheeling-dealing-working-women-rev-way-future/>

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<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1374447/wheeling-dealing-working-women-rev-way-future/>



Asha'ar Rehman

YET another effort has been made, by an honourable judge of the Lahore High Court, to somehow address the scourge of dowry in Pakistani society. Hearing the case of a divorced woman who asked for a fair evaluation of the dowry she had brought to her then husband's home the justice observed that the nikahnama should have a column listing all that is given as dowry at the time a couple tie the knot.

The judge "directed the Punjab government to introduce a new legislation to incorporate dowry items in nikahnama (marriage certificate) so the miseries of women litigants seeking recovery of their dowry after marital break-up can be reduced...".

The judge said "the brides should also be educated and well informed about negative impacts of dowry and should be taught that they can lead a better life with more independence and happiness". He advised "women to make bold moves towards exposing families demanding dowry using the help of the legal system". He said the "legal system should be made more accommodative to make the brides and their family members comfortable".

The court asked the law secretary to take the required course to have this legislation in place "at the earliest" which would shift the focus to the Punjab Assembly. The assembly must now deliberate long and hard, but a judge speaking with so much urgency on the topic of dowry is so much like old times when jahez was considered to be a pressing problem requiring immediate attention. The direction given speaks of the difficulties anyone asked to come up with a solution related to matters of dowry is immediately confronted with.

The dowry issue brings out so many contrasting sides to people and their preferences in life. Dowry is something to be ashamed of even as it is a source of pride, the kind that is flaunted at the most triumphant moment. The same set of people would be hiding it one moment in front of one particular group and not too long afterwards they might be found showing it off in front of another audience.

Given that the utmost secrecy is often maintained in the shifting of dower items to the home of the blessed 'shurfas' at the time of marriage it is difficult to see that there would be any volunteers filling in the new jahez column in the nikahnama. There will have to be some law forcing them to do so, which brings us back to the sad discussion about how existing laws aimed at curbing the practice are routinely flouted. The media was only allowed to flash images of the most expensive and ostentatious wedding in Punjab recently since the organisers of the event were sure they would get away with it.

Most shockingly, in so many instances the exercise to estimate the worth of dowry is undertaken only after signs of estrangement between the couple come to the surface. The Lahore High Court case mentioned here took up the plea of a woman who refused to accept a lower court's evaluation of the riches she had brought for her husband's pleasure over and above her own transfer to his house. She pleaded that the price tag put on the jahez items by the lower court was much smaller than the amount she claimed at the dissolution of her marriage.

I know this must have left a bad taste in the mouth of many sensitive souls but this was not at all an unusual occurrence. Money affairs feature as prominently at the end of a marriage as they do at its start. Quiet, uncomplicated settlements elude many and resorting to the courts for a resolution is routine.

There are laws that discourage the practice of giving and receiving dowry, but it is a problem that has long since been placed in a category which defies all attempts at reform. The entries in this category are best left unattended, at a comfortable distance from debate lest they turn into a source of collective pain and shame. There's a sense of resignation with which society has accepted dowry as a necessary tradition that cannot be discontinued.

The moments when Pakistanis are shaken out of their apathy by a report on the 'curse' of jahez are becoming less frequent. There are, of course, bits of news about a 'bride' being burnt over her inability to bring a dowry befitting the status and imagination of her in-laws. There are so many incidents of husbands and in-laws losing their cool at some point and satisfying their anger by snuffing out a fragile, defenceless life.

The newspapers are full of stories of torture and killing on account of an insufficient dowry. Quite often, the emphasis of those who highlight these ugly situations is on the violence it all culminates in. There are calls for protecting women against domestic violence. There are demands for — and some practical work has been done on this — ensuring proper treatment for victims of violence carried out because of the size of the dowry. There are not too many words spoken in anger against the scourge of dowry itself. It is certainly not like the past when the subject would be spoken about with so much passion and conviction.

There are no ready solutions to this question short of a miraculous overnight transformation where all people, without exception, suddenly discover the true meaning of dignity. The belief — there has to be such a belief to sustain civilisation — however, is that answers will come once the right amount of pressure has been created by a vibrant forward-looking debate by those who care.

The Lahore High Court judge asking for the introduction of a new column in the nikahnama has done his bit by reigniting a dead debate. It is now for others to join in and take up a challenge that all of us have been too afraid to face.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1325334>

#### MAN ARRESTED FOR SEXUALLY ASSAULTING NIECE

The Express Tribune, April 9th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: A man who had allegedly sexually assaulted his nine-year-old niece in an Islamabad suburb last week has been arrested, police said on Saturday.

The victim\* and her family worked at a brick kiln near Sector I-16 and lived in makeshift quarters at the kiln.

On March 29, the child's father had lodged a complaint with the Noon police that an unidentified person had raped the child as she slept in the quarters with her grandmother.

The girl's father had said that they had tried to chase the suspect when the child made noise but the assailant managed to flee.

Police said the child suffered injuries during the sexual assault and required stitches. The doctors also confirmed the sexual assault.

Later, police had shifted the child to a government-run shelter. After spending a few days with children at the shelter, the girl told police investigators that her paternal uncle\* had assaulted her. The child also recorded her statement before a magistrate.

After the statement was recorded, police arrested the suspect on Friday. He was produced before a magistrate on Saturday who granted police three-days physical custody of the suspect.

Police said that the suspect had confessed to the committing the crime before investigators. Police added that the suspect had also been molesting the child.

The victim is still living at the women crisis centre..

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1378533/man-arrested-sexually-assaulting-niece/>

## May 2017

**NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 29TH TO JUNE 4TH 2017**

### **FEUDAL LORD SENT TO JAIL FOR RAPE CASE JIRGA**

Dawn, May 30, 2017

SUKKUR: A court on Monday remanded a feudal lord in judicial custody for allegedly settling a sexual assault case in a jirga.

Seven men were booked for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old girl after local political parties staged rallies and demanded legal action against the feudal lord and justice for the victim's family.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar took notice of the incident on May 11.

On Sunday, Sardar Taj Mohammad Domki told a press conference at his residence in Kandhkot town that he had settled the gang-rape case in a jirga by imposing a fine of Rs1.8 million on the "real accused".

He said that had he not intervened in the matter the girl would have not got justice from the courts. He claimed that the complainant, the victim's father, would file an application in court to withdraw the case.

However, the Kandhkot police registered a case against Sardar Domki, the convener of the jirga, and 14 others at the C-Section police station.

The police arrested the jirga convener and produced him before the Kandhkot Civil Judge for remand. The court sent him to prison on 14-day judicial remand.

Meanwhile, Kandhkot SSP Dr Samiullah Soomro told Dawn that the FIR of the rape case was lodged on May 10 and as per the girl's medical examination she was sexually assaulted 15 days ago.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336205>

### **DEAF, MUTE WOMAN RAPED ON LAHORE-BOUND TRAIN UNDERGOES TEST THRICE**

Dawn, May 30, 2017

LAHORE: A deaf mute woman, who was allegedly raped on a Lahore-bound train near Samasatta (Bahawalpur) two days ago, had to undergo medical examination thrice.

'S', a mother of three, was travelling with her sister and brother-in-law to Lahore from Quetta by Akbar Bugti Express on Saturday night.

The woman told her relatives [through sign language] that she went to washroom where an unidentified man barged in and raped her.

Victim's brother-in-law Ali Aqdu reported the matter to railway police and they checked all bogies of the train and arrested a man 'K', a sepoy in Punjab Regiment and posted in Chaman, Balochistan.

The Samasatta railway police later registered a rape case against the suspect on the complaint of victim's brother-in-law.

The complainant told Dawn that they were travelling from Quetta to Lahore when a man raped his sister-in-law in the washroom of the train.

He said his sister-in-law reported the matter to his wife and they raised an alarm [in the train] while adding the railway police reached there and inquired about the incident.

He said his sister-in-law narrated the incident by using sign language and also pointed to the man who was sleeping in other bogie near the washroom.

He said the police arrested the man and also registered a case but he did not understand why the police had his sister-in-law medically examined thrice.

He said first [medical] examination was carried out in Bahawal Victoria Hospital, second in Multan and again the officials called them to Lahore for third examination.

He alleged that the policemen were not cooperating with them and dealing [with them] like they were suspects.

Samasatta SHO Malik Iqbal told this reporter that the army personnel had contacted them and sought custody of the suspect for trial under military laws.

He said they had sent samples of the suspect for DNA test.

To a query, he said they would hand over the suspect to the respective authorities.

The SHO said he did not know why the authorities carried out three medical examinations.

He said the police registered the case and after medical examination allowed the family to continue with their journey.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1336312>

## WOMAN BURNT IN SHANGLA

Dawn, Jun 04, 2017

SHANGLA: A man along with relatives burned the second wife of his son-in-law after drenching her in petrol, leaving her critically injured.

SHO Karora Haleem Khan told reporters on Saturday that the accused with relatives, including women, came to his son-in-law's house and sprinkled petrol on his second wife before setting her on fire. The woman was critically injured. The police officer said the injured woman was taken to the rural health centre in Karora, wherefrom doctors referred her to Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar.

The victim's husband told police that he got married the woman three months ago. He said he used to send huge amount of money to his first wife from Saudi Arabia, but she gave the money to her father. "When I asked for the payments from my father-in-law he got angry and later, when I was not in my house he along with other relatives came to my residence and set my second wife on fire after sprinkling petrol on her," the complainant told police.

He said after the incident he rushed his injured wife to hospital in Peshawar. He said his first wife had also gone to her in-laws' house before the incident.

Meanwhile, district police officer Rahatullah Khan told this scribe that six persons, including two women, had been arrested in the case, after lodging cases against them under sections 324, 452, 147, 149 of CrPC.

Meanwhile, a woman on Saturday confessed to killing her husband for repeatedly raping his daughter-in-law.

DSP Alpuri Amjad Ali Khan told this correspondent that during interrogation the accused woman confessed to her crime. He said after the incident, the police had arrested the victim's wife, daughter-in-law and son.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1337316/woman-burnt-in-shangla>

#### WOMAN KILLS HUSBAND FOR ASSAULTING DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

The Express Tribune, June 4th, 2017.

Shangla: In a rare incident of honour killing, a woman killed her husband at a village in Shangla, claiming he had been repeatedly assaulting their daughter-in-law for the past three months.

The woman, Begum Bibi, told the police she had killed her husband Gulbar Khan because he had lost respect for his relatives.

The rape victim's husband, an FC soldier knew what his wife was going through, but said he could not pull the trigger out of sheer respect for his father and had planned to leave home once he came back from training.

Alpuri's Headquarters DSP Amjad Ali Khan told The Express Tribune, that they had received reports of a murder in the Zara village of the district on Thursday. A police party went and arrested two women, who handed over the pistol and readily confessed their crime.

Both the women were presented before a sessions court on Friday, DSP Amjad Ali said.

Begum did not hesitate in admitting that she had killed her husband, Ali said. Gulbar Khan was sleeping in his room when she opened fire on him with a pistol, while their daughter-in-law also helped her, the DSP said quoting the suspects statement before the court.

"I killed him because he didn't respect family and relations," Begum told the court while recording her statement under section 164 of Criminal Procedure Code in the sessions court.

According to Begum, their son Wakeel Khan, was employed in FC and was on training since the last few months. In the absence of Wakeel, his father forced his wife into an 'illicit relationship' and the practice continued for three months, she said.

During her confession she added, "I decided to kill him when he refused to give up his evil practice."

Police also produced Wakeel Khan before the court on Saturday. The husband told the court that he was split between respect of parent and honour of wife and had finally decided to leave home. Wakeel said his wife had also told him about his father's action, "but due to parental respect, I couldn't kill, him, but informed my mother, that I will leave home after my return."

A case was lodged against the three under Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code and the court sent Begum, Wakeel, and his wife to jail under judicial remand.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1426737/woman-kills-husband-assaulting-daughter-law/>

#### A POROUS DEMOCRACY WITHOUT WOMEN VOTERS

The Express Tribune, June 4th, 2017.

As the 2018 general elections draw closer, all our attention should be on how to make citizens aware of their right — and need — to vote. If democracy has started its wheels in Pakistan, those eligible to vote should be identified and equipped to exercise their constitutional right.

According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), however, there are 12 million women who are not registered voters in Pakistan. Out of a population of approximately 190 million, 12 million women in our country do not hold any computerised national identity cards (CNIC) issued by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), a prerequisite to register oneself as a voter. The choice of whether to vote or not is not an option for them. This significantly alarming statistic will impact our democracy in many ways but politically dehumanising 12 million voters will impact us beyond just the exercise of voting and the elections.

Looking past the elections for a minute, holding a CNIC card itself has various implications. A CNIC number in this country is often a basic requirement for many individual transactions, allowing one's self to confirm their identity with ease but is essential for any interaction with the state. It is the first recognition of a person's active citizenry.

These 12 million women, it is safe to assume, then have not been engaged in any formal employment, do not hold a bank account, have not carried out any formal transaction often required to own property nor more worryingly, have they attended a government educational institution after 18 years of age. These 12 million women, therefore, exist without truly existing, not involved as active citizens. Uncounted by and unknown to the state machinery in the true sense of the word.

According to statistics — though we do not need statistics to show us on what basis Pakistan is divided, an intelligent guess would be more than accurate — the majority of Pakistani women that do not hold ID cards are from rural Pakistan and belong to economically poor families. This creates another reason for the divide between rural and urban to widen and remain so.

Another persistent trend is the divide in voter registration statistics between genders. In 2015, the Fair And Free Election Network reported the difference in the female and male voter registration gap at 11.65 million. This wide gap between registered female and male voters continues even when analysing the four provinces individually. Worryingly, the gap increases every year.

The real irony, however, is that these 12 million women are so far removed from the state's radar in terms of its responsibilities to them that a CNIC is not at all essential to these women. Their day-to-day lives do not require any formal interaction with the state nor do they expect anything from the state machinery.

Hence these women do not think it necessary to go through what they consider rigid procedural requirements, such as birth and marriage certificates, which they do not possess, the administrative costs involved and the physical access to NADRA offices. The result of this process would be documentation that realistically these women do not believe will benefit them in any way.

Poorly educated women, unaware of their rights and the state's responsibility towards them is bad enough. What is worse is the complacency with which the state, its machinery and political parties have taken advantage of the patriarchal structure to maintain the status quo.

Constitutionally, the state has breached 12 million citizens' basic fundamental rights and all political parties have actively ensured the transgression. To mend this going forward even perfect democratic institutions should seek a state of emergency, so alarming is the disproportionate figure of 12 million politically excluded and disenfranchised citizens.

Going into the 2018 elections would result in the third uninterrupted election this young democracy desperately needs. But the meaning of democracy, like religion, has been lost to ritualistic practices. We must be careful going forward that democracy does not stand still in Pakistan, as mere ticking of the boxes.

Periodic elections — tick. Ballot boxes and political representatives — tick. Parliament with a ruling party and opposition — tick. We must strive towards a Pakistani democracy that reflects inclusion, accountability and truly representative structures. If we ensure anything in these elections, it should be that the 12 million women who do not hold CNICs should do so. It is essential we take these women along in the process of building our democracy.

The ECP and NADRA are attempting to strategies to narrow the female/male voter registration gap. But such a grave problem with such little time left requires much more collaboration and actual innovative thinking. To identify these 12 million women, the government must openly accept the help of specialist non-governmental organisations, to tap into their unique knowledge bank.

Once these women have been identified, NADRA should firstly, forego the administrative fees and the rigid documentary evidence required for CNIC registration. More mobile units should reach out to the women that are unable to access NADRA facilities. The national and provincial commissions on the status of women must act as oversight bodies ensuring that mobile units are reaching out where they are actually needed.

In Balochistan, in the absence of such a commission the Women's Development Department should play the role of being an oversight body. Alternatively, for the purposes of these elections a separate and free voters only identification card could be introduced, where the requirement of registration is left to a minimum.

It is not possible to emphasise enough that this responsibility lays solely with the state. But political parties ambitious to hold power all the while taking advantage of the state's inability to recognise its responsibility, is equal to collusion — perhaps even treacherous. The new amendments to existing law to ensure that election results are declared null and void in constituencies where women have been barred from voting is a welcome and much needed development.

But first things first. Registration of women voters. It is only once these women are registered, can we actually organise, mobilise, educate and ensure their participation in the upcoming elections. For too long, family patriarchs, political party deals to conclude against women voters and the lack of political will and foresight has created the perfect environment to silence women voters. The invisible electorate in Pakistan are its women and the status quo that shuns them out should be challenged and discarded with the state taking the lead.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1426648/porous-democracy-without-women-voters/>

RS675M ALLOCATED FOR PUNJAB WOMEN DEVELOPMENT DEPT  
Business Recorder, June3, 2017

LAHORE: The Punjab government has allocated Rs 675 million for the women development department (WDD) with a focus on empowering women through establishment of hostels and developing IT-based portals for tracking developments in the field of gender parity.

According to the budget documents for FY 2017-18, out of Rs 675 million, Rs 210 million has been allocated for Punjab working women endowment fund as other development programmes (ODPs) and Rs 100 million allocated for Punjab commission on the status of women (PCSW) for research and surveys pertaining to gender issues under the ODPs.

The documents suggested the major part of the allocation for 2017-18 will be utilised in training of domestic workers, monitoring and tracking of women empowerment initiatives, establishment of working women hostels and development of IT-based portal for tracking developments in the field of gender parity.

The major targets/new initiatives which will be implemented during 2017-18 are awareness of public at large on women rights through mass media, capacity-building of newly-elected lady councilors under new PLGO 2016 and monitoring and tracking of implementation of women empowerment initiatives (PWEIs) announced by the chief minister.

In ADP 2016-17, an amount of Rs 629 million was allocated for the women development sector which was later revised to Rs 498 million. The allocation was made for one on-going and six new schemes during the FY 2016-17.

The documents said more than 95 percent of allocation has been utilised during the FY 2016-17 and out of total seven ongoing and new schemes, three schemes are to be completed up to 30th June, 2017. Out of the total allocation, Rs 100 million were allocated as other development programme (ODP) to the Punjab commission on status of women (PCSW).

The women development department was established on 8th March, 2012, (International Women's Day) to materialize the goal of women's empowerment and to implement the pragmatic vision of Quaid-e-Azam-make females' 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 public and uplift of the social and economic status of women in the society. The department also works towards facilitating women by establishing working women hostels and day care centers.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/06/04/14-page/879786-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 22ND TO MAY 28TH 2017

FATA'S FORGOTTEN WOMEN

Dawn, May 23rd, 2017

Razeshta Sethna

HINA Shahnawaz was 27-year-old when she was murdered in Kohat in February 2017. Working for a non-governmental organisation in Islamabad, she was her family's sole breadwinner.

Educated and with a promising career trajectory, hers was an extraordinary achievement for an unmarried tribal woman — so extraordinary that it evoked the anger of her semi-educated male cousin.

When she refused his marriage proposal, he shot her in the heart in her own home because, according to rewaj (tribal custom), she was a blot on his clan's honour.

For women like her, achieving socio-economic emancipation is often tantamount to death. "Women are treated worse than dogs under rewaj," explains a young woman from Kurram Agency who has been 'exchanged' through a jirga decision to settle a feud.

In the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, women have been invisible and voiceless for centuries.

Because women cannot be seen to be counted, their population is based on estimates in the absence of official figures.

According to the 1998 national census, Fata's female population is 1.5 million, with around a three per cent literacy rate.



The region has long been considered a difficult, if not impossible, area to access. And because Fata and most of the Pakhtun belt is a militarised and controlled space, it is impossible to investigate incidents of abuse and violence against women.

“Fata has always been treated as a strategic space where people have been denied their political rights for 70 years,” says Bushra Gohar, a senior member of the Awami National Party (ANP).

Deprived of basic education and healthcare, women have suffered the most from this neglect.

Dowry is legal, property is denied to women when it involves shared lands and a woman is considered her family’s honour — to be bought, sold, bartered and killed.

“Women risk punishment, even death, if the honour of the clan is violated,” explains Sakeena Rehman, an ANP representative from Mohmand Agency. When Noreen Naseer, an activist from Kurram Agency, conducted a survey in her area of women’s views on tribal practices, most matriarchs were resigned to their fate — but younger women expressed anger at oppressive customs sanctioned through the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR).

Ms Naseer, who teaches at the University of Peshawar, claims that “even a 21st century Pakhtun man believes his cultural practices are superior and that tribal society is egalitarian.”

There are no mechanisms in the almost 120-year-old FCR to protect women against practices such as swara, badala-i-sulh (‘exchanged’ to settle feuds), valvar (‘exchanged’ for money), ghag (being forcibly ‘claimed’) and honour crimes.

According to Ms Naseer, most tribal families have experienced at least one honour killing. Given the prevalence of such violence, why have crimes against women gone largely undocumented?

“There are no police stations in our tribal areas to register cases; there are no courts or independent tribunals. Women are at the mercy of informal justice systems,” Ms Naseer explains.

She is involved with the Qabaili Khor (tribal sisters) network, comprising about a hundred women, including Ms Rehman.

Advocating in favour of mainstreaming Fata, they want the judicial system to extend to Fata — but is anyone listening?

“Our women and girls want to go to school, but all they do is collect sticks from the mountains and walk miles for water.

Change will come only with a legal system that replicates the [country’s] judicial mechanism,” Ms Rehman posits.

One of two women on the seven-member ANP reform watch committee, she believes women’s voices must also be heard through jirgas, especially if they are to have a role in a reformed set-up.

Whether that actually happens is to be seen, but disrupting a centuries-old patriarchal order will require time and political will.

Ms Gohar concedes that it is not easy for women to be nominated onto all-male consultation committees.

“Political parties must take responsibility, as the reform package will go through a parliamentary committee.

Parties must be put on the spot for not nominating women to key decision-making forums. Women should not be absent from the table,” she says.

There is no mention of women in the colonial-era FCR, with one exception — Article 30, Chapter IV: “any married woman, who knowingly and by her consent, has sexual intercourse with any man who is not her husband, is guilty of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may be extended to five years or a fine or both.”

The complaint must come from a husband or a guardian, leaving women vulnerable to abuse.

In November 2015, Fazeelat Bibi, accused of committing adultery, was killed by her brother-in-law in Khyber Agency.

Her husband filed a case with the FCR commissioner in Peshawar against the jirga and political agent in Landi Kotal, who had sanctioned her murder under rewaj.

“She was property, so she was used as a sacrificial goat,” says Ms Naseer. Even if justice is served in her case, it will come too late.

“Our state has forgotten women,” human rights activist I.A. Rehman says.

When a six-member, all-male government committee made recommendations, including replacing the FCR with the Rewaj Regulation for Tribal Areas, women’s rights were sidestepped.

Recommendations include the jirga system — with no reference to women’s inclusion — for civil and criminal matters, with the court appointing a council of elders to adjudicate in accordance with tribal customs.

“The jirgas will inherit all the traditions of the FCR jirga, including indifference and hostility towards women. There is no reference to women’s inclusion in the new jirgas,” Mr Rehman says.

Ms Gohar concurs, “Rewaj is the new face of the FCR. Vested interests want the status quo to remain untouched, and they include the civilian bureaucracy, the military and the maliks.”

Having witnessed jirga decisions followed in her area, Ms Naseer says, “Almost all jirga members have killed female family members in the name of honour.”

She believes that most jirgas comprise illiterate people with no knowledge of forensic sciences or DNA tests.

“Elders are paid allowances by political agents for sitting in jirgas so, yes, they will resist abolishing this centuries-old system. Customs of rewaj are also manipulated for their benefit,” she tells Dawn.

The way forward is marked with uncertainty: how will the state allow the people of Fata, women included, to move into a new social and political status?

“Laws cannot be made without social development and education, and without women’s participation,” Mr Rehman points out.

So far, the voices of tribal women have been ignored. Just how much say is allowed to women in male-dominated consultative bodies in the future can only be imagined.

But without their participation, it will be impossible to mainstream tribal communities and bring reforms to this historically neglected part of the country.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334803>

## DESPITE LAW, CHILD MARRIAGE CONTINUES UNABATED IN SINDH

Hafeez Tunio

Dawn, May 23, 2017

KARACHI: Three years have passed since the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2014 was passed but the Sindh government has yet to properly implement it.

Monitoring committees have not yet been formed at district levels nor have any awareness campaigns been started to mobilise the community, police and especially the nikah registrars who solemnise marriages.

“A 17-year-old girl tied the knot with a 27-year-old man. The nikah registrar gave the family a marriage certificate too but the girl’s national identity card number on the nikah nama [marriage certificate] was missing because she is a minor,” revealed a family member of the girl who lives in Shikarpur.

This is not an isolated case, as numerous child marriages go unreported in various districts of Sindh under the nose of the concerned authorities who are supposed to take action under this law. “Early child marriage, that is marriage below the age of 18 years, is a cognisable offense. Whoever performs or facilitates any child marriage will be punished with rigorous imprisonment, which is not less than three years,” states the law, adding that the same punishment will be awarded to the nikah registrar.

Child rights activist Iqbal Detho told The Express Tribune that awareness about this law at a local police level is an essential component of its implementation but no one has yet taken any initiative to spread any awareness about it. “The head muharars who mostly register the FIRs and investigation officers who investigate the incidents must be made aware of this law,” he said, referring to the rules of the law. Detho added that Mirpurkhas division dominates statistics of child marriage cases and is followed by Sukkur, Hyderabad and Larkana divisions.

“The nikah registrar has to ensure that the bride and groom are at least 18 years of age or older. Copies of the couple’s national identity cards must be attested by the registrar under Section 5 of the Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961 but this never happens,” he lamented.

The practice of child marriage is not limited to Muslims, as cases have also emerged of members of the Hindu community marrying their underage children off. It is especially common among scheduled castes, such as the Bheels, Menghwars and Kolis. Sajjad Bajeer, a local journalist, referred to two recent wedding ceremonies in Mithi tehsil of Tharparkar and said, “Some time ago, a Hindu girl of 12 years of age was married to a man who was around 30-years-old”.

He said a similar case was reported in a Muslim household in Chachhro area. “No one has taken the law seriously. The police and local administration are aware of this custom but it still continues,” he said.

The Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO), a civil society organisation fighting for the rights of citizens has begun lobbying for the implementation of the law. Raheema Panhwar, a programme specialist who deals with such cases, said that it is primarily the role of the government to educate people about this law.

“The district level committees under the supervision of the deputy commissioner with district officers of the women development, education and social welfare departments along with two representatives from civil society organisations and one member each from the media and minorities as members are supposed to start awareness

campaigns but all have not,” she said, adding that the organisation has started campaigning in various districts, engaging other civil society activists to highlight the gaps in this law.

Saleem Abbasi, a civil society activist, said that change is not possible until and unless feudal landlords, especially those who are politicians, take the lead against this heinous practice.

“They should include this in their party manifestos,” he said, adding that earlier the police did not have the power to take action against this menace but now the law has given the authority to the concerned SHO to lodge an FIR but since the police is politicised, implementation of this extraordinary law has not seen light of the day. “This law fights these taboos and customs but there is dire need for its implementation,” he said.

Special Assistant to the Sindh Chief Minister on Human Rights Rehana Leghari said the government has taken action by registering cases against perpetrators. “More than 50 FIRs have been lodged so far,” she said, adding that the Sindh Human Rights Commission, led by Justice (Retd) Majida Rizvi, has also recently taken action in two cases of child marriage. “We are fighting against a centuries-old custom and it will take time to overcome these issues,” she said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1416401/despite-law-child-marriage-continues-unabated-sindh/>

#### ‘PREVALENCE OF ANAEMIA RISING AMONG WOMEN’

Mudaser Kazi

The Express Tribune, May 24, 2017

Karachi: As prevalence of anaemia is rising among women, Dr Iqbal Chandio, the provincial programme director of national maternal, neonatal and child health programme, Sindh, urged that White Ribbon Alliance and its partners need to work on the grass-roots level to improve the indicators of maternal anaemia as the condition is affecting the poor.

He said this while handing over a petition on ‘ending maternal anaemia’ by the people of Sindh at a local hotel on Tuesday. The drive was conducted in more than 16 districts across Sindh in the past three months with the objective of creating awareness about the issue and providing a platform to demand effective steps to address the longstanding issue of maternal anaemia.

“The National Nutrition Survey (NNS) 2011 was an eye-opener for Pakistan and revealed inadequate progress in nutritional status of mothers and children,” said Dr Asman Badar, the national campaign manager of the White Ribbon Alliance.

“The NNS 2011 states that prevalence of maternal anaemia for non-pregnant women has gone up from 28.1 per cent [2001] to 50.4 per cent [2011] and for pregnant women it increased from 28.3 per cent [2001] to 48.9 per cent [2011]. The NNS 2011 further reported that in Sindh, 62 per cent of non-pregnant mothers and 59 per cent of pregnant mothers are anaemic. Maternal anaemia leads to poor pregnancy outcomes for the mother and newborn.”

Sharing the objectives of the campaign, she maintained that the government must increase the availability of iron and folic acid supplements by 20 per cent in Sindh. She added that the government must increase the percentage of women of child-bearing age who receive effective counselling about the importance of taking iron and folic acid supplements. Lastly, she said, the government must improve awareness about anaemia among adolescent girls in Sindh by 2018.

Mubashir Zaidi, the moderator of the event, added that we need to tackle the issue on emergency grounds and this would only happen if all the segments of society would realise the importance of health-related issues. “It’s an issue of every household,” he added. He was of the view that if we fail to make women healthy, then we would fail to make our society healthy.

Dr Fauzia Khan, the head of curriculum wing, school education department of Sindh, maintained that they would incorporate small messages in the curriculum regarding the health issues that need to be addressed urgently.

The provincial coordinator of Lady Health Workers Programme, Dr Gul Shaikh, assured the provision of help to the White Ribbon Alliance and its partners to address the issue of maternal anaemia in the province.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1417287/prevalence-anaemia-rising-among-women/>

## WOMEN UPLIFT INITIATIVE TAKES EU TEAM TO JAMSHORO, DADU VILLAGES

Dawn, May 27th, 2017

HYDERABAD: A delegation of the European Union (EU) visited three villages of Jamshoro and Dadu districts on Thursday and Friday in connection with the 'Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strengthening Support (SUCCESS)' programme for which they had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Sindh government.

The EU would form a women's organisation under SUCCESS in Sindh's eight districts.

The EU would form women-specific organisations each at the mohalla level which would be called community organisation and the second tier would be formed at the village level while the third tier at the union council level, which would be called a local support organisation. This structure would be adopted at the taluka and district level as well to be called joint committee, to be headed by the assistant and deputy commissioners concerned at the taluka and district levels.

According to a press release issued on Friday by the Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP), which is partnering with the EU and Sindh government, the EU is committed to play a role for reducing poverty and food insecurity in rural Sindh.

Mr Amaury Hoste, the team leader for rural development of the EU delegation, said the union was working with the Sindh government, TRDP and other partners for integrated rural development, nutrition, economic empowerment and land rights for alleviating poverty in rural Sindh through women.

He, along with Mr Georges Dehoux, development adviser of the EU delegation, Ms Genevieve Hussain, policy adviser of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), visited the villages of Khamiso Khan Khaskheli, Hari Camp, Thariri Jado Shaheed of Jamshoro and Dadu districts.

The delegation met representatives of community organisations of women formed by the TRDP. They said the EU had taken first step to build base in the shape of women community organisations. Once strong base was built, the EU would support with diversified inputs to reduce poverty.

The delegation said that there were 57 per cent poor households in those districts and appreciated passion, enthusiasm and willingness of rural women to escape poverty. It discussed root causes of rural poverty with communities and assured them that the EU was committed to work with them for reducing poverty, providing food security and nutrition; this would all be done by women and for women.

It urged the FAO to work in collaboration with the TRDP for nutrition and food security in rural Sindh. It said that there was need to build synergies between all poverty-reduction programmes, including the Benazir Income Support Programme for better results.

Allah Nawaz Samoon of the TRDP, FAO representatives, government officials, local elected representatives were also part of the visit and discussions with women community members.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1335597>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 15 TH TO MAY 21ST 2017  
INVESTIGATORS FIND VITAL CLUE IN MINOR GIRL'S RAPE, MURDER CASE

Dawn, May 18th, 2017

KARACHI: Investigators probing the kidnapping, rape and murder of a six-year-old girl in Manghopir are looking for two possible suspects who were last seen roaming around the victim's home before her disappearance, it emerged on Wednesday.

SSP Investigation (West) Akhtar Farooq said the victim had returned home from the madressah she was studying in on Monday at around 2pm. Later, she came outside the house and was playing with her two cousins when two men kidnapped her, he said.

He added that the other children were terrified after the incident.

He said the body was found on Tuesday in a tent erected on an empty plot located at a distance of about 400 metres from her house.

The investigators found a computerised national identity card from the crime scene and the police were trying to locate the person, aged around 24, said the SSP.

He also visited the crime scene on Wednesday, met the victim's parents and talked to the children who were playing with her.

One of the children told the investigators that the two suspects were often seen in the neighbourhood.

The body of the six-year-old was found on Tuesday after her parents approached the police and informed them about her disappearance while playing in the street.

A post-mortem examination revealed that she was subjected to a sexual assault and then strangled.

Manghopir SHO Haji Sanaullah told Dawn that a case was registered on the complaint of the victim's father, who nominated one suspect. "We are conducting raids to arrest him," he added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1333787>

NCSW GIVES GLOBAL CALL TO SUPPORT WOMAN CANDIDATE FOR WHO POST

Dawn, May 19th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) has given a call to women all over the world to support the candidacy of Dr Sania Nishtar for the director general of World Health Organisation (WHO).

Letters written by the commission will be sent across the world through the Foreign Office to get maximum votes.

Chairperson NCSW Khawar Mumtaz told Dawn that at the first stage she had given a call to the international community and forums.

"I received around 400 endorsements by global health advocates from more than 40 countries after which it was decided to involve the Foreign Office to send letters to different countries to get support," she said.

In reply to a question, Ms Mumtaz said not only Dr Sania Nishtar, who is contesting for the post, was competent and best possible candidate but there were just a few women at the top level in the United Nations.

“We are also giving a message to the international community that there should be gender balance in the UN and for that women candidates should be supported for different positions,” she said.

A 2016 Credit Suisse Research Institute analysis of over 3,000 companies showed that on a global average just 13.8pc of senior management positions (defined as CEO or reporting to the CEO) were occupied by women. Within the UN system, only 23pc of programmes, funds, specialised agencies or other entities are currently led by women.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS), activist and Oscar-winning filmmaker Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy has said Dr Sania has a vision and a bold voice. The combination of her experience both globally as well as on the front lines in the health sector makes her a formidable contender for the WHO post.

“But more than that, Sania’s selection to the top will signify that capable women can and will change the way the world operates,” she said.

President and CEO of the Global Fund for Women Dr Musumbi Kanyoro said, “Sania has been a champion for women. Like the many women who have signed onto this declaration, I know that Sania will transform women’s health through the advocacy and reforms that she’ll implement as DG of the WHO.”

The first round for the election was held in January this year in United Nations office in Geneva, and Dr Nishtar was among three candidates who were elected by 34 executive board members of the WHO.

The final round for the selection of the director general will be held in Geneva on May 23.

Dr Nishtar has extensive experience in public healthcare both from within and outside the government. She has done PhD in public health and has served on several United Nations commissions and held advisory positions on different international panels and health policy think-tanks. After the Ebola outbreak of 2014 the world requires a top public health leader to steer the organisation introducing major reforms to enable it to respond to challenges posed by emerging diseases.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1334074>

#### WOMEN OF DIFFERENT FAITHS VOW TO WORK FOR RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Dawn, May 20th, 2017

PESHAWAR: Women representatives of different faiths at a training workshop here on Friday pledged to work together for maintenance of sustainable peace, social cohesion and finding solution to the problems of their respective communities in a unified manner.

The training session was organised by Peace Education and Development (PEAD) Foundation under ‘Women Peace Builders Network’ project.

The workshop titled ‘devising early warning mechanism for community-based women groups’ was aimed to enable these women to promote peace, religious harmony and tolerance in their respective communities and help prevent disputes.

Around 60 women from different union councils of the provincial metropolis attended the workshop. The participants were taught how to access, collect and channelise the information from different sources for further necessary actions to prevent any unfavourable incident in their localities.

They were also given opportunity to meet officials of police, social welfare department, directorate of human rights and members of dispute resolution councils.

On the occasion, Shoaib Khan, one of the master trainers and deputy director of directorate of human rights, shed light on protection of human rights, prevention of violence against women and how to access the relevant officials of human rights directorate in case of any violation of their rights.

He informed the participants about the initiatives taken by the government departments for welfare of public. He also shared the helpline number with the participants to contact in case of any problem.

SP Sahibzada Sajjad Khan said KP police were striving to ensure protection to the people regardless of their creed or caste. He said minorities, particularly women, should immediately contact police if they or their community members faced any problem.

Dr Shahid Khan, another master trainer, said without active involvement of minorities their problems could not be addressed. He informed the people about how to play their due role for the country's development by utilising the available resources.

PEAD coordinator Shagufta Khaliq said they wanted to enable common women to resolve their problems by themselves and sensitise their communities to tolerance and interfaith harmony.

“These women can play an instrumental role in helping their communities in difficult situations,” she added.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1334193>

## ECP TO HOLD RE-ELECTION IF WOMEN BARRED FROM VOTING

Irfan Ghauri

The Express Tribune, May 21, 2017

ISLAMABAD: In a tangible step to secure women's right to vote, a new law has been enacted, empowering the election authorities to disqualify candidates involved in restraining women voters. The legislation can also declare the entire poll void and order re-election in any constituency.

The National Assembly, on the last day of its previous session ending on Thursday, amended sections 78 and 103 AAA of the Representation of People Act [RPA], 1976.

The amendment to section 78 ensures that a candidate or his supporters — if found exerting influence to bar a woman from contesting an election or stop any woman from casting vote, by any means — be deemed to have committed corrupt practice which will lead to disqualification of such a candidate.

And, the amendment to section 103AAA has enhanced powers of the Election Commission of Pakistan [ECP], enabling it to hold a summary inquiry if it gets reports of irregularities in conduct of an election and declare the poll in such constituency null and void.



To make the law more stringent, appeals against the ECP's decisions could now be filed in the Supreme Court of Pakistan only. Tagged as the Representation of the People [Amendment Bill, 2017], the bill was tabled by the PPP's Senator Sherry Rehman in Senate as a private member bill.

Approving it in March this year, the upper house had referred the bill to the National Assembly for its nod. After the passage of the legislation, the election authorities would be required to compile gender segregated results of every polling station and of the constituency as a whole.

There were reports in the previous elections that women in certain constituencies – especially in the remote areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkwa and Balochistan – were restrained from voting under covert agreements among political parties or candidates.

The reports suggested that local politicians, workers of political parties, clerics and community leaders had been part of such secret understanding. Since no male and female segregated data of polled votes was available, it was hard to verify such reports.

Senator Sherry Rehman had tabled another bill that proposed that if the votes polled by women are less than 10 per cent of the total votes polled in a constituency, the ECP should declare the election void and order re-polling within 30 days. The bill is pending in parliament, with many lawmakers averse to it.

However, as a first step to secure women's right to vote and participate in the election process, the parliament – through the newly adopted law – has enhanced the number of offences that come under corrupt practices.

After the enactment of the new law, which has been sent to the President of Pakistan for his signatures, a decision taken by the ECP under this clause could not be challenged in any court of law except the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

According to the current voters list, Pakistan has 54.57 million male and only 42.42 million female voters. This shows a huge gap of unregistered female voters in the country.

It is estimated that more than 12.17 million women of 18 years or above – who are otherwise eligible to be registered as voters – are not included in the voters list. The prime reason is that they do not have the Computerised National Identity Cards [CNICs] needed to enlist them in the electoral lists.

The ECP has recently identified 26,000 block codes where there is a more than 12 per cent difference between male and female registered voters. Bridging this gap before the general election due next year is a daunting task for the election authorities.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1415150/ecp-hold-re-election-women-barred-voting/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MAY 8TH TO MAY 14TH 2017

WOMAN BURNT FOR GIVING BIRTH TO GIRL DIES

Dawn, May 8th, 2017

MUZAFFARGARH: A woman who was allegedly burnt by her husband on April 2 for giving birth to a girl died in the Nishtar Hospital Multan on Sunday after fighting for life for 35 days.

The incident had taken place at Chowk Sarwar Shaheed in Chak 589-TDA. According to the first information report, Muhammad Sajid and his father Umar Hayat had set the Rashida Parveen and her eight-month-old daughter Eman Fatima on fire.

Muhammad Younas, father of Rashida, told the police that he had found his daughter and granddaughter unconscious in their burning house. He shifted them to the Nishtar Hospital Multan. He registered a case with the Chowk Sarwar Shaheed Police Station against Sajid and his father Umar. The baby recovered after treatment but Rashida succumbed to her burns on Sunday.

The suspects had got pre-arrest bail while now the police now added Section 302 of the Pakistan Penal Code in the case.

Talking to Dawn, Station House Officer Muhammad Idrees said the police were looking into the matter from different angles as some family clash also might be the cause of the incident besides the girl's birth.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1331755>

## LOSING FAITH AND FAMILY

Dawn, May 9 2017

Sara Farid

SIXTEEN-year-old Sita was picking cotton in the fields of Darshi Kohli near Samaro, Sindh. Like many other Hindus in rural Pakistan, she along with her parents worked on land owned by a Muslim family. Her family has been working as farmers for generations.

Out of nowhere, a group of armed men stormed towards the family. Two men held down Sita's mother, Lal (shmi), and her father, while a few others forcefully took Sita with them. Reliving that dreadful day two years later, Lakshmi says, 'They belonged to the Khashkheli tribe from a nearby village' the same tribe that owns the land on which she and her family continue to work. 'We could not stop them and had to watch our daughter being taken away right in front of us.

Sita's parents rushed to the police and managed to get a kidnapping case registered. Finally, one day, they got a phone call from their daughter. A frantic Sita told them that she had escaped, instructing them about where to pick her up.

The family breathed a sigh of relief. The worst, they wrongly thought, was over.

Subsequently, the case of Sita's kidnapping was presented in court. Over the next 40 days they took her twice for court sessions in Umerkot. After the first hearing, while members of the abductor's family were also present in the court, Sita's family was approached by an intermediary from the Khashkheli family who threatened them that they had better drop the charges. Determined to pursue the case, Sita's family did not back off.

After the second hearing, Sita, her brother and uncle were riding back home in a rickshaw when masked armed men attacked them. 'They started firing,' says Lakshmi. Her son was shot in the arm and her husband's younger brother was shot in the shoulder. The men grabbed Sita even as she screamed, tied a cloth over her face and took her away a second time.

The parents were back to square one.

They filed another case of kidnapping and rape with the police. Soon enough, they found themselves back in court. Sita was present for the hearing this time around too, but she was with the Khashkheli men instead of her family. The men had a clear message for Lakshmi. 'Your daughter has converted to Islam and is married in the family,' she was told.

Just outside the court premises, with her kidnapers standing by her, Sita asked her mother to drop the case and forget about her.

Lakshmi saw the helplessness on her daughter's face: clearly, Sita did not want her family to continue struggling. Lakshmi and her husband have four younger daughters and three sons. Defeated, and realising the gravity of the threat, they stepped back.

They have not heard from Sita ever since.

With despair and pain in her eyes, Lakshmi carries out her everyday chores. 'I feel so lost,' she says. 'Sometimes I feel I have lost my mind. Now, we have to protect our other girls and we want to be left alone.'

Other families in Darshi Kohli and Hindu communities living nearby are similarly terrified. No one wants to discuss the incident.

Lakshmi's relatives encourage her not to speak to activists and journalists. They are worried for the safety of the rest of the girls.

Lakshmi and her husband, like many other families in the village, are considering migrating to India.

'It is so unfortunate that our Hindus are leaving Pakistan and are forced to take refuge in India,' says Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, a member of the National Assembly, associated with PML-N. 'There is lack of political will in Pakistan and especially in Sindh to pass the bill on forced conversions. There are pressures from religious groups. Hindu families are vulnerable and desperate. They are no longer able to protect their daughters and the way out for them is to migrate to India.'

'The feudals are influential people and they are crushing and exploiting the Hindus who are poor and work as farmers on their lands,' says Nawal Rai, a social activist in Umerkot who is himself Hindu. 'They live under so much fear that for the last five years, Hindus from here have started migrating to India or getting passports made as a safety measure.'

The abduction of teenage Hindu girls and their forced conversion to Islam is an ongoing issue, especially in Sindh. According to a 2015 Aurat Foundation report, every year nearly 1,000 girls from minority religions are forcefully converted to Islam. The report states that wilful conversions do take place but there is no doubt that forced conversions are a reality.

'Our mothers tell us not to go near Muslim villages, and to never to make eye contact with any Muslim man,' says 10-year-old Kavita.

Upon much protesting by minority activists, the Sindh Assembly passed a bill in November that criminalises forced religious conversions and forced marriages.

But this too has led to much controversy.

The Sindh government decided to review the bill in December, and early this year, the bill was returned.

[http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=09\\_05\\_2017\\_016\\_002](http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=09_05_2017_016_002)

THE FACE OF WOMEN'S STRENGTH IN PAKISTAN  
The Express Tribune, May 9th, 2017.

Aisha Sarwari

“I can’t fade,” says Tanzeela Mazhar, the woman who took a man down on charges of harassment in the workplace. When she walked in to meet me, this is the last thing I thought she would say. Mazhar has so much of what young people today call swag.

Her words are both triumphant and also telling of the vulnerability women face when they come out of their shell and expose a man for bad behaviour. She wore printed pants, a baby pink printed scarf over a button down white shirt and matching pink lipstick. She looked like she had dressed for TV in a role of an anchor.

She played this role in PTV for about a decade. “You have to be on air. That is how you make it as an anchor.” Which meant that all the time her boss, the man she accused, pulled her out of the limelight for turning his advances down, she was in career oblivion. Her boss would not just be a sleaze, he would come on to her physically, touching her, making her feel unsafe. “What matters is how small someone made you feel.”

Yet in Pakistan what matters is what physical harm was actually done, what the backstory is and why a woman brought this on herself. In a gross culture of misogyny, victim blaming and sanction over the violation of consent, Mazhar has become the voice of women, who emerged on the other side of an anti-sexual harassment campaign, with both her dignity and sanity intact. The latter was a real struggle. There were propped charges of blasphemy on her to frighten her off. When all else failed the right wing, which was squarely in the accused pocket, said that she enjoyed favours from her boss and is crying foul when they stopped.

“Somehow if a man uses his privilege and doles out favours to women he preys on, the fault is the woman’s and no one would point a finger at him for overstepping his authority.” In this culture of vile neglect of a woman’s narrative, Mazhar dared to ask questions. Very uncomfortable ones and that too publicly. She asked them on the very medium that she commands: the media.

She recorded a series of vlogs where she asks why women are not believed when they complain against lewd behaviour, unwanted sexual attention and violation of physical boundaries. “This is a place where minors are raped. Yet we are more secure believing the best about men.” She recorded this and put it on social media. It received over 400 retweets and likes on Twitter.

There has been overwhelming support from women and even among young men for her bold work. It points to the fact that the new Pakistan is bone tired of the old order. Since her expose, many women have come to her and told her horrific stories about how they were harassed, and then silenced.

Mazhar took her complaint to the ombudsman for harassment. Unfortunately, despite a recorded conversation between her and the accused, clearly proving his culpability, the committee ruling was that there wasn’t enough evidence. “I didn’t want to knock on the court doors only to get another turn down of my voice.” Instead, she beat him at the age-old game of credibility. She spoke out so vehemently and so loud with so much data that the truth was out there, no matter what some committee felt.

For ages, men have set the tone. They have laid out the verdicts. They have charred the course and decided who gets to speak and whose voice doesn’t count. Mazhar refused to give that power to anyone else. “People tried to tell me what I feel, where I was at fault and what I must do.” When women break the shell the go-to process is to think on their behalf.

Mazhar’s biggest disappointment: women. “I’ve propped up so many women, yet only a handful publicly supported me.” Even those women who were harassed by the same man hung her out to dry. There was support, sure, privately, in the dark.

Dark is how best the struggle is described. First, the battle for your story being heard. Then, afterwards, the battle of getting the story to be believable. Mazhar's family supported her but not without peril. "As a girl who fetched water from the river in her childhood, the conservatism was a river I almost drowned crossing."

She wouldn't swap the journey for anything though. When I asked her if there was a class issue in her fight for justice: without a doubt. "It was so much easier to dismiss me."

Women like Mazhar would have been avoided like the plague, but she didn't let that happen. She takes selfies and posts them to tell that silent constituency that is watching her: "There is no way in hell I am fading."

I have been harassed several times. I have never had the courage to speak up like Mazhar. When we met I felt my voice was handed back to me. I first heard her speak at a conference where I tweeted her immortal words. "We must shame men who think women who work are fair game." This is me, helping her staying alive in our consciousness as the darkness of silence engulfs us, and helping her do what comes naturally to her — become the relatable face of women's strength in Pakistan.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1404665/face-womens-strength-pakistan>

## KILLING FEMALE INFANTS

Dawn, May 10th, 2017

ON Sunday, this newspaper reported a harrowing case of murder in Muzaffargarh. According to the story, a young woman and her child were set on fire by the woman's husband on April 2. Their crime? The woman was punished for giving birth to a girl, and the infant for being one. Sadly, the mother died this weekend although her eight-month-old daughter has miraculously survived. When the dangerously obsessive preference for having boys supports the patriarchal notion that the latter can provide economic stability — unlike girls who are considered bad fortune — many mothers find themselves contemplating sex-selective abortions or abandoning their newly born daughter.

The Edhi Foundation's ambulances pick up dead babies from streets and garbage dumps in many parts of the country. Some of the infants have been strangled to death, others burnt, starved and even stoned — most with their umbilical cord still intact. It is commendable that the foundation has urged people to deposit unwanted infants in cradles placed outside its offices with no questions asked. However, its efforts also underscore the state's negligence — the state has turned away from protecting the lives of vulnerable infants. For their part, police rarely investigate cases of female infanticide.

With infanticide more common in societies where there is poverty and poor development — such as India and some African countries — combating this scourge requires public-awareness campaigns and education. Addressing the social stigma faced by women when they have girls is critical to dispelling the notion that boys are more valuable than girls.

This is especially significant where misogyny is rampant from the get-go. The authorities must make it clear that killing female infants is tantamount to murder and that the perpetrators will be punished. Above all, the state should know that one way to stop anti-women and anti-girl practices is to support universal girls' education, because educating a girl means educating an entire community, thereby changing cultural attitudes.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1332070>

## UNLIKE IN INDIA, LITTLE ATTENTION HAS BEEN PAID TO THE ISSUE OF RAPE IN PAKISTAN

Dawn, May 10th, 2017

Across the border in Pakistan, little attention has been paid to the issue. Unlike the Indian Supreme Court, the higher judiciary in Pakistan has seen it fit to sentence convicts to death, even those who are mentally ill. In many cases, defendants have been executed even when there are problems with investigations and prosecutions. It is rape, and not the death penalty, however, that is the issue here. While India has imposed the highest punishment on these gang rapists, Pakistan has yet to take similar action in rape cases.

One relevant example is the 2002 case of the gang rape of Mukhtaran Mai. Like the woman in the Delhi rape case, Mukhtaran saw her assailants and was able to identify them and chose to do so. It wasn't enough. As happens with so many cases in Pakistan, the case was pushed around on appeal from one court to another, in the mess of parallel jurisdictions that is the Pakistani judicial system. Initially, six men — the alleged rapists and those who were part of the panchayat that ordered her rape — were found guilty. Justice, it seemed, would be served, to a woman who had undergone the most horrific ordeal possible.

It was not, however, the end of the story. In 2005, five of the six men, who had been found guilty and sentenced to death by an anti-terrorism court, were acquitted by the Lahore High Court and the sentence of the sixth was commuted to life imprisonment. In 2011, an appeal to the Supreme Court against the high court verdict was rejected.

In an interview she gave to the BBC when the decision was announced, Mukhtaran said that the police had not recorded her statements properly. She said that she had lost faith in all Pakistani courts.

Most Pakistani women, particularly those who have had some encounter with the justice system, would likely agree. Like the convicted Indian rapist who alleged that the woman he raped and killed had only herself to blame because she was out at nine o'clock at night, most men here are used to blaming women for the abuse and harassment they suffer at the hands of Pakistani men. If a man beats his wife, it's because she 'made' him, by refusing to acquiesce fast enough, or with enough submission and servitude, to his demands.

If a male professor harasses a female student, it's because she dressed or looked or smiled in a certain way and so 'deserved' the treatment. If a boss harasses an employee, well, you 'can't clap with one hand'; it's her fault for being in his employ, for working outside the home, for being present in a place where he can prey on her.

A border may divide India and Pakistan but this logic of 'you can't clap with one hand' unites its men.

In the initial days after the Delhi rape incident, several newspapers commented on the fact that the men were not particularly big or burly and looked rather ordinary. It is an important and thought-provoking comment because it draws attention to the rapist in every South Asian man, sitting dormant and eager to grab an opportunity. In Delhi, that opportunity came when six men jointly decided to prey on an innocent female for the crime of being out at nine in the evening.

For others, it may come in other places, in empty offices or darkened corridors or silent streets. In a society where men are so unquestionably dominant and women grow up internalising this hatred towards them, the woman is always believed to be at fault; the number of rape cases and the lack of punishment for rapists simply prove the point.

In all other instances, military might or athletic achievement, rhetoric or regional influence, Pakistan and India try to outdo each other. In this instance, however, there will be no attempt to do that. India may have imposed the worst punishment possible on five of the rapists, but Pakistan will continue to ensure that its rapists go free. All the ordinary men, the ones who believe that women are asking for it simply by existing in the ambit of their predatory and sinister intentions, need not worry; in Pakistan no one will stop them, no one will get in their way.

CHARSADDA/MANSEHRA: A 14-year-old girl was allegedly strangled by her father with the help of his teenage son in the name of honour in Prang village of Charsadda.

Separately, a man was killed on Sunday also allegedly in the name of honour by the relatives of the girl the victim's brother had married without consent of her family in Pulrah area of Mansehra.

In Charsadda, police claimed to have arrested both the suspects when they were burying the body of the killed girl. They said that the girl was killed by her father and brother when she returned home after meeting her boyfriend.

The father of the deceased girl told police during initial investigation that he had warned his daughter to mend her ways and refrain from meeting the boy but she ignored it.

The mother of the girl informed police about the incident. Police raided the place and arrested the man and his son when they were burying the body of the deceased girl.

The body was sent for postmortem and police registered an FIR against the father and his son at Prang police station.

In Mansehra, the victim was on his way home after attending a marriage ceremony in a nearby village when he was shot dead by a group of armed assailants.

The body was taken to King Abdullah Teaching Hospital for autopsy and later handed over to family.

According to Pulrah police, a younger brother of the deceased had married a girl without permission of her family, which led to his killing by the girl's family.

A similar incident occurred in Kaghan valley the other day when two brothers were shot dead by the family of the girl their third brother had married with.

Meanwhile, body of an elderly man was found at a hotel here.

Mir Zaman, 65, resident of Garhi Habibullah, had stayed for a night at the hotel near the bus terminal.

However, he was found dead in his room when a waiter went in.

The police shifted the body to King Abdullah Teaching Hospital for medical examination.

The city police lodged FIR and began investigation to ascertain the exact cause of the death.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1330368>

#### COTTON PICKERS: ACTIVISTS CONCERNED OVER VIOLATION OF LABOUR RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Business Recorder, May 1 2017

HYDERABAD: Civil society activists concerned over violations of the labor rights of the women cotton pickers in Sindh. According to a rough estimate more than a million cotton pickers work in cotton picking from July to Sep of whom 80% are women; these women experience various problems, low and unfair wages, poor safety and security measures. Pakistan is a country in transition and country's major portion of economy is based on agriculture.

In rural areas of Sindh women play a major role in agricultural Production, livestock raising and cottage industries and remain busy from dawn to dusk to supply food to men in fields, fetch water, collect fuel wood, and manage livestock. With respect to crops, women's participation is particularly high in cotton, rice, pulses and vegetables. Rice and cotton cultivation in Sindh and Punjab jointly account for more than one-third of women's annual agricultural activities.

The cotton picking is informal form of labor and not recognized in labor policy and the labor laws does not cover agriculture labor. Women cotton pickers are working in 9 cotton producing districts in Sindh. With respect to crops, women's participation is particularly high in cotton, rice, pulses and vegetables.

A dominant majority of them are women and most are Kolhi and Bheel, minority Hindu Dalits. Rice and cotton cultivation in Sindh and Punjab jointly account for more than one-third of women's annual agricultural activities. The bodies of cotton pickers also have to bear the onslaught of sprays of poisonous pesticides to the crop which cause skin allergies. Most women identified themselves as cotton pickers, and noted that they are getting unequal and low wages.

Women cotton pickers earn 60 to 100 rupees per day and men earn 150 to 250 rupees per day. As pesticides are used in cotton crops, women are often affected by asthma and skin diseases. It has been estimated that women account for 23.55% in cotton areas.

According to a civil society activist Javed Soz head of Sindh Community Foundation says that the cotton picking women are not organized as other labour groups and fail to negotiate their rights with policy makers for their economic justice and protection of rights of equal wages. This is because the cotton picking women are seasonal laborers so the labour policy in Pakistan does not cover this group of laborer as a laborer for social security benefits. There is need to hold advocacy for inclusion of the cotton picking into the labor policy.

They have poor bargaining power to fix the rate of the wages for picking cotton with the local land lord. He further adds that although Sindh Industrial Relation Act 2013 recognize agriculture workers in cotton as labor and rights for forming union but concrete actions have not been taken to ensure labor union of this section of agriculture laborers .

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/05/01/5-page/871606-news.html>

‘EMPLOYING MORE WOMEN DIVERSIFIES TALENT POOL’  
Dawn, May 5th, 2017

Sumaira Jajja

KARACHI: There is a qualitative improvement when women join workforce, therefore, there is a need for industry wide changes to improve female participation, panellists opined during a discussion on the ‘Breaking boundaries, gender equity in the workplace’ on Thursday.

The day-long event was organised by the Pakistan Business Council's (PBC) Centre for Excellence in Responsible Business (CERN).

During the discussion moderated by Sadia Khan, president of INSEAD Global Alumni Association, Unilever CEO Shazia Syed and Reckitt Benckiser CEO Shahzeb Mehmood shared interventions which led to the inclusion of more women in their respective organisations.

Other participants included CEO Circle Sadaffe Abid, CERN's gender consultant Sidra Minhas and lead gender expert at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) UK, Emily Coates.



Earlier in her keynote address, Ms Coates spoke on why it was important for businesses to employ women. She said employing more women allows for an “increase in talent pool – the more applicants you get, the bigger, better and diverse pool you have.”. Better employee productivity, improved customer relations are part of the deal when more women join the workforce.

Munaza Kasmani, HR Director of Reckitt Benckiser shared details of DARE forum which provides mentorship for female employees.

PBC CEO Ahsan Malik suggested giving 20 per cent tax relief to women who returned to work after giving birth.

The ‘Gender diversity in business sector of Pakistan’, a baseline survey of PBC member companies carried out by CERN and Circle is an interesting read. The survey was sent to 61 companies, with responses from only 31. More than 50pc of companies had gender diversity marked as one of their top five business goals. Of the surveyed companies, 50pc had female workforce participation between 10-20pc while 60pc companies acknowledged facing hurdles in inducting women. Only 50pc firms explored training and mentoring schemes for female employees.

The survey notes that the percentage of women employees decreases drastically at senior management levels including departmental heads (DH) and CEO, CFO, etc (C-Suite).

The automotive industry employs 35pc women at entry level, 40pc at manager level but this falls to 5pc at DH and 0pc at CEO level.

The banking and finance sector has up to 80pc women employees at entry level, has 0.8-40pc at manager level, 0.5-10pc at DH and 0-11pc at C-Suite level.

In the FMGC sector, 3-60pc women at entry level, 0-25pc at manager level, 0-18pc at DH and 0-7pc at C-Suite level.

In engineering products, only 3pc women at entry level while 0pc at manager level, departmental head and C-Suite level.

In the logistics sector, 0-6pc women at entry and manager level while 0pc at departmental head and C-Suite level. Cement and chemical sectors too have no women in senior managements. Only 2pc of supply chain processes involved women.

Two FMCG companies and textile sector have set goals of 26-40pc representation of their workforce within their gender diversity policy.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1331079>

#### DEATH PENALTY FOR RAPE

The Express Tribune, May 7th, 2017.

Rape is a crime everywhere in the world, no country or culture is exempt. Punishments for rape are invariably lengthy prison sentences and in some cases, death. Rape is an under-reported crime everywhere and consequently rapists everywhere go unpunished. It is a crime that happens so frequently that it rarely merits headlines — anywhere.

But there are some rapes that have the capacity to shape the zeitgeist and the rape and appalling torture of a 23-year-old medical student in New Delhi in 2012 is one such in the modern era.

The victim died a fortnight later. Four men were found guilty of the crime, a fifth accused, the bus driver, hanged himself in his prison cell. The men were sentenced to death and the Indian Supreme Court has now upheld the sentence on appeal.

This newspaper has consistently opposed the death penalty; but equally has supported the rule of law. There is nothing to suggest that the sentence within the canon of Indian law is anything other than legally sustainable. The father of the victim has called for the sentence to be carried out swiftly but there are going to be legal hoops to go through before the hangman does his job, and it could be some time before there is a final resolution.

The head of the New Delhi Commission for women said that at least six rapes a day were happening in the city alone every day, and that rapists were not afraid of the consequences of their actions as the Indian legal system is so sclerotic.

The current case has taken five years to get this far and that despite being fast-tracked. Countless other women, alive and still seeking justice, wait in the wings of a system that is loaded against them. And what of Pakistan?

There has been no rape case here that has aroused the world in the same way as in India but the same conditions pertain — women struggle to get justice, and not just for rape but for every other type of crime.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1403076/death-penalty-rape/>

## June 2017

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JUNE 12TH TO JUNE 18 TH 2017*

### *STOP DISRESPECTING WOMEN*

The Express Tribune, June 15, 2017

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif is Pakistan's own version of US President Donald Trump and his incredibly insensitive, stupefying tweets. In his latest Twitter rampage, the minister labelled Ms Firdous Awan, who has switched over to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf along with a few male colleagues, a "dumper". That the minister spared the party's male entrants and targeted Ms Awan shows that sexism is alive and kicking in the country's politics.

Though the defence minister issued an apology last year for calling another PTI leader, Dr Shireen Mazari, a "tractor trolley", he repeated the reference in his recent tweet underscoring that his apology was perfidious. Mr Asif's irresponsible remarks demonstrate a singular lack of decorum. Personal attacks are cheap and vile and party leaders with differing views should learn to communicate in a civilised manner instead of propagating the erroneous message that it is acceptable to personally attack those with dissenting views.

Female leaders must unite to call out the sexism they have faced in office. By actively choosing not to respond, they are also sending a wrong message to female hopefuls who aspire to eventually hold key positions. It would bolster the women's cause if PTI chairman Imran Khan throws his support behind his female party members, drawing a parallel to the strong women he has had in his personal life and understanding that women are certainly not the weaker or inferior sex.

Mr Asif should recognise that one of the ladies whom he again derided has a doctor's title and although his comments were aimed at her abilities, if not her intelligence, he owes her and all his female colleagues in parliament an immediate apology. Such remarks have become all too frequent and require disciplinary action. Just as professional sports players are fined for foul language and journalists fired for libellous comments, so, too, should politicians be charged for their conduct.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1435527/stop-disrespecting-women/>

## EMPLOYING WOMEN

Dawn, June 18th, 2017

Anum Malkani

IN my first job outside Pakistan, new hires would undergo a series of sensitivity trainings. The goal was to promote a diverse and tolerant workplace by explaining what constitutes discrimination against minorities and clearly outlining the limits of acceptable behaviour in the workplace. In Pakistan, where workplace harassment is common, such trainings are unheard of. At no stage are we taught about diversity, empathy and inclusion in any meaningful way.

It is no surprise then that, across industries and sectors, women are few and far between. Women in managerial positions stand out, with success stories making headlines. Female litigators are discouraged from pursuing a line of work that is heavily male-dominated, and female politicians are often those who are beneficiaries of a system of dynastic politics. Women are usually welcomed in 'pink-collar' jobs, which tend to be underpaid and non-contractual.

Organisations where one would expect higher female representation in the upper echelons, such as the top retailers in women's fashion, are no better. At a conference on IT for retailers that was held recently in Lahore, the women in the room could be counted on one hand. The male participants analysed the behavioural patterns exhibited by their wives, mothers, sisters and daughters when they shop, with women conspicuously absent from the discussion.

The most commonly cited reasons for the abysmal gender ratios in our workplaces are: (1) there aren't enough women applying for jobs and (2) women leave the job when they get married/when they have children. Another common refrain is that, to ensure adequate female representation, employers would have to lower their hiring standards: an absurd suggestion in a country where girls outperform boys in academics. These are easy alibis to absolve ourselves of the responsibility to ensure diverse and tolerant workplaces.

Yes, there is a supply issue: women are not encouraged to pursue careers the way men are. Even those women who are given the right opportunities struggle every step of the way: juggling responsibilities at work while shouldering the burden of housework, child-rearing and elderly care; dealing with a society that labels working mothers as neglectful; and surviving in workplaces that are tailor-made for men.

It is also true that organisations face a high turnover of female employees, but not necessarily because women willingly choose to resign after starting a family. Inhospitable work environments are a significant factor behind the decision to forego a career.

Few workplaces here provide daycare centres, lactation rooms, adequate maternity and paternity leaves or flexible timings. I once heard a hiring manager of a local organisation say he would not hire women as they cannot stay at the office late due to family pressures. Women work in offices where a 'boys club' culture is entrenched, and sexism and sexual harassment are routine. Solving these issues is key to female employee retention.

Men who continue to blame the skewed gender ratio on a dearth of hire-able women also need to engage in self-reflection. What are their expectations from their wives and daughters? A friend told me about how her colleague, who insisted he cannot hire women due to lack of female job applicants, also went on to assert that his wife must stay at home to look after the children. He charitably stated that she may pursue a 'hobby', but a career was out of the question.

To be sure, this disdain for the working woman is a luxury for the upper classes who do not require dual incomes to survive. For those women who work out of necessity, economic empowerment is a distant dream, men continue to be

the primary decision-makers of the household. Working conditions are even worse; women are involved in unregulated work and have little to no legal protection.

When the men to whom we appeal to hire women and create women-friendly spaces don't live by those ideals in their own homes, there is little hope. Legislation must be enforced to counter workplace harassment; affirmative action and mandatory benefits such as paid maternity and paternity leaves and daycare centres are needed. Our schools also need to do a better job of training children with regard to diversity and tolerance and our media must stop juxtaposing the bad working woman with the docile housewife.

As for those women who are unable to or prefer not to work outside the home, housework, child-rearing and caring for the elderly do indeed constitute a fulltime job. Adequate compensation and legal status as employees for stay-at-home mothers is too futuristic for our society, but we can at least learn to value a woman's physical and emotional labour in the home.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1340243>

## July 2017

### *NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 24TH TO JULY 31ST 2017*

#### ***BBC WOMEN WANT WIDE GENDER PAY GAP FIXED SOON***

Dawn, July 24th, 2017

LONDON: Some of the BBC's most prominent female journalists and TV presenters are banding together to demand that the broadcaster fix its wide gender pay gap immediately rather than in several years as management has proposed.

TV personalities including Clare Balding, Victoria Derbyshire and others wrote an open letter on Sunday to the BBC's top manager saying that plans to resolve the company's gender pay gap by 2020 must be accelerated. They pointed out that the Equal Pay Act became the law in 1970.

BBC responded in a statement that it has made "significant changes" in recent years but needs to do more to close the pay gap.

Documents made public last week showed that male BBC TV and radio personalities make substantially more than their female counterparts. The salary disparity came to light after the publicly funded BBC was forced to publish the salary ranges of its best-paid actors and presenters.

The list showed that two-thirds of the highest earners were men, with the highest-paid woman earning less than a quarter of the highest-earning male star. Many BBC men were also found to be receiving far higher salaries than women in comparable jobs.

Education Secretary Justine Greening, who handles matters involving women and equality, told Sky News on Sunday it is "impossible not to be shocked" by the BBC's pay disparity.

She said the salary gap is "very hard to justify". Prime Minister Theresa May has also criticised the pay differential.

The letter to BBC Director-General Tony Hall says the documents confirmed a long-held suspicion that "women at the BBC are being paid less than men for the same work." Balding, one of BBC's most accomplished TV journalists, said in a pointed tweet that a 2020 target for equal pay isn't good enough, since the Equal Pay Act was enacted in 1970 and the Equality Act was passed in 2010.

"We're standing together to politely suggest they can do better," she said.

The women said they are taking action now so “future generations” of BBC women won’t face gender discrimination.

Hall said, when the salary list was published, that the BBC needed to move more quickly on issues of gender and diversity.

The BBC said on Sunday that when annual figures are published next year substantial progress on salary equity will have been made.

The broadcaster’s statement said its substantial workforce has been “hired over generations” and that the problem is complex and cannot be fixed overnight.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347288>

## PANCHAYAT ORDERS ‘REVENGE RAPE’ OF TEEN GIRL

Owais Qarni

The Express Tribune, July 26, 2017

MULTAN: A Panchayat, or village council, in an impoverished southern district of Punjab ordered a man earlier this month to rape a teenage girl in revenge for the earlier rape of his sister, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred in the Rajpur area of Muzaffarabad.

“The Panchayat had ordered the rape of a 16-year-old girl as punishment, as her brother had raped a 12-year-old,” police official Allah Baksh told AFP.

Twelve members of the Panchayat – including the man who presided over the meeting, or Sarpanch – have been arrested so far, police told The Express Tribune, adding that a manhunt had been launched for the remaining members of the Panchayat who fled after the incident.

The manhunt was started after two cases were registered against the members of the Panchayat at a police station inside the Violence Against Women Centre (VAWC) in Multan, the first such centre set up under a new provincial law passed designed to enhance protections for women that was passed last year.

The Protection of Women Against Violence Act-2016 criminalises all forms of violence against women, including domestic, psychological and sexual violence, and established a toll-free abuse reporting hotline.

It also mandated the establishment of shelters such as the one where the rapes in Multan were reported. The maximum punishment for rape under the law is the death penalty. Alternately, convicts may face imprisonment of up to 25 years.

“It was not a formal Panchayat, like has happened in the past,” police official Allah Baksh said. “It was just a gathering of uncles and aunts [of the first victim] from that village, in the same area.”

On July 16, a 12-year-old girl was raped while working in the family fields just south of Multan, according to one of the FIRs. “My daughter [F\*] was cutting grass in the fields on July 16, around 2pm in the afternoon when ... she was covered in a cloth [by her attackers] and forcibly raped,” her mother told the police.

Following that sexual assault, members of the victim’s family gathered together and resolved to rape a member of the alleged attacker’s family in revenge, SHO Malik Rashid said.

“On the night of July 18, about 2am I was sleeping with my children in my house when [U\*] my 16-year-old daughter was taken away [by three men],” said the second victim’s mother in the FIR.

The second victim is the sister of the alleged attacker in the first rape, said Rashid.

“We implored the culprits to leave my daughter alone, but [they] threatened us that if anyone came forward they would be killed,” said the second victim’s mother.

This is not the first incident of its kind in Punjab.

Several similar incidents cases have been reported in the media while most remain unreported due to social stigma associated with such cases.

A Jirga was involved in one of South Asia’s most infamous cases of sexual violence against women when, in 2002, it ordered the gang rape of a woman called Mukhtaran Mai after her brother was falsely accused of rape.

Mukhtaran made the unusual decision to defy her rapists and take them to court. Her attackers walked free but she went on to become a high-profile women’s rights activist. Her story inspired an opera, ‘Thumbprint’, which opened in New York in 2014 and premiered in Los Angeles last month.

Panchayats or jirgas are a traditional means of settling disputes in the country’s rural areas, where courts and lawyers are not always accessible or trusted. Such councils do not, however, hold any legal standing.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif, taking notice of the latest incident, ordered an inquiry.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1467157/17-year-old-raped-panchayats-orders-muzaffarabad/>

## MAN STRANGLES DAUGHTER TO DEATH FOR HONOUR

Muhammad Shahzad

The Express Tribune, July 30, 2017

LAHORE: A woman has fallen victim to what is believed to be another case of honour killing in the provincial capital on Saturday.

According to police, Khalil, the father of the victim, strangled his daughter to death reportedly for the sake of honour. SHO Shalimar Ghulam Bari said they received a call in the morning that a murder had been committed.

The cops rushed to the spot and found the victim lying dead on a cart, covered with a cloth. The team examined the crime scene and collected forensic evidence.

The SHO said that he observed marks around the neck. Police transferred the corpse to the morgue and took Khalil into custody. The victim had been married for a few years, but took a divorce a year ago.

Khalil, while talking to the media, said that his daughter eloped without her parents’ consent. “No can bear such a disgrace at the hands of their daughter. So, I killed her,” he confessed.

Incidents of honour killing have become far too frequent in the country. A report of Aurat Foundation, compiled in 2016, showed that most of such cases were being reported in Punjab.

A report compiled of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan stated that at least 8,393 cases of honour crimes had been committed throughout Pakistan from January 1, 2014 to January 1, 2017.

## IN BETWEEN PRIDE AND HONOUR

The Express Tribune, July 30th, 2017.

Aminah Suhail Qureshi

Our society has established one fact with utmost certainty and unshakeable resolve: whenever we have to choose between pride and honour, we shall always choose pride, for 'pride' is to covet and 'honour' is to save. And it is this very pride which has coined terms like 'honour killing' and 'honour revenge'.

From the inception of the concept of 'honour' as an abstract idea implying respectability and worthiness, along with social standing and reputation of a person or a group, to restricting its meaning to chastity and fidelity especially that of a woman, this process of transformation has victimised many. No example is better than that of Mukhtaran Mai's to illustrate the severity of the whole situation.

Fifteen years on, the situation is the same. The honour of two more innocent girls was assaulted to venerate the pride that resides in the existence of their culprits. A 16-year-old girl was subjected to rape in retribution by the brother of a 13-year-old neighbour who was raped by the former's brother. The panchayat (village council) had hence, ordered 'revenge rape', rejuvenating the need to question the preposterous tolerance that is shown towards the functioning of these jirgas in presence of the formal legal system of Pakistan.

These traditions, like many laws of this country, are in use to gratify personal vengeance as reflected in the murders of Henna Shah Nawaz and Mashal Khan. Such instances act as barometers to gauge the level of frustration and lawlessness that exists in people and, therefore, are becoming increasingly worrisome.

"If there were any justice in the panchayat, they should have shot the rapist. Why punish an innocent girl instead?" is a question asked by Mukhtaran Mai that was left unanswered when five of her six convicts were acquitted on 'insufficient evidence' and remains open to debate to date.

Ordering rape to avenge rape is as absurd as uttering profanities against one religion as an answer to blasphemy committed by someone else. The judgment given by the panchayat has raised questions on this system's legitimacy and existence in the future and has also helped in understanding the emerging trend of mob justice, for both have been witnessed making impulsive, baseless and, therefore, irrational decisions.

We, as a nation, have an interesting history of blaming the West and its agents implanted in our country for all the defamation caused since the very beginning. Mukhtaran Mai was accused of creating hype out of an 'ordinary' situation to get attention of the Western media. Her name was also put on the Exit Control List by Pervez Musharraf as he did not "want to project a bad image of Pakistan."

Here is the most fascinating fact of today. People admit that vilification has occurred, but the dispute exists over what has caused it this time: a tribe court allowing revenge rape in Muzaffarabad near Multan, or Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy's documentary, *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*, earning three nominations at the Emmy's.

Why has showing mirror become more heinous a crime than the crime itself? Do we expect the whole world to be as incognisant and foolish as us that they would need films to become aware of what is happening in Pakistan?

"We hope that our work will spark difficult conversations that eventually lead to a change in mindsets. We have a long way to go," claims Sharmeen. The distance covered on this path seems to be nothing in front of what is yet to cover as the road is full of marshes that are being incessantly watered by our panchayats. Yes, evolution takes time, but the time taken should not be too lengthy that it consumes many lives and several generations.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1469655/in-between-pride-and-honour/>

## WAITING FOR JUSTICE

Huma Yusuf

Dawn, July 31, 2017

FEW concepts have as much gravitas as justice. But as the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif has shown, in Pakistan, even justice can appear ambivalent. Is it justice if it is seen as selective? Can justice be served if it appears that dangerous precedents have been established?

While the country obsesses over the course of justice as it plays out at the highest levels, there is little capacity to consider how it is typically meted out in our country. Last week, while we awaited the Supreme Court verdict on the Panama case, reports emerged that a panchayat in Muzaffarabad, in the Multan area, ordered the rape of a 16-year-old girl to settle scores after her brother was accused of raping a 12-year-old girl. The teenager was raped allegedly before the 40-odd members of the panchayat and her parents. Several days passed before the girls' mothers lodged FIRs, and the police began to arrest panchayat members.

Media coverage of this informal act of justice got the formal wheels of justice turning: the chief justice has taken suo motu notice of the panchayat ruling, Shahbaz Sharif has tasked an investigation committee to report on the revenge rape within a few days, and the officers at the local police station have been suspended.

The incident highlights how the law only works for some of the people, some of the time. For the rest, the judiciary is perceived as compromised and backlogged enough to enable the power of panchayats to persist. The juxtaposition of last week's headline-making verdicts indicates that the law of the land can be exercised in the seats of power, not at the grass roots — for the average Pakistani, the law is more rhetorical than accessible or experienced.

We are a full 15 years on from the horrifying gang rape of Mukhtar Mai, also ordered by a panchayat to avenge the actions of her brother who was accused of having an affair. Pakistan has since enacted several laws at the federal and provincial levels to outlaw panchayats and jirgas as well as progressive legislation regarding rape and so-called honour killing. Sadly, this has had little impact on practice, as evidenced by Muzaffarabad.

Last year, the hopes of women's rights activists were raised when it decided to review Mai's case (the court had earlier upheld the acquittal of Mai's rapists on the grounds of insufficient evidence). A fresh judgement against Mai's rapists would have major implications for how the judiciary determines lack of consent and may lead to a sharp increase in rape convictions. However, the review judgement on that case is still pending.

Aside from the murky issue of what justice means in Pakistan, the revenge rape reiterates how the role of the state and law-enforcement agencies blurs between the formal and informal, allowing for a cherry-picking approach when it comes to the law.

After the rapes took place, police officers and a relative of MNA Shah Mahmood Qureshi reportedly tried to serve as mediators between the two families, and proposed an 'exchange marriage' whereby the victims would be married to their rapists to prevent the dispute from continuing — rather than immediately arresting the perpetrators and panchayat members. What hope for justice when its servants aren't committed to its cause?

Once the families rejected the idea of an exchange marriage, the mother of the 12-year-old victim filed her complaint in a Violence Against Women Centre in Multan, a test project inaugurated in March that includes a police station and



women's shelter and provides psychological services for victims. It is a silver lining of sorts that she could access such a shelter, and highlights the need for more state resources to protect and empower women.

However, women will start to see justice served when they begin to vote on the basis of gender issues, and make politicians accountable for their record on the same. The political elite, which is dependent on the electorate, has the power to influence patronage systems which include the police and local-level politicians. And irrespective of the messages conveyed by last week's judicial developments with regard to the country's highest office, the judiciary must work with other state institutions in order to see the law effectively implemented.

Commenting last year on the Supreme Court's decision to review her case, Mai said: "If any girl was in my situation, I would tell her that getting justice is very difficult. But we, as women, should still keep raising our voices. These court systems will have to change ... Mothers, sisters, daughters, if we all unite and speak out, eventually we will get justice — if not for ourselves, for future generations." Muzaffarabad suggests more women will have to suffer before justice becomes less difficult to access for those who most need it.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348620/>

#### MAN SELLS SMALL DAUGHTER TO LANDLORD AFTER FAILING TO REPAY LOAN

Dawn, July 31st, 2017

**BADIN:** A man handed over his eight-year-old daughter to an elderly landlord as a mortgage after failing to pay him back Rs100,000 loan in Tando Bago town, 21 kilometres from here, on Sunday.

The shameful deal came to light when Ms Soomri Machhi approached Tando Bago police station and complained that her husband Achar Machhi had sold off her daughter Nazia, 8, to an old landlord Ali Murad Chandio in Pathan Water village near the town.

Police raided the village to recover the girl and returned her to her mother who accused his husband of having sold the girl for Rs100,000.

Tando Bago SHO Ali Anwer Leghari confirmed the girl had been sold and said further investigation was under way.

Achar Machhi told journalists that he had handed over his daughter as mortgage after having failed to pay back the loan he had taken from the landlord.

Police did not register an FIR nor made any arrest in the case.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348578>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 17TH TO JULY 23RD 2017

##### NO BLAME ON WOMEN'S TEAM

The Express Tribune, July 18th, 2017.

Pakistan women's cricket team under the captaincy of Sana Mir had a tournament to forget when they lost seven out of seven matches in their current ICC Women's World Cup campaign. Pakistan's last match pitted them against the second weakest side of the tournament Sri Lanka, and they had to go all guns blazing against the islanders to beat them, but they fell just 15 runs short in their hunt for at least one victory in the eight-team event. Before that, they were outgunned and outplayed by South Africa, England, arch-rivals India, Australia, New Zealand and West Indies, respectively.

The social media went abuzz with varied opinions on the Pakistan women's team's debacle, but the only notion of interest was their comparison being made to their compatriot male players, who recently won the Champions Trophy. A little retrospection would help people remember that while the men's team faced embarrassment at the hands of India in the 2016 World T20, Pakistan women's team defeated Indian women in their T20 contest by two runs to bring some consolation to the cricket-loving nation. The argument here is not to support Mir's charges, they need to be criticised, but, simultaneously, a remedy should also be proposed for the problems which plague women's cricket in Pakistan.

Firstly, no one heeds much to women's cricket. The idea of women walking outside their homes is still elusive to many men in the country, thus, finding talented players from across Pakistan itself becomes a daunting task. Secondly, female cricketers, while still use the same facilities as male cricketers, are not provided with a world-class support staff and are also underpaid in comparison to their male counterparts. They don't complain because for them the love for the game and the chance to play it means more than worrying about earning enough from it. All in all, more focus and energy to systemise women's cricket structure is needed before we demand miracles from them.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1460247/no-blame-womens-team/>

#### WHY WOMEN'S STORIES NEED TO BE TOLD

The Express Tribune, July 18th, 2017.

Aisha Sarwari

The writer is a freelance journalist based in Islamabad. She blogs at [www.aishasarwari.wordpress.com](http://www.aishasarwari.wordpress.com). She can be followed on Twitter @AishaFsarwari

A proud Pakistani man on July 12th killed his sister in Badami Bagh, Lahore, because she was divorced and was going to remarry. Bushra Bibi brought shame to her brother. In retaliation, he shot her and fled, but not before he also killed his niece because she accompanied Bushra when she visited her maternal home.

Over a thousand women are killed in the name of 'honour' in Pakistan every year. Barely a handful of them make it to the pages of a newspaper. This is because it is always Bushra's brother's story, never hers.

The plight of women in Pakistan is so daunting that it is never told in a narrative form, just in statistics. The news stories only define what was done to women. Women almost always never tell their own story. They have no credibility to. For instance, why was Bushra remarrying? What drove her to go to her mother's house knowing well enough that her brother is a potential murderer? This would never be told. To be newsworthy, women would need violence to have befallen to them — like an axe — slicing and abrupt. It is a blood sport.

Women here fight on two fronts: for the right to be heard and then, if they win on that front, for the right to have a grievance.

It is by telling their stories that women can convey the urgency of how desperate their situation is and how critical it is to find lasting solutions to protect women from ghastly 'man-made' traditions like these honour-based murders. Despite the rhetoric of taking women along, most governments in Pakistan have failed to meaningfully improve the status of women.

The government says the right things but doesn't do much. Leaders often tout the overused line at forums, "there is no honour in honour killing."

Government policies have failed because the scale of misogyny is too large and often infiltrates policy. They end up applying Band-Aid solutions that throw women a bone: a token woman in power here, a pro-women speech there, a

women's day commemoration here or a daycare centre — all, except the tough work of having murderers like Bushra's brother face severe consequences.

So even though we talk of millions of dollars that are supposedly allocated specifically to elevate women, reality, however, is lacklustre. Scratch lacklustre. It is an abomination. Even though there is money allocated, including aid money, it is not spent on deserving women or women at all.

Policymakers say culture, religion, value systems do not allow for women to be a part of the development programming in Pakistan. They say women can't get permission to travel or attend trainings from their male family members. The guardianship culture is to blame, they say. Also, that these women cannot leave their domestic chores to be able to accommodate empowerment programmes. Such excuses are the bane of why already allocated money for women ends up where it shouldn't — to men and women securely part of the elite.

The only way to ensure efficient channelling of government funds is to ascertain that it is women who are in control of policy and defining what they want and need, what their challenges are and who blocks them from their goals. This only happens when women's stories are told — forcefully and widely.

If only the problem could be solved with more money. It can't. Several architects of women's development programmes say that when women at the grassroots level are offered money to empower themselves with it, they reject it. Fear paralyses women when they are faced with freedom. Women's financing programmes need to be coupled with training programmes to build internal capacity to cope with growing financial independence.

Women reject financial help for good reasons, too. They face more violence as they tread towards empowerment and social uplift. They disturb the power lopsidedness and force it towards more equality. Violence is one of the key inhibitors of women's progress in the country. Around 90% of women face violence in Pakistan, according to the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

There is a change in the legal system, women now have more recourse. However, due to the ingrained culture there is a hesitation to press charges against men to whom women eventually have to return to for financial support.

If one could wish for two things here, it would be an end to lazy women's development architects and a realisation in Pakistan's government that women's exclusion makes no political, economic or social sense. It costs to keep women behind.

In World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2016, Pakistan ranks 143 out of 144 countries. There were 15,222 cases of honour crimes registered in Pakistan from 2004 to 2016. According to the Human Rights Commission Report 2016, these cases are on the rise.

Mere condemnation can only save so many lives. We must enable women to be more mobile, self-reliant and violence-free. These are big dreams for a country that seems to build lots of roads, but does not bridge the crucial gap between opportunities for a girl compared to a boy.

It seems like the more Pakistan advances, the wider the echo chamber and ubiquity of misogyny becomes. There is also a severe push back from the right wing to tame women and make them invisible. Taking power back from Pakistani men and giving it to women begins with letting women tell their own stories. Preferably, while they are still alive.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1460264/womens-stories-need-told/>

Washington: Digital Rights Activist Nighat Dad has said that online violence against women is a global issue; it's just that the consequences are different in Pakistan due to culture, religion, societal norms, patriarchy and also the lack of awareness.

In an interview to the Guardian, she said she reached a breaking point after the killing of Qandeel Baloch.

"I reached my limit, where I was like, I don't think that I can deal with this. It was impacting on my emotional health. The guilt I felt that if I'm not going to respond to this call or the message which I'm getting in the middle of the night, maybe this person will lose their life or maybe there is a fear of violence," she said.

A number of women felt increasingly unsafe especially online after the murder of Baloch by her brother. More and more women began seeking out Dad to relate terrible stories of online harassment, revenge porn and men doctoring photographs of women in order to extort money from them.

Dad has been actively working on spreading the word about the Digital Rights Foundation which she established in 2012. Digital Rights Foundation helps women deal with the new phenomenon of online harassment.

Dad expanded her operations and launched Pakistan's first cyber harassment helpline after recognising the urgency of tackling the issue. Dad with her team of 12 people which includes a counselor field up to 20 calls a day.

The cases range from women wanting advice on social media security settings to more serious problems. "Every single day we are resolving these issues. There are issues of identity theft, blackmail, there are women filmed being raped and then blackmailed to prevent it going online," says Dad.

"Technology is ever changing, so violence in the online spaces has also increased. It has become doxing, sextortion and revenge porn. It's massive," she said.

According to Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) report more than 3,000 cybercrimes were recorded in 2015. And 45 percent among this ratio were women who were using social media. In May, Dad's team commissioned a study that found 70 percent of women were afraid of posting their pictures online. Most women feared their pictures could be misused; 40 percent of women were harassed and stalked on messaging apps.

Rabia Mehmood, a Pakistani technology journalist, speaks on online harassment as, "Harassment is a significant issue for women with access to technology in Pakistan, and has been so since the days of landlines. Unfortunately, the transition to better connectivity, more user control of platforms and devices, has not eradicated the online abuse and violence for women, it has only made the issue much more stark."

"In Pakistan, outspoken women have received rape and death threats, smear campaigns run against them, and their contact information has been shared on social media. We have seen a transitioning of violence and harassment of women from the offline world to online spaces," she said.

"There is little help available. A trust deficit between the authorities and women exists in Pakistani society. Women believe justice will not be served, there is fear of being shamed and judged, and finally, not knowing the right procedure of seeking help," Mehmood said.

In 2015, a group of young women studying at Edwards College in Peshawar contacted Dad. These young women spoke to Dad how someone on Facebook was posting their photos alongside with their names and phone numbers stating they were prostitutes.

In fear of losing their reputation, most women were forced to meet the demands. With help from Dad and her team, a number of these young women chose to fight back. The women reported the blackmail as a crime and the men were arrested.

The page couldn't get removed because the images were not nude and the text on the page was written in Pashto language, which was not found to be breaching any Facebook's community standards guidelines.

Dad began to lobby Facebook. "We found a gap in Facebook's mechanisms," says Dad, who finally succeeded in having the posts removed. As a result of what happened in Peshawar, Facebook has expanded its operations to include more native language speakers to review content.

She is optimistic. "Mostly, women actually fight back now. There were times when women would just detach themselves from technology – but that's not a solution. We really want them to reclaim these spaces by knowing how to fight back, and I think change is happening. It's slow, but it's happening," Dad said.—NNI

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/07/19/5-page/892565-news.html>

#### PRIVATE SCHOOL HEAD CONFESSES TO SEXUALLY ABUSING WOMEN

Dawn, July 21st, 2017

PESHAWAR: The principal of a private school, arrested on charges of sexually abusing several women and making their objectionable videos, has confessed to his crime before the court of a local magistrate.

Magistrate Asghar Khan recorded statement of the suspect, Attaullah Khan Marwat, under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, following which he was sent to Peshawar Central Prison on judicial remand.

The suspect, who is also owner of the school, was arrested after a case was registered against him on July 14, 2017, at Hayatabad police station on complaint of a student. The student had levelled serious allegations against him of sexually exploiting students and women and making their objectionable videos by installing secret cameras in different parts of the school.

However, a police officer privy to the investigation in the case, told Dawn that so far the charge of sexually abusing students by the principal could not be proved.

Riaz Khan, the investigation officer, told Dawn that the suspect was produced before the magistrate on Wednesday and he recorded his confessional statement. However, he stated that his confessional statement was only related to bringing women from outside to the school, having sex with them and making their objectionable videos.

When asked that in the FIR it was mentioned that he had also made videos of students and teachers to blackmail them, the official said that there were initial allegations of that type against him which had so far not been proved.

A student of the school had told police that the suspect was involved in exploitation of students and teachers. He alleged that he exploited students, teachers and some outsider women, but because of his fear nobody was disclosing those facts.

The student also alleged that the principal also showed him several videos, which he recorded secretly and also invited him to indulge in that kind of activities.

The police, in the FIR, stated when they raided the school the suspect tried to conceal his two mobile phones. It was alleged that in the said phones there were several objectionable videos of different boys and the suspect used three rooms of the school for that purpose.

According to the FIR, police also recovered memory cards and USBs and in preliminary inspection several videos were witnessed in which the suspect was involved in immoral activities with boys and girls. “One of the video was filmed while the suspect was busy in sexually abusing a minor boy and a girl,” the FIR states.

The case was registered under around a dozen sections of Pakistan Penal Code dealing with adultery, rape, outraging modesty of a woman, stripping women of their clothes, criminal intimidation, enticing away females, seducing minor girls, etc.

The police also claimed to have recovered contraband and a pistol from his possession. They also claimed to have recovered a camera installed in the school for filming videos.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1346682>

#### YOUNG COUPLE KILLED IN APPARENT HONOUR KILLING

The Express Tribune, July 22, 2017

KARACHI: A young couple were murdered at a house in District Central on Friday in an apparent act of honour killing.

The incident took place in the early hours of Friday at a house located in Hussain D'Silva Town, North Nazimabad, within the limits of Sharae Noor Jahan police station. The deceased young man was identified as 20-year-old S\*, while the woman was identified as 20-year-old K\*. The bodies were shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for medico-legal formalities.

Contingents of law enforcers, including the Rangers and police, reached the site and collected evidence. Referring to the initial investigations, SHO Abdul Ghaffar said the deceased were neighbours, adding that the man ran a general store in the area. The officer further said the girl's father and brother were key suspects behind the incident. The suspects killed both the victims apparently in the name of honour after the family found S\* at their house with K\*, SHO Ghaffar added.

The officer further disclosed that the suspects escaped after killing the victims with a sharp weapon. The body of S\* was handed over to his family while the body of K\* was handed over to neighbours for burial. The police have registered a case against the suspects and further investigations are under way.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1463344/young-couple-killed-apparent-honour-killing/>

#### VEILS OF VIOLENCE

Dawn, July 23rd, 2017

Nazish Brohi

INVISIBILITY cloaks featured in the Grimms' fairy tale of the 12 dancing princesses; the trickster Umro Ayyar from Tilism-i-Hoshruha had one, and so does Harry Potter. The wearer drapes it to do what he wants without being detected. That's how the blasphemy accusation works in Pakistan, a veil of virtuosity concealing what is underneath. Below it almost always lies the property case, the promotion, the money or material gain, the spurned offer or the prior enmity.

Since reason shuts down at blasphemy accusations, objectivity might be possible in examining another context where violence has an aura of religious communion — the pattern of lynching escalating in India where suspicions of cow slaughter and possession of beef is enough to get people killed. Pratap Mehta writing in Indian Express on gau-raksha

terrorism shows the accusation works to “criminalise the victim”, resulting in vigilantism where a “group of people claim direct sovereignty: they act above formal law and feel entitled to enforce morality”, and that such attacks are undertaken “to spread the fear that it can happen at any moment, anywhere”. The similarities stand out.

The blasphemy law is just the starting point for redress. People participating in mob violence are not trying to implement existing laws, nor does the state have such behavioural control over the people that overturning the law will halt mob lynching. What the law does is to allow the state to hide behind religio-legalities and prevent its framing as a human rights issue, positioning the state as another antagonist instead of the protector and guarantor of life. We know the blasphemy law was rushed through parliament under Zia without debate, that it is historically contentious and there’s no consensus on it even among religious scholars, as shown by Arafat Mazhar in a series of articles on Dawn.com.

But changing the law will lead to a showdown because right-wing religio-political parties are latching onto the issue to revive their flagging importance. Look inside the Jamaat-i-Islami for instance. Their ideological core is no longer as vibrant as many have passed away or drifted away, and few nazriyati are left. Their radical followers have given up on electoral processes and have either joined the armed militants of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, Al Qaeda or Islamic State to fight off the ‘evil West’, or distanced themselves from politics altogether with the Tableeghi Jamaat.

The younger generation of the Taliban no longer considers JI leadership as authority, and even attempted a suicide attack against its late leader Qazi Hussain. Takfir divides some into smaller camps, where sectarian agendas triumph over pan-Islamist agendas. Meanwhile, JI’s previously middle-ground supporters have gravitated to the PTI, leaving the party to frantically swing from firebrand leadership to conciliatory politics. Plus JI’s importance for the establishment has diminished. The blasphemy battle cry is also a gamble for relevance, to rally causes that allow them control over the national narrative.

Changing the law is not impossible. It has happened in the not too distant past with the Hudood Ordinance. Till 2006, the law criminalised adultery and blurred the boundary between rape and consensual relations, where a woman’s inability to prove a rape accusation (through finding four Muslim adult male witnesses) was taken as an admission of adultery. While the law is still there, the Women’s Protection Act (passed despite vocal opposition by religious parties) made its implementation near impossible.

The blasphemy law will eventually be changed, once it is untenable for the power elite. Punishments for vigilante killings will also come as they start comprehending that these weaken the state, that riding the tiger is not a strategic skill because it makes as much sense as balancing on a landmine. Meanwhile, the price of the wait will be paid for by the likes of the father of Mashal Khan, in his fight for justice, and by the likes of scholar Junaid Hafeez, languishing in prison for years, his career and life wrecked over a flimsy charge — one tortured and killed by society, the other destroyed by the state.

But by the time they decide to take up the challenge, it may be too late to address the one issue the state cannot control at will: there are people who can be roused into killing their neighbours, colleagues, friends, relatives. These are not paid professional killers who dispassionately take down people they see as contracts or targets. Mashal Khan was tortured and killed by students, acquaintances he may have thought were friends, people he met every day. Shama and Shehzad were beaten and burnt to death by villagers and neighbours who knew them well. It shows there’s a latent vein that can be tapped for igniting, to borrow Philip Roth’s phrase, “the ecstasy of sanctimony”. Not all problems can be legislated,

encounter killed, banned, suo motu-ed or dharna-ed into compliance.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1347009>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 10TH TO JULY 16TH 2017

## WORKING WOMEN HOSTEL AN URGENT NEED OF SIALKOT

Abid Mehdi

Dawn, July 10, 2017

**SIALKOT:** Working women from remote areas of the district who have to undergo the daily grind of shuttling between their homes and workplace in the city badly need a hostel so that they could avoid hassle of covering long distances, besides saving money they spend on their arduous commutes.

Hundreds of women belonging to far-off urban and rural areas of the district daily visit the city to work in local factories, banks, government and private educational and health institutions etc, but they have to return to their native towns and villages after duty hours.

Many of these working women say that if given a choice they would prefer to stay in the city that would save them daily hassle of traveling to their workplace and returning back home by overcrowded public transport.

Such an option, they say, would also save them travel expenses that take away a considerable chunk of their already meager incomes.

Talking to Dawn, a group of working women, including Hina Shehzadi, Irum Nasir, Kashifa Hassan, Munaza Khan, Iqra Bashir, Uzma Nasir, Bushra Parveen, Fouzia Mughal, Mehmooda, Arfan Kanwal, Sameena Nisar and Noureen Gillani said none of the factories in the city offered hostel facility for the women employees who had to daily shuttle between their workplace and homes.

They said though portions of houses in localities like Muhammadpura, Pakpura, Puran Nagar, Nishat Park and Prem Nagar were available on rent but the owners demand hefty amounts as advance payment with exorbitant rent which most of them could not afford to pay.

Besides, they said, most of such accommodations lacked proper security, especially for women. So, they said, they had to either travel daily to their workplace or go for low-rent options which lacked the basic facilities and proper security.

Some of the women recalled that Provincial Minister for Women Development Hameeda Waheeduddin, during her visit to the city a couple of years ago, had announced that a hostel for working women would be established in Sialkot, but nothing had so far been done in this regard.

Kalsoom Bibi, a worker belonging to a far-off Bajwat border village, said that she had to travel more than 72 kilometres daily to reach her workplace here. During her daily commute, she has to cross three rivers — Chenab, Tavi and Jammu — to reach Sialkot. She said provision of hostel facility could help her a lot.

A Chawinda-Pasrur based worker, Rukhsana Bibi said, “I reach here (Sialkot) after traveling more than 40Kms daily, saying that the journey not only takes time but also costs her dearly.”

Similarly, Shakeela Bibi of Kamonki and Khadeeja Bibi of Gujrat have to cover long distances daily to reach their respective workplaces in Sialkot.

They added that though several factories in the city provided transportation facility to their male and female workers, but their managements never thought about providing hostel facility, especially to the female workers belonging to remote areas.



They urged Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif to order early establishment of a hostel for the working women in Sialkot, so that they and other workers could be relieved of the problems they had to face daily.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1344310>

## NO JUSTICE, 'NO VALUE' FOR WOMEN IN A LAWLESS AFGHAN PROVINCE Mujib Mashal And Zahra Nader

International new york times, july 10, 2017

There are three versions of how Tabaruk, a mother of six, died this spring during a journey through treacherous snow-covered mountains in Afghanistan.

She and her family had been expelled from their village in Ghor Province because her teenage daughter, Mah Yamsar, was said to have brought dishonor by becoming pregnant out of wedlock.

The police in Ghor say Tabaruk fell off her horse and died.

Members of the provincial council and human rights activists say she was pushed off a cliff, and then tied to a horse and dragged around until dead.

A third version of the story was told to Mah Yamsar by her 8-year-old brother, who was traveling with Tabaruk at the time. "They killed my mother with the bullets of a gun," the brother recounted.

If Afghanistan is one of the worst places to be a woman, then Ghor, a province so lawless that people often wonder if there is a government there at all, may be the country's capital of gender-based violence and abuse. Week after week there are reports of women abused or killed in Ghor by men who never face justice.

"There is no value for women there," Ms. Koofi added. "It is as if she deserves to die."

With a population of over 700,000 and located in west-central Afghanistan, Ghor is considered one of the most deprived provinces of the country. It has received little government attention over the years, and the rule of law is almost nonexistent in certain parts of the territory. Ghor also shares borders with some of the most violent provinces with strong Taliban presence, making it vulnerable to the insurgency.

Some of the cases in Ghor briefly shock the nation before fading into its long history of abuse.

A teenage girl, Rukhshana, who was forced into an arranged marriage, was later caught fleeing with a lover. She was buried waist deep in dirt and stoned to death in October 2015 by a gang of men the government said were Taliban. The male lover was flogged and set free.

"From her waist up, the rocks had ripped her body and some piece of stones had made it inside her ribs," said Hanifa, Rukhshana's mother. "The blood would not stop. There were 12 other women in the room helping me wash her" in preparation for burial, she said.

Aziz Gul, 19, was shot at night and buried before her parents could even see her body.

Police records said she was also fleeing with a man, reportedly a lover, to avoid a forced marriage, when she was caught by a mob and killed on the spot last June. But her parents said she was abducted from her uncle's house, and after she was recovered villagers accused her of adultery and then shot her.

“They killed her around night prayer, and I heard the news at dawn prayer,” her mother, Belqis, said. “By that time they had buried the body already.”

In the most recent case, a woman named Suraya was trying to flee what she said was an abusive forced marriage of four years. She left in March with her lover and an elderly aunt, who accompanied them to help them avoid suspicion. All three were chased by heavily armed villagers and killed. Their charred bodies remained in the open for days; villagers threatened anyone who would come to pick them up.

Ms. Koofi, the lawmaker, said the violence had its roots in tribal feuds and the pervasive practice of marrying off girls at a very young age for large dowries. By the time the husband-to-be comes up with the money, often after years of labor in Iran, the girl has grown up and developed feelings for someone else.

Also playing a crucial role in the violence, Ms. Koofi said, is the absence of the rule of law and a complete sense of impunity.

When security officials are pressed on the situation in Ghor, Ms. Koofi said, they say they have to balance justice with security — and that if they go after the perpetrators, they will side with the Taliban who are already gaining ground in the province.

This sense that the province’s misogyny and injustice would be tolerated as a compromise for stability was underscored when President Ashraf Ghani decided not to support a female governor he sent to the province after she faced resistance. The governor, Seema Joyenda, was ousted at the end of 2015, within six months of her arrival, and that move may have further cemented a feeling of impunity among fundamentalists.

There are other episodes that raise questions about the government’s commitment to trying to stop, or at least punish, the killing of women in the province.

Mullah Saadyar, one of the militant leaders listed on police documents as ordering the stoning of Rukhshana, recently came for treatment for an illness in Ghor’s provincial capital, Chaghcharan, but the government did not arrest him.

No one has yet been prosecuted for the death of Tabaruk, either.

In the months before she died, Tabaruk, who, like many Afghans used only one name, was focused on protecting her daughter from her own almost certain death.

The daughter, Mah Yamsar, says she was at home last year when a neighbor, Sayed Ahmad, raped her. She hid the episode from everyone, until her body started changing, and she realized she was pregnant. Her mother became her secret-bearer and helper. In rural Afghanistan, it is common for such pregnancies to end in honor killings.

Mr. Ahmad had pills delivered to Mah Yamsar that would help her have an abortion, which occurred in the seventh month of her pregnancy.

Mah Yamsar went to the hospital and stayed there for eight nights, needing two blood transfusions.

When she was discharged and returned to her village in the Dawlat Yar district of Ghor, elders gathered for a council to decide the family’s fate. Tabaruk and her husband were in attendance, as was Mr. Ahmad, the accused rapist, but Mah Yamsar was not.

“He said, ‘I won’t swear on the Quran, but I did not rape her,’” Mah Yamsar said her mother told her about Mr. Ahmad’s words at the meeting.

The village council, swayed by Mr. Ahmad's powerful relatives, said Mah Yamsar's family had brought dishonor on the village. "Load up, and leave this place," the family was told.

Mah Yamsar, still recovering from the abortion, was put on a motorcycle. Her mother rode a horse, while her father, her brother and two village elders, both men, followed behind.

Mah Yamsar arrived ahead of her family in Kharsang, also in Ghor, where the family planned to start a new life. Her mother never made it.

At first, her father said Tabaruk would come. Then he said she had fallen off the horse and died.

But her brother said their father was lying. His father and the two village elders took Tabaruk off into the distance, telling him to stay behind. When they returned, his father said Tabaruk had fallen off the horse.

But the child told Mah Yamsar he heard gunshots.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/08/world/asia/afghanistan-women-honor-killings.html>

## WOMEN QAZIS IN INDIA

Rafia Zakaria

Dawn, July 12, 2017

SHE is one of the very first. This summer Jehanara Begum, a woman from Rajasthan, and 15 other Muslim women will become some of the first female qazis — or Islamic judges — in India. They will have taken part in a two-year programme at the Darul Uloom Niswan, an institution in Mumbai that has begun to train Muslim women from all around the country. Following graduation, the women will return to various areas and begin to fulfil their duties as qazis.

It has not, of course, been an easy road. Muslim women in India have been advocating for female qazis for a while. The issue came into the spotlight in 2008, when a Muslim woman activist named Naish Hasan got a well-known Indian Muslim female scholar named Syeda Hameed to solemnise her marriage.

Expectedly, controversy ensued, splitting India's already beleaguered Muslim community into two. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board did not approve, declaring that female qazis were not permitted in Islam and could not be appointed. Not everyone agreed; Tahir Mahmood, a former member of the Law Commission of India, which oversees adjudication over Muslim personal law, disagreed, as did the Darul Uloom Deoband. He, along with many women activists, insisted that there was nothing in the sacred texts that prevented women from becoming qazis.

And so it was that in 2016 the All India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board appointed two women, Hena Zaheer and Maria Fazal, as city qazis (shahar qazis) for Kanpur. There was a catch, however: their roles would, for the time being, be limited to arbitration and counselling, for fear of upsetting the conservative (and male) qazis already working in the city.

That was last year and this year a whole slew of new qazis, like Jehanara Begum, will return to Indian cities, trained not only to arbitrate and counsel community members but also to perform marriages. It is likely to change the entire landscape of Muslim women's encounter with Muslim personal laws.

Some of the answers can be found in Jehanara Begum's own story. Her husband regularly beat her, threatening her mother and asking whether she wanted her daughter back alive or as a corpse. When Jehanara turned to the qazi in her community, a man, he refused to help her get her rights and told her to "bear it".

Unable to endure the brutality of her married life, Jehanara left and never went back. Without the support of the qazi, she was unable to get any of her rights, such as the 15 grams of gold promised to her in her nikahnama. Even though they live in the same city, Jehanara Begum has been unable to see her children.

The idea that the nikahnama can be a document that ensures that women get equal rights and just treatment during the marriage, and the right to divorce and to various marital assets if it dissolves, is not a new one. But as Jehanara Begum's case and scores of others highlight, this is easier said than done.

The new batch of female qazis insists that they will follow the requirements of Muslim personal law that are often overlooked by male qazis, demand documents to show the groom's qualifications, proof of his income, and ask for divorce certificates if they say they are divorced and death certificates if they say their wife has died. Moreover, given that there are women like Jehanara Begum among them, they will make sure that they never tell an abused woman to 'bear it' when she comes to them for help.

At the same time, the issue of female qazis imputes issues that are larger than the internal squabbles of the Indian Muslim community. While the larger rhetoric of training and appointing Muslim women qazis is being presented by the Indian state and non-Muslim proponents of the move as a testament to its commitment to minority rights, this is not exactly true.

Even as these Muslim women get trained and appointed qazis in their communities, others are suffering from the scourge of violence against Muslims that has become endemic in Modi's India. Recently, after a 100-man-strong mob lynched a Muslim man named Alimuddin in Jharkhand, a large group of Muslim women gathered and threatened to take up arms to defend their men. "Mob violence," one speaker declared into the mic, "should be answered by mob violence".

The statement points to why a great initiative, the empowerment of Indian Muslim women, could be robbed of some of its positive impact because of the rest of the Indian institutions' failure to protect Indian Muslims. In a besieged community where all Indian Muslims, men and women, are being lynched and persecuted, treated as lesser Indians and unqualified citizens, a siege mentality is increasingly more likely to prevail. The consequence of this sort of thinking, the recourse of many small persecuted groups, creates more challenges to Muslim women qazis being accepted and supported by Indian Muslims.

The problems of Indian Muslim women are all too familiar to Pakistani women. It is notable, however, that despite the fact that Islam is the dominant religion of Pakistan, no organised effort to train and appoint female qazis is in evidence. Without the pressure of being a minority faith, female qazis in Pakistan could transform the way women see their rights and options within the marital relationship. In not having to turn to male qazis, always eager to tell women to 'bear it', Pakistani women — many of them suffering under the same cruelties that plagued Jehanara Begum — could see the gender revolution they have been waiting for.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1344819/women-qazis-in-india>

## WOMEN ARE OIL INDUSTRY'S GREAT 'UNTAPPED RESERVE': STUDY

Dawn, July 13, 2017

Istanbul: Women are "chronically" under-represented in the oil and gas industry and the sector is losing out by failing to draw on their skills, a study said on Wednesday.

Women account for just 22 per cent of workers in the oil and gas sector, said the joint study by the World Petroleum Council and Boston Consulting Group entitled “Untapped Reserves: Promoting Gender Balance in Oil and Gas”.

But on average, women represent 38pc of the workforce in major oil producing nations, it said.

Only 1pc of the industry’s CEOs are female.

“Oil and gas companies are failing to fully leverage a potentially sizeable and critical pool of talent,” said the report, released on the sidelines of the World Petroleum Congress in Istanbul.

“Women have been chronically under-represented in the industry historically and remain so today,” it said, saying the proportion of women was lower than in any other sector.

The report to a certain extent confirmed stereotypes of the sector as a male-dominated, macho industry, with women almost completely absent from top positions.

It said that although men and women start out on an equal footing, women rarely reach the top of an organisation in the sector.

Those who are employed are also working largely in office roles and not technical jobs, which in this industry is a prerequisite for taking a top job.

The study said the combined effects could ultimately weigh heavily on oil and gas companies’ ability to increase capital productivity.

“The industry could boost women’s representation steadily and materially over time and reap a host of benefits including improved organisational performance, creativity, decision making and morale,” it said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/134488>

## NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 2ND TO JULY 9TH 2017

### WOMAN’S BODY RECOVERED FROM FLOODWATER

Abdul Wahid Shahwani

Dawn, July 02, 2017

**KHUZDAR:** Personnel of Navy and Frontier Corps recovered on Saturday another body from floodwater in Lasbela district.

“The body of a woman, who was swept way in a flashflood along with 15 other people in the Sajidi Goth area, was recovered,” Deputy Commissioner of Lasbela District Majeed-ur-Rehman Qambrani told Dawn.

He said 10 bodies had so far been recovered from the affected area and four people were still missing. “Navy swimmers were making all-out efforts to recover them,” Mr Qambrani said.

Sources said that the bodies were stuck in the mud that accumulated in a water reservoir being used to supply water to a number of villages in the flood-hit area. The authorities have decided to make a breach in the reservoir to empty it to recover the bodies, they added.

Former chief minister Saleh Bhootani visited the areas and assured people affected by the flood that all possible steps would be taken for their rehabilitation.

He said Chief Minister Sanaullah Zehri would be requested to announce a package for the affected people.

Commissioner of Kalat Division Hashim Khan Ghilzai told newsmen that the relief operation had been launched in the affected areas. "Tents, food packets, drinking water and other relief items have been provided to the people affected by the flash flood," he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1342707>

#### WOMAN AMONG THREE SHOT DEAD FOR HONOUR

Dawn, July 2nd, 2017

DERA MURAD JAMALI: Four men gunned down three people, including a woman, in the name of honour at a village of Nasirabad district on Saturday.

Ms Tasneem, Gul Jan and his brother Meer Jan died instantly after having received multiple bullets during the attack in Goth Dur Mohammad Umrani, police said.

The bodies were handed over to heirs after medico-legal formalities at the Dera Murad Jamali district hospital. "It is an honour killing incident," a senior police officer said.

Suspected killers fled the scene after the crime.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Inspector General Police of Nasirabad Division, Sharjeel Ahmed Kharal, suspended the SHO of the Baba Kot Police Station for negligence.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1342705>

#### INDIAN WOMAN ATTACKED WITH ACID FOR FIFTH TIME

Business Recorder, 3 July 2017

NEW DELHI: A woman who survived an alleged gang rape and four separate acid attacks has once again been hit by corrosive liquid, Indian police said Sunday.

The 35-year-old mother, who was allegedly gangraped in 2008 over a property dispute, was at a women's hostel in Uttar Pradesh state capital Lucknow when a man scaled the walls and poured the chemical onto her.

"She was filling water at the hand pump when the attack took place. The attacker fled from the spot," Vivek Tripathi, local police chief told AFP.

The woman, who cannot be named for legal reasons, sustained burn injuries to her face and shoulder and is undergoing treatment at a hospital.

Police have launched a manhunt to identify the assailant, the officer said.

Due to the previous string of attacks, the woman was under round-the-clock police protection, but the armed policeman was barred from entering the women's hostel. The woman was allegedly gang-raped and attacked with acid by two men in 2008 over a property dispute.

She has subsequently been attacked twice more by the same men, in 2012 and 2013, in a bid to force her to withdraw the criminal cases against them.

Most recently, the two men allegedly forced her to drink acid while she was travelling on a train with one of her daughters in March this year.

The two men are facing trials over all the attacks, but they were released on bail in April.

Around 300 acid attacks were reported in India in 2015, according to the latest official crime figures, which experts say represent only the tip of the iceberg.

India brought in stringent laws to deal with the acid attacks in 2013 following public outcry over the plight of hundreds of survivors who battle lifelong scars and social stigma.

The country's top court banned the sale of acid to the public in 2013 to curb such attacks, although they have largely continued unabated.

Most attacks are carried out by men taking revenge for spurned marriage proposals or over property disputes.—AFP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/07/03/15-page/886368-news.html>

## **August 2017**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 20TH TO AUGUST 27TH 2017***

### ***'TRIPLE TALAQ' OUTLAWED***

Dawn, August 25th, 2017

MUSLIM women in India have reason to rejoice, for they have won the battle against the regressive practice of the 'triple talaq' which the country's Supreme Court has ruled as being 'unconstitutional'. According to this custom, a man could divorce his wife by merely repeating the word 'talaq' (divorce) three times. In a digital age, even text messages and Whatsapp have been used to effect such an 'instant' divorce.

This licence to capriciousness has been the cause of untold misery and financial hardship for women, a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads in the marital relationship. Women divorced in this way have often had to contend with straitened circumstances overnight, sometimes even with the loss of their children's custody. It was a particularly cruel way of allowing men to control women and keep them constantly in fear of losing the security that marriage provides in a conservative society.

Not surprisingly, the practice of triple talaq — which many Islamic scholars say is not mentioned in the Holy Quran and is banned in most Muslim countries, including Pakistan — has many champions among Muslim men in India. While maintaining that the practice is 'evil', they nonetheless want to retain it based on spurious arguments about the fundamental right to practise religion. Curiously, such men have no qualms in embracing modern technology like smartphones — whereby they sometimes pronounce instant divorce — even as they cling to outmoded traditions where it suits them.

The Muslim religious lobby in India has responded with fury to the court's ruling, declaring that as far as they are concerned the status quo remains. To counter this defiance, there must be an extensive awareness campaign to spread the word that the triple talaq stands outlawed.

We in Pakistan could also do with a similar campaign, for in some backward areas here, this mode of divorce continues to be seen as valid. In fact, women in this country generally have little awareness of the fine print in their nikahnama. It is about time that changed.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1353808>

## CHILD MAID SEXUALLY ASSAULTED, SUSPECT ARRESTED

The Express Tribune, August 25th, 2017

Meanwhile, SHO Rana Ghafoor confirmed that the accused had fled the country. “We are utilising all resources to provide justice to the affected family and bring the culprit to justice at every cost,” he said.

He told The Express Tribune that samples of both the victims had been sent to forensic laboratory in Lahore. “As per initial medical examination report of victim (B)\*, the medical officer at Gojra Civil Hospital confirmed that she has been sexually assaulted,” he said.

\*Names changed to protect identity

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1490210/two-sisters-working-maids-sexually-abused-employer/>

## TWO SHOT DEAD FOR ‘HONOUR’ IN KOHAT

Dawn, August 26th, 2017

KOHAT: A man killed his wife and her alleged paramour in Cheechana Ghunda area here in the name of honour, police said on Friday.

Officials of Riaz Muhammad Shaheed police station said the accused found his wife and her alleged lover in his house and shot them dead.

The police shifted the bodies to women and children hospital and after autopsy handed them over to relatives.

Police registered a double murder case against the accused and started making raids for his arrest. The police termed the case as honour killing.

Meanwhile, the police raided a factory making homemade liquor and arrested the owner on Friday.

The police had information that a liquor factory was operating in Tappi area and was supplying it across the district. They carried out a raid and seized 200 litres of homemade liquor with hundreds of empty plastic and glass bottles.

A large quantity of labels of foreign made liquor was also seized.

Accused Jumma Khan said he brought alcohol from Darra Adamkhel and then mixed it with some chemicals purchased from Punjab.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1354005>

## MORE WOMEN SHELTERS IN BALOCHISTAN URGED

Dawn, August 26th, 2017

QUETTA: The Balochistan Assembly on Friday adopted a resolution asking the provincial government to set up Darul Aman to provide shelter to women who were victims of domestic violence in the six divisional headquarters.

The resolution was moved by Yasmin Lehri of the National Party in the session presided over by Speaker Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani.



The resolution was passed when only 14 of the 65 members were present in the house, while quorum requires at least 17 members.

None of the members from the opposition and treasury benches pointed out that the quorum was not sufficient to pass a resolution and the assembly proceedings continued despite the shortfall.

Addressing the house, Ms Lehri said that Darul Aman facility was not available in Sibi and other districts of Balochistan for victims of domestic violence who were forced to leave their homes.

“The Darul Aman facility is available only in Quetta, and women facing domestic violence in far flung districts of Balochistan have no option but to continue being tortured,” she said, adding that the situation of the Darul Aman in the provincial capital was not ideal as well as it lacked basic facilities, including health and education.

Provincial ministers Dr Hamid Khan Achakzai, Abdul Rahim Ziaratwal and MPA of National Party Dr Shama Ishaq supported the resolution, suggesting that special fund should be allocated for the purpose in the next budget.

The assembly also passed another resolution moved by Shahida Rauf of Jamiat Ulema-i- Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), urging the National Highway Authority (NHA) to take practical steps to prevent fatal traffic accidents along the National Highway in Balochistan with the cooperation of the provincial transport department.

“Check and balance system should be introduced in Balochistan for avoiding such fatal incidents in future,” Ms Rauf suggested in her resolution, adding that there was no check on underage drivers and possession of driving licence across the province.

Other members of the assembly also expressed their concern over increase in traffic incidents on the highway and how driving licenses were issued by the authorities concerned without taking test.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1354021>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 14TH TO AUGUST 20 Th 2017

K-P DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILL ‘WOMEN-UNFRIENDLY’

The Express Tribune, August 17, 2017

Hidayat Khan

PESHAWAR: Aurat Foundation, a non-profit organisation, has raised concerns regarding the domestic violence bill proposed by the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government, saying that the bill did not mention violence against women.

“Women are the main victims of domestic violence, but in the draft bill there is no mention of the protection of women against violence,” Aurat Foundation Resident Director Shabina Ayaz told a press conference on Wednesday.

The foundation asked the K-P government to not pass the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act soon to be tabled in the K-P Assembly.

Shabina added that more than 180 cases of domestic violence had been reported in the province during the last few months out of which 94 women were murdered by their relatives.

The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) last year dismissed this bill terming the draft legislation contradictory to Islamic Shariah. After going through a grueling review, the draft was approved by the CII and it was handed back to the K-P

government. However, now the women's rights activists have raised their concerns, saying that the bill is not a women friendly legislation.

Shabina also criticised the definition of 'child', who, under the draft law, is a person who at time of commission of offence has not attained the age of fifteen years. The definition of a 'child' differs according to different laws in Pakistan.

"Most of Pakistani laws are in contradiction with each other, and this will be another addition," she said.

The foundation also criticised the formation of a protection committee mentioned in the draft of the bill. The committee included a medical doctor, one psychologist, a female and male law officer, two women members elected as tehsil councilors, and a religious scholar.

"The formation of this committee is impossible as there are neither enough psychologists nor female law officers available at the local level and it was only the 'religious scholar', who would be available due to which everything would be depended on him."

"We don't believe it [the bill] to be women friendly," said Saima Munir, a senior member of the Aurat Foundation.

She added that women are the major victims of domestic violence and they cannot be ignored in the formation of any law related to domestic violence.

The Aurat Foundation and other organisations working for the prevention of violence against women said they have not been consulted in the drafting of the bill neither by the provincial commission nor the women caucus which had formulated the recommendation and forwarded it to the Council of Islamic Ideology.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1483412/k-p-domestic-violence-bill-women-unfriendly/>

## GIRL AXED TO DEATH FOR MARRYING OF HER CHOICE

The Express Tribune, August 19, 2017

MULTAN: A 24-year-old girl was axed to death allegedly by her family members for marrying of her own will in Yazman, Bahawalpur District, police said on Friday.

An official of Yazman police station told The Express Tribune that Sughran Bibi, daughter of Allah Bachaya, had tied the knot with Muhammad Madni, a resident of Pakka Laraan, against the will of her family about eight months ago.

He added Sughran Bibi was not in contact with her parents but they were making efforts to bring her back home. He maintained, "Four days back, accused Allah Bachaya, his sons Zahid, Javed and Pervaiz brought the girl home by deceit."

The official pointed out when Sughran Bibi came to her parents' house, the accused allegedly axed her to death in the name of honour. "The accused fled the scene after committing the murder," he said.

"Later, the accused tried to involve victim's husband Muhammad Madni in the murder case," he elaborated.

Soon after the incident, police reached the spot and shifted the body to hospital for legal formalities. The official said, "A case has been registered against Allah Bachaya, Zahid, Javed, Pervaiz and mother of the deceased girl."

He said raids were being conducted to arrest the culprits and further investigation was underway.

Earlier in June 2017, a sixty-year-old woman was killed by her son in Multan for 'honour'. Police said accused Kamran opened fire on his mother, who was sleeping at the time, killing her on the spot.

The accused was later arrested by the police. Kamran had become vary of his widowed mother's 'character' after a relative had sent her a marriage proposal.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1485113/girl-axed-death-marrying-choice/>

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Dawn, August 20, 2017

Nadeem Omar Tarar

DESPITE accounting for about half of Pakistan's population, women are disproportionately underrepresented in national employment registers. Given our society's endemic gender inequality, working women know that to compete in a man's world they must work twice as hard. From highly paid CEOs to lowly paid domestic workers, the social and psychological costs that working women bear often outweigh the financial gains.

Feminist groups were in the vanguard of the struggle for political and social rights during the heyday of the Gen Zia's martial law regime, and women activists were the first to launch public protests against legislation that amounted to state-sponsored gender discrimination — placing the issue of women's rights at the heart of the national democratic struggle.

Following amendments to criminal law regarding 'honour' killings in 2004, we have witnessed a decade of progressive legislation being moved in parliament. In recent years, the efforts of the Alliance against Sexual Harassment culminated into the enactment of the landmark Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010.

Under the act, a federal ombudsperson secretariat was created in Islamabad in 2010 specifically for the resolution of cases of workplace harassment. Retired justice Yasmeen Abbasi, the current federal ombudsperson, has contributed significantly to the implementation of the law. The ombudsperson's office is also working on amending the act to replace 'women' with 'person' in the act to make it more inclusive and extend its outreach to workers in the uncharted shores of the informal economy.

However, the right of suomotu action, which is granted to all other federal and provincial ombudspersons in the country, has been denied to the federal ombudsperson for workplace harassment. Without the legal authority to proactively seek out cases of sexual harassment, such as those that are brought to the public's attention through the media, the ombudsperson's office must wait for the aggrieved person to step forward and lodge a formal complaint before the law can take its course.

If a woman accuses a man of sexual harassment, her claim must be taken seriously. Sadly, the prevalent chauvinist attitude assumes that the woman must be guilty of provocation. Such allegations are routinely brushed aside in organisations dominated by men. Given this casual attitude towards harassment and the fact that women are almost universally discriminated against by men in Pakistan, some say that even if a woman wanted to make a false allegation the attempt could be ignored. The National Implementation Watch Committee, a part of the implementation framework, should proactively monitor cases of harassment to offset any chance of the law being misused.

What does it say of the efficacy of the federal ombudsperson for workplace harassment that even a member of parliament such as Aaisha Gulalai chose to make her allegations public and fight a media trial with PTI chairperson Imran Khan rather than file a formal complaint with the office? Parliamentarians must arm the ombudsperson's office

with the powers to actively initiate investigations into workplace harassment, and make use of the mechanism themselves to build trust in the institution.

Given the increasing number of women in higher education, business and employment, all public and private organisations must abide by the act in letter and spirit. Many women are also assuming active roles in politics and working across various tiers of political parties. It is high time that the National Assembly speaker and the Senate chairperson establish an internal code of conduct, and a complaint and appeal mechanism, to enable women parliamentarians to participate in a fair, equitable political environment.

Gender sensitivity trainings workshops should be conducted in all places of work and education in both the private and public sectors. Schools, colleges and universities — nurseries for developing a young nation — should be the focal points for gender sensitisation programmes.

Notwithstanding the gaps in the implementation of laws designed to create enabling public, work and home environments for women, the series of legislation and amendments in the Penal Code are commendable attempts to reform not just criminal justice but also society. These laws aim to change deep-seated gender inequalities, rooted in our social structure, which tend to restrict the economic and intellectual potential of Pakistani women to unremunerated household labour.

It is an obscure fact of our national history that nearly all our human rights bills have been tabled by women parliamentarians, aided by rights activists. Pakistani women have struggled very hard to achieve legal emancipation; however, there is still a long way to go to achieve emancipation from the clutches of a patriarchal, social and cultural order.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1352645>

## NO COUNTRY FOR GIRLS

Dawn, August 20, 2017

Tanzeel Hassan

A few years ago, somewhere in Quetta lived a beautiful young woman with her two girls and a husband renowned across the city as among the best sonologists. The couple decided to have a third baby in the hopes of having a boy this time round. A few months into the pregnancy, however, it dawned on the woman that her life is not as precious as the foetus inside her womb. The baby on the way was a boy and things had changed for the mother. It was almost as if she had ceased to exist.

Doctors routinely take an oath to preserve life and to renew it. But in this case, the sonologist threw caution to the wind. Some months in, the woman's consultant gynaecologist warned the family that continuing with the pregnancy would be risky for the mother. In fact, the mother-to-be threatened to abort the pregnancy herself if her doctor's advice was not heeded. But the sonologist insisted on forging ahead, come hell or high water.

But the woman's health did deteriorate over time. A few weeks before she was due, she was rushed to the hospital for an ultrasound. Doctors detected neither foetal movement nor a heartbeat; they advised an induced abortion to save the mother's life and that too immediately. But the husband wanted to seek a "second opinion" — it was, after all, a male foetus.

The couple returned home that day only to return the next morning. But the woman succumbed to the unnecessary delay; her body was too frail to resist the toxins being released from the dead foetus a day more. Amid the sobs of her girls, she passed away, holding her peace and with it, her dreams and ambitions and perhaps those of her daughters too.

“It was outright murder and I believe her consultant was equally responsible in the crime, for she let her patient go home because of what her husband wanted,” says Dr Agha Xaher Gul, Head of Business Strategy at Marie Stopes. Dr Gul was completing his house job at the time; he says the incident shook Quetta. But then again, thousands of women have succumbed to their husband’s maddening pursuit to have a son. This case was no different.

Of late, the trend of aborting a pregnancy if it’s a girl has caught on across Pakistan. Although data on abortions because of the sex of the foetus remains scant, the Population Research Institute, a non-profit research group, released some worrying statistics: of the 24 million sex-selective abortions performed during 2000-2014 across the world, more than 1.2 million were estimated to have been carried out in Pakistan.

To put it simply: over 15 years, approximately 219 pregnancies were terminated every day on the basis of their sex.

While many doctors shrug off this statistics claiming it to be untrue and unsubstantiated, veteran gynaecologist Dr Shershah Syed expresses the likelihood of its legitimacy, adding however that some might have been done as family planning.

Babies are now being sold in the name of adoption,” claims Faisal Edhi, alleging that some NGOs and welfare organisations are also involved in it. This mafia lures the parents into selling their babies instead of dropping them in cradles. Then they sell these children on further for hefty amounts to adoptive parents.

“Sex-selective abortions are not uncommon and most likely these numbers are correct,” says Syed. “Nobody can give exact figures but educated and uneducated people both try to find out about the sex of the foetus and go for an abortion if it is not a boy. The picture is grim as far as the girl child is concerned. Nobody cares about them and they are the cause of tension in families.”

In the heart of the Karachi, in an old building, philanthropist Sarim Burney is sitting with a married couple. The woman is pregnant with her third daughter; they have just had an ultrasound done to confirm the sex. The couple is there to inform Burney that they will abandon their baby after birth if indeed it is a girl. In case the ultrasound sex prediction proves inaccurate, they will keep the newborn.

Burney tries to reason with the man not to discriminate between a boy and a girl. But the man insists he cannot afford another daughter due to lack of resources.

“The couple returned to the trust after a few months with an adorable baby girl,” recalls Burney. “We offered an adequate monthly stipend to keep their daughter at home with them but they left the baby at the trust. Had we forced him to take the daughter back, the father would have dumped her or sold her off somewhere. We felt it was better to keep her with us.”

Philanthropist Bilquis Edhi echoes the narrative.

“Everyone wants an inheritor,” says Bilquis. “We keep talking about Islamic values but do not follow them in our lives which teach us daughters are blessings,” she adds while expressing her resentment over gender discrimination that claims the lives of many born and unborn girls. Sitting cross-legged on her bed casually, she is talking to Irfana, a widow, who has flown to Pakistan from the US to adopt a boy.

Bilquis worked side by side with her late husband, Abdul Sattar Edhi. She has seen it all before — the beaten wives, the distressed children, the abandoned babies and numerous little dead bodies. She has many stories to tell, mostly heart-wrenching, of infants who were found dead from trash dumps nibbled at furiously by animals.

“But one of them survived,” she exclaims as the bitter-sweet memory strikes her mind, “she was very beautiful, had fair skin and long, curly eyelashes, but was cruelly bitten by dogs.” Moving her hand toward her cheek, she gestures that the baby’s right cheek was badly gnawed at. She underwent major surgeries and survived.

But while this baby was a warrior, the 12-hours-old girl found from a trash dump in the Gulistan-i-Johar locality earlier this year in April wasn’t. She died just hours after her birth despite receiving emergency treatment. The same month, an eight-month-old Eman was burnt alive along with her mother in Muzzafargarh by her very own father. She too survived miraculously unlike her mother, who met her fate for giving birth to an unwanted child — a girl.

The fact that the majority of babies recovered from garbage dumps are girls, the fact that most of the babies left in Edhi cradles, hospitals and maternity clinics are girls, the fact that less girls are born in Pakistan than boys and the fact that the primary and secondary school participation of girls is small in number in contrast to boys, is not just mere coincidence. They are all tied together and point to the mindset of our society — the obsession to have sons, and the savagery and discrimination that results as its consequence.

Of course, this is not the phenomenon of every Pakistani household – some are content with the children they have. There are some who avoid a family with no son, and then there are those who nip the problem in the bud to maintain their ideal family. They all are part of this society.

Pakistan’s sex ratio at birth (SRB) is fairly skewed. Typically the sex ratio at birth usually oscillates around 105 male births per 100 female births. In Pakistan, it is estimated to be 109.9. In other words, around 110 male births per 100 female births; this is close to India which is infamous for sex-selective abortions.

Our society runs on a skewed gender valuation system in which sons enjoy pre-eminence as they are economic resources, support for elderly parents and, most importantly, prolong the family’s patrilineal lineage. Those considered the best kinds of people are parents with daughters whom they raise to be sons, but no one raises their sons to be their daughters.

“Every strata and socio-economic segment of society is engulfed with this craze, regardless of their social, economic and educational background,” explains Faisal Edhi, Bilquis’ son. “The rich want an heir to continue their legacy and the poor want a future breadwinner for the family. In short, everyone wants sons.”

But is the desire for survival so intense that people would dump and dispose of their flesh of blood?

“The reason children are thrown in the trash is not that they are illegitimate,” argues Faisal, “nor is it poverty. It is their sex, it is because they are girls.”

Faisal believes that people are “exploiting” ultrasound technology to determine the sex of the child before birth and choose whether or not to bring a girl child to this world. Those who do not get a chance to abort the pregnancy throw them in garbage dumps, offering them as food to street animals and leaving them to die a cruel death. It was for this reason that Abdul Sattar Edhi had begun a cradle service, encouraging people with “unwanted” babies to let those newborns have a lease on life.

Without legal oversight into the health sector, parents dumping their babies into trash dumps evade charges of second-degree murder. But when it came to the Edhi Foundation’s cradle service, they came under attack for encouraging people to have kids out of wedlock.

“We have received severe backlash in the past and still face criticism from religious conservatives,” says Faisal irately. “They want these children to die as if they have no right to live.”

Of all the deserted babies found alive in the country, claims Faisal, about 90-95 percent were baby girls. He also notes that for every newborn boy left in an Edhi cradle, there are seven newborn girls.

And yet, the Edhi Foundation claims to receive a drastically lower number of babies from their cradles across the country as they did a decade ago. But if you think that this indicates things are getting better, think again.

“Babies are now being sold in the name of adoption,” claims Faisal Edhi, alleging that some NGOs and welfare organisations are also involved in it. This mafia lures the parents into selling their babies instead of dropping them in cradles. Then they sell these children on further for hefty amounts to adoptive parents.

“Sometimes a third-party agent or a middleman is involved too,” explains Faisal. “They are not unwanted children. They are planned babies, brought to this world to make money, often by families stricken with poverty.”

To back his claim, he discusses a case of receiving an application for adoption, only to be withdrawn later. When asked why, the applicant told them that they had adopted a baby through an agent from a family in Ibrahim Hyderi, an impoverished locality in Karachi. “This was when I came to know about all this,” he says.

Faisal Edhi recalls the smuggling of newborn infants to Malta in the early 2000s and how millions were allegedly earned by selling Pakistani babies abroad. BilquisEdhi also speaks about how an educated couple adopted a child from the Edhi Centre and sold the child on later. “The incidence of baby boys being sold is twice as much as baby girls,” states BilquisEdhi.

The society we all make, let alone the husband and in-laws, asserts immense pressure on women to give birth to a boy. A pregnant woman is often bestowed with prayers that she may be blessed with a son and never with a daughter. In cases where parents withhold information about the infant’s sex, expectations are associated with the mother based on old wives’ tales such as the shape of her baby bump or the way she walks. Silly it may sound, but it happens nonetheless.

If those blessings go in vain and a woman fails to meet the high expectations, she is lambasted and ridiculed so much so that it affects her mental health and well-being. Sharing the story of her distant relative who couldn’t sustain the torture after giving birth to her fifth daughter, BilquisEdhi explains that it is men who determine the sex of a baby (by passing on either the X chromosome, which makes a girl, or the Y chromosome, which makes a boy). In Pakistan, however, women are routinely blamed for giving birth to a girl.

Given this dichotomy, it is routine for doctors to not disclose the sex of the baby in the first place. Almost all doctors interviewed agreed that parents insist on revealing the sex for shopping or naming purposes, but what happens after in case it’s a daughter proves to be something else. But since there is no law against foetal sex disclosure, doctors comply with the request if parents insist or are aware of it. “If parents are extraordinarily curious to know the sex of the baby, this puts us on guard,” says DrSrah Sabah Khan, who is completing her house job at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre in Karachi.

Dr Shakira Parveen, associate gynaecology professor at the Civil Hospital Karachi, says she also rebuffs requests of revealing the baby’s sex. She says it can “create trouble for the doctor.” If the patient has a strong desire for a baby boy but is carrying a girl, she can get tense and hypertensive, which leads to complications in smooth pregnancy.

“Almost 70 percent of my parents are not happy when they get to know that their child will be a girl,” narrates DrParveen. The doctor adds that the reaction of parents after delivery is not as negative as when they get to know the gender before birth.

“Sometimes it is the mother who is unhappy with the birth of a daughter because of the stigma attached to it,” she says. “Mothers think that a son can help them get a strong place and respect among their in-laws.” DrParveen advises parents not to blindly trust ultrasound results as they can be inaccurate and create difficulties in accepting the fact later.

Every gynaecologist, at some time in their career, has witnessed prenatal and postnatal discrimination against newborn baby girls. One such doctor is DrMahjabeen Khan. She discusses a case where a husband stood outside the labour room, threatening his wife of divorcing her if she delivered a girl.

“The baby was not even completely out when the patient sat up to check its gender. She had given birth to her eighth daughter and went in shock soon after,” recalls Dr Khan. “It was a normal case till then but suddenly complications arose because of the husband and his desire to have an heir. I can still hear echoes of him screaming. It was quite traumatic.”

Discrimination can also be weighed with the amount of risk parents are willing to take to deliver their unborn child.

“Most parents do not take a risk if they know they are having a boy. Even if there is no need for a C-section, they insist to go for it to ensure zero threat to their unborn son’s life,” DrParveen says. “But many parents resist a C-section to deliver a baby girl despite doctors’ recommendations to the contrary.”

The senior gynaecologist also highlights that if two patients of the same name deliver babies at the same time, a boy and a girl, both families would be willing to claim the boy.

“I have seen a case where families were misinformed about the gender of their baby initially because of similar names of patients,” she recalls. “Later, when they were told the sex correctly, the family who had had a boy was over the moon while the other disowned their baby.”

Hilda Saeed is a founding member of Women’s Action Forum (WAF) and has seen more than most. She recalls a pre-Partition story that still rankles:

“There was a Hindu woman street vendor who’d sell purified butter and papadums, and at times handicrafts, in the neighbourhood. For some time, she’d stopped selling till one day, she reappeared. When asked about her prolonged absence, tears gushed down her eyes. The woman had given birth to her third daughter. But she wasn’t crying because of that little creature. It was the ignominy that flashed back in her mind, the humiliation of being forced to parade naked around the village on a donkey wearing a garland of black shoes around her neck. Her husband was behind that, as retribution for delivering a girl.”

Pakistan’s sex ratio at birth (SRB) is fairly skewed. Typically the sex ratio at birth usually oscillates around 105 male births per 100 female births. In Pakistan, it is estimated to be 109.9. In other words, around 110 male births per 100 female births; this is close to India which is infamous for sex-selective abortions.

An in-depth analysis of the data from all five censuses conducted in Pakistan since 1951 also reveals that the male population has constantly dominated female population in numbers. As of the 1998 census, Pakistan’s overall sex ratio was 108.5 males per 100 females or 925 girl babies per 1,000 boy babies. When classified further, the distortion is found worse in Balochistan (114.6) and Sindh (112.2).

Although gender imbalances at birth are attributed to a set of local factors in each country, they are generally observed in regions with persistence of patriarchal norms and son preference. These are typically countries where people have easy access to sex-detection technologies and pregnancies are terminated on the basis of gender. This practice is known as female foeticide and is quite common in China and India. Pakistan, however, doesn’t have as skewed a SRB



as its two neighbouring countries, but researchers suspect the problem is alarming because of the inordinate delay in carrying out the population census.

“With the advancement in science and technology, couples can choose the gender of their child before birth,” claims MrWajid of the Right Choice conception clinic. “Having a success rate of 95 percent, the procedure is not surgical.”

Right Choice sends a prospective couple a detailed chart mentioning the woman’s ovulation days and guidance to conceive their preferred gender after examining their initial reports. During a brief conversation over phone, Wajid claims to have been in business for more than 17 years and to have operated from an office in Zamama, Karachi, for one year where they received a tremendous response.

However, ever since they moved to Islamabad, they are now operating online. The calendar costs 80,000 rupees (excluding 5,000 rupees for tests) which is non-refundable and is made in advance. The company operates in collaboration with a US partner, who creates the chart for the couple based on their reports and details.

For those with infertility issues, there is a package of 100,000 rupees.

When asked what if the method fails, Wajid says: “You can confirm the sex through a 3D ultrasound within 90 days of conception and abort the foetus if it is a girl. As the foetus is not a living being before 120 days, there is no harm in doing that.”

Somewhat similar to female foeticide is female infanticide, when parents neglect their female child deliberately and let them die (of starvation or thirst), resulting in their premature deaths.

Researchers have observed higher rates of malnutrition in girls because of being weaned off breast milk earlier, either to feed the baby boy or in trying to get pregnant again in pursuit of a male child. This denial of breast milk/ sufficient food often results in the loss of many innocent lives.

“A female sweeper of our hospital delivers twins, a boy and a girl. As time passes by, the baby boy continues to gain weight while the girl grows frail and dies within four months. She is starved to death gradually, in front of my eyes, as the mother found it more important to breastfeed the boy,” recalls Dr Gul.

Female foeticide and infanticide, when combined together along with the number of females who died as a result of unequal opportunities or access to resources, lead to the “missing women” epidemic — a term coined by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen to indicate the difference between the women present on the planet and those that would have been here had the sex ratio been “natural” worldwide.

Doctors, who are interviewed, however, do not relate this imbalance to prenatal sex selection. Some of them even think the SRB in Pakistan is not too distorted to worry about.

DrShershah Syed believes it is difficult to control and report gender selection in a disturbed and unorganised healthcare system such as ours. “You cannot stop it. The rich pay hefty sums of money to famous doctors and have abortions while poor people go to street abortion clinics. It’s not possible to control this.”

The fees of an abortion may rise with the stages in pregnancy. The later the pregnancy, the higher would be the charges, a source shares. “Some doctors even charge around 5,000 rupees more per month, making a rough total of 70,000 to 90,000 rupees to perform the service.”

Excluding a few doctors, none of the health professionals admit the prevalence of prenatal sex-selection in the country. Nor does the research conducted by the Population Council Pakistan in 2015 confirm it (suggesting only its

possibility). Some, who believe that it happens, either decline to speak on record, citing lack of information or claim it to “have not reached epidemic proportions.”

Dr Hussain Abidi, medical insurance doctor, however, says that mothers try to self-abort babies when they do not want to continue their pregnancy and are later admitted to hospitals in debilitating situations. Doctors then have no option but to perform an abortion, for medical reasons. During his tenure, DrAbidi has witnessed cases where expectant mothers were admitted in life-threatening conditions. Later upon investigation, the cases were either withdrawn or restated with purely medical reasons to get financial cover from insurance companies.

The picture is gloomy, but a ray of hope is flickering on the dark horizon.

Speaking about the preference of adoptive parents, Sarim Burney and DrMubinaAgboatwalla, chairperson of HOPE, both agreed that trends have been changing.

“Adoptive parents are really desperate to adopt a baby. Nowhere have I seen any discrimination,” argues DrAgboatwalla. “Even if they have already adopted a baby girl they will still go for the baby girl if available.”

She confirms, however, that around 70 percent of the abandoned babies left at the HOPE hospital and maternal clinics are girls. Burney adds that prospective parents prefer girls because boys are no more considered a support system for parents in their old age.

Indian social scientist and feminist activist KamlaBhasin describes the patriarchal system as a war of resources where the man is the ‘sun (the resource)’ and women are ‘planets’ dependent on him to sustain life. But perhaps, the stars will only align for girls if women are no longer financially dependent on anyone; and instead others are reliant on them.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1352104>

## GENDER POLITICS: THE SILENT SUFFERERS

Dawn, August 20, 2017

MalihaDiwan and Fareeha Khan

Mahira\* had just begun her new job at a well-known shipping company in Karachi when she noticed something. Her boss hugged all the girls in the office and was very short-tempered. “It made me very uncomfortable,” she says.

“When we’d go for meetings, he’d move around his desk and hug us. The first time that happened, I quickly shot out my hand but I didn’t know how long I could avoid getting ‘hugged’ by him. He would also bark orders and didn’t want to listen to my feedback on the programmes which is what I was hired to do.”

Mahira left the position a couple of weeks later but not everyone is lucky or brave enough to leave their job or boss behind. The harassment accusations brought forward by politician Ayesha GulalWazir against Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman Imran Khan show that not even the richest or most privileged amongst us are spared harassment in the workplace.

MNA Ayesha GulalWazir’s harassment allegation is a reminder that harassment is not uncommon at the workplace

According to DrWarsi, assistant director at the Council of Gender Equality, Islamabad, one in three workers are subject to work-related harassment or bullying. Most incidents of bullying at the workplace, however, go unreported. “People are mostly afraid of being misjudged,” he points out. “I have seen many people with workplace-related

trauma, stress and attention-deficit syndrome. They become paranoid, repeat the same things over and over again and doubt the intentions of every passerby.”

Pakistan is also ranked very low in gender equivalence at the workplace: according to the 2016 Global Gender Report, Pakistan ranks 143 out of 144 countries in terms of workplace and sexual harassment. Even heavily patriarchal societies, such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia, have made tremendous improvement in curtailing this issue and are ranked higher than Pakistan.

One of the reasons for Pakistan’s low ranking is most likely because of an unfriendly environment at the office. Sara\*, a former employee at a TV station talks about how she once rushed to work and didn’t have time to really put on make-up or blow dry her hair. Her manager wasted no time in commenting on her appearance: “I can’t really repeat what he said because it was so inappropriate but it devastated me. I stopped going to work from the next day.”

The Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 is supposed to legally address the kind of sexual harassment Sara and Mahira faced but often it isn’t effective. According to Reema Omer, a legal adviser for the International Commission of Jurists, there are “a number of shortcomings. For example, the definition of workplace is very narrow. It is still not clear whether it applies to students in educational institutions, and it appears unlikely that it applies to domestic workers or political parties.”

“[There is a] lack of awareness about the law and what constitutes sexual harassment,” emphasises Omar. The lawyer also lists other factors hindering the effectiveness of the law such as the “failure of employers to implement [it], the reluctance of victims to register complaints, the limited funding and other resources available to the ombudsperson’s office, and prolonged delays in appointing ombudspersons.”

However, Omer is quick to point out that the law has worked well in many ways as organisations and government departments have “adopted the code of conduct provided for under the [2010 Act] and constituted inquiry committees [which have] expeditiously decided cases, finding against the accused in quite a few cases where allegations have been proven.”

There are, however, situations that are not covered under the law and women often have to manage a delicate balancing act. For instance, Sana\*, assistant manager at a public-sector bank says that “working in a male-dominated sector is all the more difficult. If you laugh a bit loudly or try to be friendly with your co-workers you are judged as easily approachable and willing. If you are reserved you are labelled as pretentious and coy.”

Women are also expected to work harder than men. The case of Saira\* illustrates this well. A lecturer at a public college, she continued working while she was pregnant and almost lost her child because of unreasonable work pressure.

“I was supposed to start my maternity leave from the next day and was asked to work late to answer emails,” says Bano. “I was feeling some pain in my abdomen but always felt the pressure to do as much as I can and I didn’t want to say no. I ignored the pain. Eventually, I had to be rushed to the hospital and I almost lost my child.”

For employees such as Sana and Saira, there are few options to address the harassment they face at the workplace. While there are laws in Pakistan against sexual harassment at the workplace such as the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010, there is nothing that addresses other forms of harassment for either gender.

The 2010 Act “does not apply to other kinds of harassment such as harassment based on religion, ethnicity, disability, etc. [but] this doesn’t mean bullying and other forms of harassment are lawful in the absence of such a law,” says Omer. “In some cases, Pakistan Penal Code offences could be applicable,” she says. “For example, intimidation is a crime under section 503 of the Penal Code.”

DrWarsi also points out that most victims of office bullying are not aware that they have a right to not be treated this way or they are reluctant to address the issue. “In our society the concept of bullying bosses or co-workers is relatively newer,” he says. “However, people sometimes do not know that they suffer from harassment or are victimised. The latent gestures and hidden motives are never reported.”

This leaves employees with few options such as leaving the job. This is highlighted in the case of RukhsanaShaheen, the former secretary of education, who says that she was marginalised and overworked in her department for being too ‘assertive’.

“I was a young, vulnerable female in the midst of a male-dominant arena,” Shaheen recalls. “I would be asked to fly to Lahore from Islamabad at two in the morning without prior notice. I belong to a middle-class family with no bureaucratic background and they exploited me till the end.”

According to the former education secretary, the hectic work schedule eventually took its toll. “My health began declining and after reflecting on it, I offered my resignation, which was immediately accepted. Within a day I was relegated to a non-entity,” she adds.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1352678>

#### WOMEN ACTION FORUM DEMANDS SINDH WOMEN COMMISSION BE ACTIVATED

The Express Tribune, August 20,2017

HYDERABAD: Decrying apparent procrastination on part of the Sindh government and highlighting the repercussions, the Women Action Forum has demanded activation of the Sindh Commission on Status of Women without further delay.

At a press conference in Hyderabad, the forum’s Prof Amar Sindhu lamented that though the Sindh Assembly legislated the law for setting up the commission in April, 2015, the body has yet to be made operational.

She recalled that the commission’s first announcement was made in 1995 by Benazir Bhutto while speaking at a conference in Beijing, China.

Sindhu, who is also a representative of the Khanabadosh Writers’ Cafe, said the government notified the commission in May, 2017. Under the notification, only 19 days were given to complete the set up, she added.

“Even after 27 months, [since the legislation] the law could not be implemented,” she observed.

According to the law, the commission will be able to review the government’s policies on women rights and ensure not only equal opportunities in terms of political participation and electoral representation but also women empowerment.

The commission would have the authority to recommend amendments to existing laws and suggest newer ones. It will also protect women from victimization besides helping victims.

Pointing out that the women development ministry’s portfolio is already with Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Sindhu asked why the government could not find a competent woman to head the department. She claimed, citing her sources, that the CM wanted to amend the existing law owing to which the implementation is being delayed.

Sindhu said similar commissions were efficiently performing in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.

On June 21, Sindh High Court also ordered the Sindh government to make the commission functional, giving a month's time to the latter for submission of the compliance report. The SHC had warned of contempt proceedings for non-compliance.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1486232/women-action-forum-demands-sindh-women-commission-activated/>

## WOMAN SHOT DEAD OUTSIDE HER HOUSE OVER 'PETTY ISSUE'

Dawn, August 21, 2017

LAHORE: A mother of five was allegedly shot dead over a petty issue outside her house in Sundar area on Sunday.

Police said Shamim Bibi, 48, mother of five, was in her house in Chota Mohanwal while her young sons were in the street.

Suddenly, she heard gunshots in the street and came outside to find that some armed strangers following a quarrel with her sons had resorted to indiscriminate fire.

As she rushed to save her sons, a bullet hit her in the head and she fell on the ground. The injured woman was taken to the Jinnah Hospital where she succumbed to her bullet wound.

Police, on being informed of the incident, reached the spot, collected forensic evidences, and recorded the statements of eyewitnesses.

The police later shifted the body to the city morgue for an autopsy and registered a murder case against five suspects on the complaint of the victim's husband, Akram.

Investigating officer Saifullah told Dawn they have arrested one of the suspects identified as Ahsan.

He said they were also conducting raids to arrest the other nominated suspects.

The IO said initial investigation showed that the suspects had parked their car outside the house of the victim to visit their farmhouse nearby on Saturday night.

He said when the suspects returned on Sunday morning they found tyres of their car deflated.

He said the suspects got enraged and exchanged harsh words with the victim's sons who were standing there.

He said the suspects then resorted to indiscriminate fire, that hit Shamim Bibi, resulting in her death.

He said they got information about the suspects from the locals and would arrest them soon.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1352934>

## NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 7TH TO AUGUST 14TH 2017

### WOMEN AS 'COLLATERAL' IN JIRGA JUSTICE

MULTAN: The rape of a teenage girl in revenge for a crime committed by her brother has left residents of Muzaffarabad district in Multan shaken and questioning a deeply entrenched system of village justice.

Last month, a council of village elders ordered the rape of the 16-year-old victim after her brother was accused of raping a 12-year-old girl.

The ruling highlighted the role such councils – known as panchayats, or jirgas – play in the lives of many rural people, who see the country's courtrooms as a distant presence.

The councils have traditionally enjoyed broad support, thanks to their ability to offer immediate justice, compared to courts that can take years to settle a criminal case, and as much as a decade to resolve a civil dispute

But the recent ruling, which allowed a rape victim's brother to sexually assault another innocent girl, has unsettled Rajpur area, home to some 3,000 people.

"May God have mercy, it was such a strange day and it was such a big injustice," said villager Amina Bibi.

"In our area there is neither a school nor a hospital, and poverty and ignorance rules here... This incident is a mark of this ignorance," said 46-year-old Imtiaz Matila.

"It's a stain on the name of the panchayat," agreed another villager, 65-year-old Manzoor Hussain.

The girls have since been taken to a women's shelter in Multan, country's fifth-largest city. Rajpur area is just a few kilometres down the road, but feels a world away from urban life.

Men sit around on charpoys, sheltering from the blistering heat, while women are conspicuous only by their absence, shielded from view behind the rough stone walls that surround each of the crudely built, single-storey houses.

Central Punjab is also home to one of Pakistan's most prominent advocates for women's rights – Mukhtar Mai, whose own story offers a window into jirga justice and its brutal mistreatment of women.

In 2002, a jirga ordered Mai to be gang-raped after her brother was falsely accused of rape.

Mai, who lives a few hours north of Multan, made the unusual decision to defy her rapists and take them to court. But in one of South Asia's most infamous miscarriages of justice, her attackers walked free, and people continued to rely on panchayats, even as she went on to become a high-profile activist.

"It's an honour-based system and there's nothing more dishonourable than the rape of a woman within your family," explained women's rights activist Aisha Sarwari.

The men of the aggressor's family must be shamed through the loss of their women's dignity, Sarwari explained.

"That's the balance of power in these communities, which makes sure that women are some kind of collateral," she added.

The Supreme Court, trying to bring jirgas to heel, declared them illegal in 2006. But in an apparent backtrack this year aimed at unclogging the slow-moving court system, the government passed a new law that promotes village councils as an alternative solution to small civil disputes.

The decision, dubbed the 'Jirga Law' by activists, has raised concerns about women's rights, given the precedents set by the panchayats.

“The decisions of the jirgas have always had a negative impact on the lives of women,” said women’s rights activist Samar Minallah.

The new law does not suggest penalties for decisions like the one made by the council in Raja Ram, added Minallah, who brought the original 2006 anti-jirga petition to the Supreme Court.

But the uproar surrounding the rapes at Raja Ram has spurred the court to demand a full investigation.

Despite her concerns, Minallah is confident that the court will “step in at one stage or another to remind the state that these jirgas are against the constitution and humanity”.

Whatever the court decides, for some in Raja Ram at least, faith in the traditional system has been shaken.

“There used to be wise people in the old days who were making good panchayat decisions,” recalled resident Matila.

“They used to know the realities of the village... but now, these are the panchayat,” he said, dismissively.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1475256/women-collateral-jirga-justice/>

## PATRIARCHAL JUSTICE

Dawn, August 7th, 2017

Asfand Yar Warraich

THE panchayat or jirga system is firmly rooted in the socio-political and cultural matrix of the Indian subcontinent. This informal mechanism of adjudication has a history spanning multiple centuries, and today, far from being an ancient and disremembered relic of the past, it continues to run parallel to our state-sanctioned judicial system, delivering its own version of justice, at times with devastating consequences.

Recently, a panchayat convened in Muzaffarabad, Multan, ordered a man to rape a young girl. It appears that the members of the panchayat deemed this to be fitting retribution, since the girl’s brother had allegedly raped the man’s sister — a classic tit for tat, so to speak. Regrettably, by the time that either the media or law-enforcement agencies caught wind of the panchayat’s decision, the deed had been done and the order executed.

This is not the first time that news of such perverse justice has surfaced, nor is it likely to be the last. Panchayats and jirgas have, in recent times, acquired a great degree of notoriety for subjecting women to unchecked exploitation and abuse. With a composition that is almost entirely male-dominated, these ad hoc tribal councils have long been accused of perpetuating outdated and patriarchal notions of equity and fairness.

Women, rather than being involved in the adjudication process, are used as mere bargaining chips, stripped of any agency, with no voice, no representation and no right of appeal. Their bodies are reduced to the front lines of petty battles over family honour, piety and prestige, and in this process, they are defiled, humiliated and exchanged — less human and more commodity.

In the aftermath of the incident and amidst an outpouring of public outrage, the state quickly catapulted into action. The chief minister of Punjab suspended officials at the local police station, expressing displeasure over their ‘extreme negligence’ and ‘criminal delay’, and called for a three-member investigation team to carry out a probe. Similarly, the country’s chief justice took suo motu notice of the case and directed the inspector general of Punjab to produce a report on the matter before the Supreme Court.

However, these temporary and superfluous knee-jerk reactions from the state have, by now, become far too familiar. They are always quick to follow such atrocious events, and they always fall short of addressing the systemic problems that these issues highlight. What is far more important for us to consider, at this critical juncture, is whether these panchayats and jirgas should even be allowed to continue to exist, and if so, under what conditions?

There are two options available. The first is to call for an immediate blanket ban on panchayats and jirgas, criminalising their convention and penalising anyone that participates in them. This is likely to be the simplest solution, for it requires the least amount of active involvement from the state. However, it is questionable whether this would actually be effective.

As a rule of thumb, top-down projects of social engineering rarely work in practice, especially if they are met with opposition from below. It is highly likely that such a ban would lead to antagonism from rural quarters, where it would be quickly coloured as an assault on customary and tribal values, and that even despite the presence of a ban, these councils would continue to be convened, albeit now behind closed doors.

Furthermore, it is also important to consider that informal justice is not necessarily an anathema to the rule of law. Not all cases belong in courtrooms, and at times, it is much more expedient for parties to settle their disputes amongst themselves. This stands all the more true for Pakistan, where litigation is not only expensive but also considerably time-consuming and cumbersome, what with our judicial system being infamously mired in corruption and nepotism and already being overburdened with a heavy backlog of undecided cases.

The second option is to bring informal judicial processes within the folds of the law, thereby ensuring their regulation and delimiting their legal mandate. Panchayats and jirgas ought to be treated as any other alternative dispute mechanism. Any party involved in a conflict may opt to seek redressal through this mechanism, but only where every party expressly consents to this in writing. During the process itself, state-appointed officials ought to be present, not only to record the content of the proceedings but also to ensure that each party is permitted to have its say. In addition, if a resolution is forthcoming, it ought to be recorded as consent decree, which, must ultimately be sanctioned by a court of law in order to be legally binding.

Moreover, it is also pertinent that the mandate of panchayats and jirgas be solely confined to civil disputes. Criminal conflicts, by their very nature, are inherently unsuitable to informal mechanisms of adjudication. After all, a criminal offence does not simply involve the individual victim and perpetrator, but also has immense repercussions for the public at large. Furthermore, even a cursory look at the history of panchayats and jirgas indicates that it is precisely with disputes of a criminal nature that the gravest forms of injustices occur.

Whatever the eventual form of their regulation, one thing is certain — for far too long have such assemblies of men been allowed to clothe misogyny as justice, to dispense sexism as equity and to legitimise violence as collective wisdom. The state must act, and it must do so before another victim is forced to surface.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1350085>

**FEMALE LAWMAKER IN PAKISTAN ACCUSES IMRAN KHAN OF ‘INAPPROPRIATE’ TEXTS. ABUSE FOLLOWS.**

Mehreen Zahra-Malik

International New York Times, August, 5, 2017

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — When a Pakistani lawmaker said this past week that she had received “inappropriate text messages” from a male colleague, she was met with a wave of vitriol on social media.



The episode has attracted widespread attention, as the man she accused is Imran Khan, the former cricket star who is now one of Pakistan's leading politicians, with a large social media following. The case also illustrates the rise of online abuse against women in a country considered one of the most dangerous in the world for them.

On Tuesday, the lawmaker, Ayesha Gulalai Wazir, from Pakistan's tribal South Waziristan region, accused Mr. Khan of sending her "objectionable" text messages, and said women were not respected in his political party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. The party denied that Mr. Khan had sent any such text messages to Ms. Wazir.

Social media users unleashed profanity-filled tirades against Ms. Wazir, calling her a liar and an opportunist. Many tried to shame her because her sister, Maria Toorpakai Wazir, a top squash player, has competed in international tournaments in shorts, the kind of attire considered immodest in Muslim-majority Pakistan.

Some messages were more frightening. "Ayesha Gulalai KILL YOURSELF," one Twitter user wrote. Another Twitter user threatened to kill her. Others proposed throwing acid in her face.

Women around the world face online abuse, but in Pakistan, with its entrenched culture of discrimination and violence against women, the threats are not idle. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, about 500 Pakistani women are killed each year by family members who believe their honor has been damaged if a female relative refuses an arranged marriage, socializes with men or even claps and sings at a wedding.

In a country where 33 million people use Facebook and at least five million are on Twitter, social media has become a frequent platform for obscene and virulent outbursts. In some cases, online abuse has incited physical violence.

"Instead of responding to my accusations or proving that I am wrong, people are saying throw acid on me?" Ms. Wazir said in a telephone interview. "I can't believe they have fallen to this level, but it is just part of a larger culture encouraged by the society and political parties here."

Ms. Wazir said she was afraid to publicly share the objectionable text messages out of fear of further antagonizing Mr. Khan's followers. But she said she was prepared to present the messages to a judge or an investigating authority on the condition that they remain confidential.

Maria Waqar, an Indiana University graduate student who has interviewed dozens of female lawmakers in Pakistan for her research on the legislature, said the abuse directed at Ms. Wazir was not surprising. She said that "the web is littered with websites, videos and message boards dedicated to objectifying and degrading women parliamentarians in particular and women in general."

In a survey of women in 17 Pakistani universities, published by the Digital Rights Foundation in May, 34 percent said they had experienced online harassment and abuse. The actions included cyberstalking, bullying, and the leaking and manipulation of personal information and pictures.

Many women reported threats of physical violence and vandalism, blackmail, sexual remarks and false accusations meant to humiliate, threaten or discredit them. Seventy percent of the women surveyed said they were afraid to post their pictures on social media websites.

The country is taking some steps to address the problem. Last year, Parliament passed the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, which was widely promoted as a tool to curb online sexual harassment. Pakistan's first cyber harassment help line, also set up last year, received 763 complaints in the form of calls, emails and Facebook messages from Dec. 1 to May 31.

In July, a man was sentenced to 12 years in jail for blackmailing a woman in the northern city of Peshawar. And in two cases still to be decided, a university professor in the port city of Karachi was arrested on charges of setting up fake Facebook pages and publishing doctored pictures of a female colleague, and two boys were arrested in 2015 on charges of using a fake Facebook profile to harass and blackmail up to 50 girls in Peshawar.

Yet online activity has still led to real-life violence, including in July of last year, when Qandeel Baloch, a social media sensation, was strangled in what is known as an honor killing. When Ms. Baloch's brother was arrested in connection with her death, he said at a news conference that he had killed her because he was incensed over her risqué Facebook posts.

Nighat Dad, the executive director of the Digital Rights Foundation, a Pakistani internet advocacy group, said, "There is a culture of violence against women that already exists in the home, the workplace, in public places, and now it is increasingly manifesting itself in online spaces as well."

In another case, Saman, a 19-year-old university student from Lahore who asked to be identified by only her first name to protect her safety, said her sister's husband had propositioned her for years before spraying her with acid, disfiguring her, in January 2016.

When she filed a case against her attacker, he threatened to post what she says are doctored nude pictures of her online. Last month, he was sentenced to 28 years in prison, but Saman said the harassment persisted.

"Even from behind bars, the threats continue," Saman, who has seen the photos, said in a telephone interview. She said she had told the authorities about the images, "but they say they can't do anything until the pictures are actually published."

Marvi Sirmed, a Pakistani journalist, said people on social media had called for her to be publicly raped and killed over her views on the rights of women and minorities.

"Women who are opinionated, who are professionals doing jobs traditionally done by men, who are entering politics and media, of course they are going to be in the line of fire on the internet," Ms. Sirmed said. "And when they fight back, the abuse just gets worse."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/05/world/asia/pakistan-women-social-media.html?mcubz=0>

#### SHC CJ TAKES SUO MOTU NOTICE OF GIRL'S GANG RAPE

Dawn, August 8th, 2017

KARACHI: Sindh High Court Chief Justice Ahmed Ali M. Shaikh on Monday directed the district and sessions judge, commissioner and the deputy inspector general concerned to submit their respective reports on alleged gang rape of a three-year-old girl by three persons in Kandiaro, 27km from Naushahro Feroze.

Official sources told Dawn that the chief justice took notice over the report of the incident published in print media.

They said the CJ also took suo motu notice of reports of chikungunya outbreak in Thar after recent rains. The district health officer and medical superintendent of Mithi Civil Hospital were directed to submit their reports, said the sources.

## WOMAN BURNT TO DEATH BY LANDLORD IN NANKANA SAHIB

The Express Tribune, August 10th, 2017.

FAISALABAD: In a horrific incident that occurred in a village in Nankana Sahib, a female domestic aide was burnt alive by her employer, a feudal landlord, on Wednesday.

Saddar Police Station SHO Amjad Ali told The Express Tribune that 35-year-old Fozia Bibi, a mother of five and a resident of Chak No 563, had borrowed some money from her employer Muhammad Hanif.

“When he asked her to return the money, Fozia requested him to adjust the amount against her salary which was not paid for almost two months,” he revealed.

“At this, Hanif got enraged and started abusing her and threatened her of dire consequences,” he added.

“However, when Fozia showed annoyance over using abusive language, the accused got infuriated and doused her in petrol with the help of his son Naveed Ahmad as well as Bilal Ahmad,” the SHO maintained. He said the accused set the woman on fire and fled the scene.

While speaking to The Express Tribune, victim’s husband Muhammad Aslam said, “My wife used to work in the fields owned by Muhammad Hanif. He promised to pay Rs13,000 per month as salary to my wife three months ago but failed to pay the amount except for some advance money.”

He added, “When my wife demanded payment of salary, Hanif asked her to return the advance money.”

Aslam said, “Fozia asked him to adjust the outstanding amount against her salary but the accused got annoyed and in a fit of rage, he set her ablaze.”

He elaborated that when he reached the spot and made an attempt to save her life, the accused locked him in a room and also snatched his cellphone.

“My wife was crying and shouting for help but none of the people, who were witnessing the incident, made any attempt to save her life,” he lamented.

He said after his wife fell unconscious, the accused set him free and he immediately shifted her to Allied Hospital for treatment.

“Her burn injuries were severe and she could not survive,” he told The Express Tribune with tears in his eyes.

Meanwhile, the SHO said the main accused behind the incident, Muhammad Hanif and his son Naveed Ahmad, had been arrested. He said a case under sections 324 and 336-B was registered against them. “We have also included section 302 of the PPC against them on complaint of victim’s husband Muhammad Aslam,” the official told The Express Tribune.

Earlier this year, a case had surfaced of a judge and his wife accused of keeping 10-year-old housemaid in wrongful confinement, burning her hand over a missing broom, beating her with a ladle, detaining her in a storeroom and threatening her with even worse.

International New York Times, AUG. 10, 2017

KARACHI, Pakistan — There is an increasingly popular formula for political TV talk shows in Pakistan. A young, well-groomed and articulate woman introduces one or two or sometimes six middle-aged, gray-haired men, and asks them what they think of this or that. She can interrupt them to announce commercial breaks, she can call up another guest, but her basic role is confined to asking each of these all-knowing men, Sir, your opinion?

Sir's opinion matters because he is a man. If you are a woman, you'd better be sure your hair is shiny and you can safely lead a bunch of wise men into a commercial break. None of those men ever says, Look, I don't know, why don't you tell us what you think?

These shows don't reflect society. As a middle-aged graying man myself, I have never come across young women who'll sit and listen with such deference. I once taught a class full of them, and always went in with a trembling heart. When confronted with their raw curiosity and assertive arguments, I would bristle. And then I realized I wasn't that different from those TV pundits. I, too, am part of Pakistan's new, well-read, well-heeled, politically correct patriarchy. We respect women, but they have to earn that by deferring to us.

This new patriarchy has been on the march in its full glory recently. Three Pakistani women have made headlines, and been told by a nation of men what was wrong with them and what could happen to them if they didn't mend their ways.

Ayesha Gulalai Wazir, a member of Parliament, was threatened with having acid thrown in her face and her home burned down after she publicly accused Imran Khan, one of Pakistan's most powerful politicians, of sexual harassment. She was called immoral and the kind of woman who sells herself for 24 hours. After saying that she would only share the lewd messages she says Mr. Khan sent her with a parliamentary committee, she was accused of playing political games. Never mind that she is a politician.

The iconic human rights lawyer, Asma Jahangir, was accused of "disgracing a national institution" after she denounced the Supreme Court for never holding the country's generals to account. She was also accused of accepting fees for working on government cases. As if lawyers didn't usually work for a fee.

Khadija Siddiqui, a law student, was hailed as a role model: Stabbed 23 times in the face and the neck during an assault last year, she took her attacker to court despite threats from his influential family and friends. He was recently convicted to seven years in prison for attempted murder.

For Ms. Siddiqui, exceptionally, we had sympathy. But that's because she had scars to show. When women show ambition or political defiance instead, we insist that they produce the dirty text messages or their income tax returns.

The new patriarchy will respect women but it makes subtle demands: First, go get shot, get doused in acid or get raped, and then we will be with you. If a woman demonstrates that the men in a political party, in the army or on a court bench are a bunch of nincompoops, the new patriarchy responds a lot like the old patriarchy: She is asking for trouble.

Ms. Wazir was asking for trouble so badly that she entered politics, joined Mr. Khan's party, won a seat in the National Assembly and then left the party denouncing its culture of harassment. Has she no shame? And what about her sister who plays professional squash in shorts? Ms. Wazir really has no honor.

Then there is Ms. Jahangir, the old scourge of the Pakistani establishment, who for years has spoken truth to power. While some of the country's most powerful men have lined up to lick the boots of every new military dictator, Ms. Jahangir's activism has sent those dictators into impotent fits of rage. What do you do with a character like that? Photoshop her into a witch and accuse her of being a traitor, of course.

The new patriarchy has attended a gender studies course; it knows not to grab a woman in a dark corner. It is happy to bring the kids to school and do the dishes. It is proud of not being a patriarchy. This patriarchy prefers to destroy women on prime-time TV. It wants to know, in all seriousness, why women accuse some of its honorable men. Where is the proof?

Ms. Siddiqui wears her proof on her face, but her path is almost impossible to tread. First, she had the good fortune of surviving 23 stabs to her upper body, then she had the courage to press charges, and then she grew a skin thick enough to withstand character assassination. Yes, she is being hailed as a role model on TV, but really, in a society where all talk about women boils down to their being mothers, sisters and daughters, who wants a role model like that? Shouldn't women just try to stay safe?

Earlier this year, I tried to help a friend file a criminal complaint with the police in a small provincial city after his sister was murdered, allegedly by her husband and his family. For the first time in my life, I saw a post-mortem report. It listed her wounds. I counted 17 above the neck. The police officers kept saying that my friend's sister had died of food poisoning, that the report said the 17 wounds hadn't really been fatal. A gender-sensitive male acquaintance who was trying to help out asked what exactly she had been up to anyway — because, you know, no man would do that kind of thing to a woman without a reason.

Pakistan's most famous fighter and victim is Malala Yousafzai. Every time the men of Pakistan see her addressing a world forum or meeting a head of state, half of them go into convulsions because they feel dishonored. The other half well up with the tears of proud parents but shake their heads because they believe she is being used by Western powers as a tool for their own political ends. Pakistan's new patriarchs don't approve of a girl being shot in the face, but when she survives, they want to decide what to do with that face.

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM AUGUST 1ST TO AUGUST 6TH 2017 TWO WOMEN SHOT DEAD OVER LAND DISPUTE Dawn, August 1st, 2017

RAWALPINDI: Two women were shot dead over a land dispute in Kalar Syedan on Monday, police said.

Ms Saffia and her daughter-in-law Ms Sadia were gunned down allegedly by their relative who was their neighbour in Dhoke Mehrban.

Sakhawat Hussain, son of Saffia, complained to the police that the accused was laying concrete in the street which did not go well with the two women who tried to stop him that led to a quarrel among them.

SI Anwar Javaid, who is leading the double murder investigation, told Dawn that after having some hot words with the two women the alleged killer went onto the rooftop of his house and opened fire on both the women killing them on the spot.

He said the alleged killer who was in his 70s and a retired army man later escaped.

Separately, a milk distributor was robbed of cash and cell phones by four robbers in Sadiqabad on Monday, police said.

Raheel Akhtar complained to the police that he was distributing his company's products when the robbers came on two motorcycles blocked his way and forced the mini-truck driver to stop.

He said as the driver stopped the truck, the gunmen held him at gunpoint and forced him to give up cash and cell phones.

The robbers fetched Rs 300,000 and three cell phones from the victims and sped away.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348898/two-women-shot-dead-over-land-dispute>

#### MAN GETS 33 YEARS IN JAIL FOR RAPING MINOR GIRL

Dawn, August 01, 2017

GILGIT: An anti-terrorism court in Gilgit-Baltistan on Monday sentenced to 33 years in jail a man for raping an eight-year-old girl.

The convict was also fined Rs250,000. After concluding the case proceedings, the judgment was passed by ATC judge Raja Shahbaz Khan.

As per the case, Ghulam Mohammad, resident of Mehdiabad area of Kharmang district, had registered an FIR with the local police station on January 8, this year, complaining that her eight-year-old granddaughter was locked by the convict, Hamid Hussain, in a room of a government primary school she was studying and was raped.

Later, the complainant said, they found the girl bleeding.

After registration of the FIR the police had arrested the culprit.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1348938>

#### REVENGE RAPES NEED TO BE PUNISHED

The Express Tribune, August 1st, 2017

Aisha Sarwari

400-year-old panchayat system is meant to protect only men. Men alone reap benefits from this system that operate out of the formal legal system of Pakistan. This is a system that proliferates male privilege. The same system made up of all-male village or tribe elders who make it up the ranks by their wife beating, philandering and social equity credentials often decides what calamity befalls women of this country. A particularly putrid one in Multan district decreed that a 16-year-old girl child is to be raped as a punishment for the rape her brother carried out.

This 16-year-old's brother had earlier raped a 12-year-old girl while she was cutting grass in the field. Justice under the panchayat system is based on a creed that commodifies and undermines women's human dignity. It is based on a system that takes women's consent away from them and places it securely in the hands of these tribal elders. It punishes men who transgress by punishing their women. 'Their' is the operative word. Women belong. Men own. Women are subservient. Men dominate. Women are victimised. Men victimise. Women have to be the honour of the man. A man can be dishonourable and have no harm fall on his own self. There is impunity for transgressions against women.

It is a brilliant system that works to ensure that men fester, prosper and thrive. Where women are shut down hard after they whimper.

This time around though, the women did whimper a bit harder. Some noise was made because there was now a mechanism of noise. There was a Violence Against Women Centre in Multan where the families of both these young raped girls registered an FIR. They had a grievance. The right to have a grievance was taken away from women before, and now under a new law, this is given back to women.

Revenge rape should technically mean that the man who raped a mere child should have been raped himself. In a misogynist culture like ours it means his sister, also a minor gets raped.

This tells us that for the panchayat it is a more cruel punishment to the rapist to see his sister raped. Therefore, having your sister, so-called dishonoured, is worse than your own death.

The idea that women hold their own choices and reputation in their own hands is an alien concept. This is why when the panchayat was grudging for doing what they did they were flabbergasted and unaware of where they had gone wrong. It is how it is always done: this was their defense. They knew no alternative universe because a woman is either a mother or a whore, with heaven at her feet or a fallen woman unworthy of a pulse. The space between these two extremes is unimaginable for these men.

There were reports suggesting that it was the women who implored the panchayat to decree that the rapist's sister is raped by a mass of men. This is painfully troubling on so many levels, if true. Women have been brought down over eons to a place where there is zero sympathy for their collective rights. They have been brought to a point of low self-esteem that they defer to the male code to function. They have outsourced their agency to the men, to their husbands, sons and fathers and to the panchayat.

How do we unlearn this subjugation? How do we hold up our sense of womanhood and call a violation a violation? How do we recognise that we have a contract with the state and a crime against us is a crime against the state?

The Violence Against Women Centres are a start. This is where these two girls are now sheltered. This is where the chief minister of Punjab may visit them. This is where they may receive justice. This is where they will find out that all perpetrators of this crime, including members of the panchayat, will face up to 25 years of imprisonment or even a death sentence.

Will this be revenge for the rapes of these two girl children? Probably not enough to restore them to their original state psychologically, but it will be a start to send a sure message to this marred country that women are not property, they are equals to men.

This is a revolutionary idea for now — one that panchayats will have to die to find out.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1470956/revenge-rapes-need-punished/>

## THE WOMEN WHO WIN

Rafia Zakaria

Dawn, August 02, 2017

I want women to win. I want them to win elections so they can lead countries. I want them to win promotions so that they can lead companies. I want them to overcome obstacles and shatter glass ceilings, demand and command authority. It is a goal that even in this moment of great technological advancement, instantaneous communication and global connectivity, is a somewhat elusive one.

But before I go on to enumerate all the reasons why, a necessary correction must be noted. When I say I want women to win, I mean certain sorts of women; women who advance on the basis of merit, survive on their own skills, reach the summit as a result of their own efforts.

That particular sort of woman, the self-made woman, has been tough to find in the realm of politics. Not very long after its birth, Pakistan had, in Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah, a candidate for president. The sister of the country's founder contested the election but did not win. But the daughter of an executed prime minister did go on to win some decades later. Until recently, it seemed that another daughter of a now thrice-removed prime minister would again take on the mantle of leadership.

All of them were leaders or came close to becoming leaders, but all three, received a leg up, a halo, an enveloping glow from the fathers or brothers that preceded them and who had laid a foundation or paved a path. Dynastic power can bestow riches and glory on many under its shadow and so it is for women, the fact of their femaleness, otherwise such a burden, mitigated by its beatific glow.

Dynastic politics, and the fact that they have permitted women to rise and lead even within the political sphere, are not of course a particularly Pakistani phenomenon. Next door in India, it was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru who steered the country, part of a new dynasty built on the legacy of her father. After the daughter came the grandson, with even the granddaughter-in-law making her entry into politics on the basis of what it bestowed. Were it not for the rise of a populist hate-mongering man, the great grandchildren and a granddaughter-in-law might have been in the top office of the land. They may yet find themselves there.

Nor is it simply a South Asian phenomenon. Even as the trauma of Trump makes America reel, it must not be forgotten that the woman who almost became president (who won the popular vote and may well have won the election were it not for the meddling of a former superpower) was also the beneficiary of a man who had come first. This uncomfortable fact has been dissected at length, often by one or another of the many American feminists that had some qualms about the fact and were made uncomfortable by how it poisoned the pot, the narrative of female triumph.

Most made their peace, though; a woman was better than no woman, and Hillary Clinton, it was concluded, had the best chance to beat the odds. Perhaps, some thought, the misogyny of American society — heck, of world society — remained stuck at such high levels that victory without dynasty would be impossible.

We all know how that bet turned out. America elected Donald Trump and now seems deep in the pit of dynastic politics, with son, daughter and son-in-law in plum positions in the White House (and also being investigated, interrogated and raked over the coals by the media). Here, again, is a woman, Ivanka Trump, the fair-haired daughter promising Americans free child-care and hoping her moment in the sun will equal the rising profits for the dresses and shows and baubles she peddles under her own brand. She has her own office at the White House and by virtue of being First Daughter (she is without any other qualification) is likely the most influential woman in the world.

There are many abhorrent facts about women who have risen because of the legacies of their fathers, husbands or grandfathers. One of the most irritating aspects is the assumption that these women somehow represent the best and brightest of their gender. Another fact is that the message it sends to other women, or rather girls, is that without such blessings of birth or marriage, it is not possible to win, to rise, to rule and overrule.

Many who argue in their favour, simply because they are women, insist that supporting those women who are available as leaders may not be the best option, but it is, as it happens, the best option. There is a simple problem with this premise: it is not perfection that the rest of us demand from the women which we wish to support; it is the fact that in supporting those who have climbed with the assistance of birth and marriage, we ignore those who have risen on merit. That is the evil that cannot be ignored.



It is always difficult to discuss an issue that is related to women in a forum that is open to men. It goes without saying that many men, alert as they are to any chance to deride Pakistan's female half, will jump at any opportunity to do so here. For them, a woman saying that some women deserve power more than others is an opportunity to underscore the general unfitness of women. In doing so, they will provide an apt illustration of why women don't win, why the tremendous united force of their hatred ensures that the hardworking woman, the self-made woman, the woman who should win, does not in fact win.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1349015>

STOP THIS MADNESS, PLEASE

Dawn, August 5th, 2017

Abbas Nasir

SEXUAL harassment is way too serious an issue to be debated in the crassest of language on social media or for that matter discussed animatedly on often partisan TV channels in a polarised political environment as is currently happening in Pakistan for many reasons.

In my view, a woman who alleges to having been subjected to such torment needs to be given time, space and a safe environment, in short, every opportunity, to substantiate her allegations.

This is important because in an environment where blaming the victim is the default for many people, and which leaves the woman with the fear of being stigmatised for raising her voice, for every single such charge that is made public it is safe to assume that dozens of others never see the light of day.

Only a woman knows what she goes through at the hands of men at home, in the street and in the workplace as even the most wonderfully empathetic and understanding of men can never experience that for themselves. It is true.

Of course, this isn't to suggest a lynch mob or a hangman's noose for the accused whenever such an allegation is made. Due process and full opportunity of defence ought to be afforded to the accused as well. This is only fair.

Only a woman knows what she goes through at the hands of men at home, in the street and in the workplace.

Against the backdrop of political tensions, when the allegation is made against a renowned public figure, in this case a popular leader who is seen as prime minister-in-waiting, it is incumbent on one and all not to take sides and to support an above-the-board process for investigating the charge.

Although he has been in office for just a few days, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi demonstrated maturity when he said in the National Assembly on Friday that in this case both the accuser and the accused were respectable (members of parliament).

Therefore, he proposed to the chair the formation of a parliamentary committee to investigate this matter in camera (away from the prying eyes of the media and the public) and reach a conclusion after examining the evidence. Later, the house voiced this demand through a resolution.

As an individual, I know no more than what is in the public domain and wish to take no position beyond stressing any and every woman's right to go public without a time bar if she feels she has been subjected to sexual harassment.

Equally, the accused should also not be condemned without a fair hearing as in this case he and his many supporters say he is facing this charge as part of a conspiracy to discredit him and smear his name because of his campaign against corruption that resulted in the disqualification of a prime minister.

Even in that case, a firm denial could have been enough with the onus on the accuser to find the appropriate forum to share the evidence in the form of the saved text messages that she claims to have on her phone.

But the way the accuser, and even her sister, a squash champion who has nothing to do with the controversy at all, have been attacked on social media accounts usually sympathetic to the accused's party leaves a lot to be desired.

In fact, while many abusive and unsavoury things have emanated from social media accounts, including Twitter handles, whose association with the party can be denied by it despite their record of pro-PTI Tweets, what some of the party spokesmen have said on traditional media should have been strongly discouraged by the leader.

It was good that the leader spoke up finally and told his supporters to stop attacks on the squash-playing sister of his party's MNA who is accusing him of inappropriate behaviour but shouldn't he have called for a stop to attacks on her? Does he see such attacks as legitimate defence?

But one can be sure he did not sanction even remotely calls for physical harm to her and would move fast to stop if he was made aware that some of supporters were calling for acid attacks on his accuser.

One has no way of knowing if the party that maintains a round-the-clock presence on social media and monitors all Tweets related to it saw such displays of criminal instigation, but it is surprising that government agencies which move like lightning against bloggers critical of state institutions' misguided policies have yet to initiate any action against them.

If the dispensation of justice and enforcement of the law appear one-sided it is one sure way to erode public confidence in the process and make one disenchanted with the system. Believe me, this is in nobody's interest.

Even state institutions that believe they can secure a greater say for themselves by eroding the spheres of influence of other institutions and the liberties of critical individuals would not benefit in the end as anarchy does not, and never has, spared any institution.

The irony is that today all state institutions stand diminished in the eyes of one section of society or the other primarily because of their inability to perform in an above-board manner their constitutionally defined role.

I stand with Ayesha Gulalai, as I would with any woman who makes such a serious allegation. I also support any accused's right to defend himself, let alone Imran Khan's, a popular national leader, as his reputation and integrity is on the line.

Regardless of which side of the political divide members find themselves on, the political class is looking bad. Let's hope it understands the dangers and puts the brakes on what appears to be a speedy journey to self-harm.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1349716>

## **September 2017**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 25 TH TO SEPTEMBER 30 TH 2017***

***CARVING OUT A PATH TOWARD FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR WOMEN***

Ishrat Ansari

Dawn, September 29, 2017

KARACHI: As the country's urban middle-class continues to grow at a rapid rate, the demand for domestic helpers is soaring as well. One charitable organisation has taken it upon itself to train underprivileged women in the sector and place them at well-paying jobs to help them become financially independent and stable.

The TAF Foundation (TAFF) works in the fields of education, health and social consciousness. In an ongoing initiative since November, 2016, it has trained scores of women in housekeeping and cooking and has also taught them about legal and financial empowerment, professionalism, ethics and value systems.

Sultana Abdul Aziz, who has benefited from the initiative, tells The Express Tribune that she used to work as domestic servant at five houses and made a measly Rs5,000 a month.

But after she enrolled in the TAFF programme and received training, she has found work at a bungalow in Garden area and makes about Rs30,000 a month.

“Now, people respect me too,” she says. “In a society like ours it’s very difficult for a woman to survive alone and it’s a pity that we are respected by what we earn,” she explains.

“This organisation [TAFF] has not only helped me improve my financial position but also instilled confidence in me, because a decade ago a woman who could not even leave the house alone can now travel in the city all alone,” she says.

Aziz believes every woman needs to be independent and financial stability plays a big part in that.

“I have a child with special needs and my husband left me for another woman. A good income has made a great impact on my life,” she said.

Eighteen-year-old Urooj Fatima, another graduate of the TAFF programme, who found a job at a popular fast food chain restaurant, said the training laid a good foundation, which helped her find a job.

“I learnt everything about my work during training. It was rigorous training under the leadership of professionally-trained academic staff,” the Lyari resident says.

Speaking about the idea behind launching the programme, Aatiqa Lateef, the chief executive officer of TAFF, says that when she moved to Pakistan from the United States she had trouble finding a trained domestic helper and that caused her a great deal of stress.

“Being a working woman, I juggled work and household responsibilities,” she recalls. Based on experience looking for domestic help, Lateef decided to launch a programme to train women in the field and also provide them placement in homes.

“Initially, when we launched the pilot project in November, 2016 we faced many hurdles because many people thought we were involved in women trafficking,” says Lateef. “We always put women in a secure environment and also give them a stipend so that they can focus on training and learning.”

The CEO adds that they also help the participants get jobs, make sure that they do not work more than 48 hours a week and earn at least Rs25,000 per month. “We don’t want them to be exploited,” she says.

There are thousands of women who work as domestic helpers in the country but they are not documented. Thus, there is no law to protect them, says Lateef.

According to her, a lot of women from the Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka work as domestic helpers and earn a minimum of Rs40,000 a month because they are trained in house work.

“For educated families and working women, untrained helpers cause so much stress,” she says.

Her programme focuses on local women who hail from underprivileged families and are searching for a decent pay and employment. “When our graduates start earning Rs30,000 a month, their problems go away,” Lateef claims.

The foundation focuses on conceptualising, planning and executing sustainable programmes, which helps create upward social and economic mobility of the less privileged individuals in society. It is all set to launch its programme in Lahore and Islamabad too.

“Every woman wants to change her life for the better and it’s their right to live a secure and happy life,” Lateef says.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1518766/carving-path-toward-financial-stability-women/>

## FAR FEWER WOMEN APPLY FOR CNICS THAN MEN

Qadeer Tanoli

The Express Tribune, September 29, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Narrowing gender gap still seems a pipedream when it comes to registration of women with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA).

This emerged when officials of the authority responded to questions raised by various lawmakers in the National Assembly.

NADRA’s data showed that the number of women applicants was far lower than their male counterparts. This was corroborated by the results of the sixth census that showed that the gap was widening.

NADRA shared its data with lawmakers a few days ago showing that 9,554,980 men were issued CNICs since June 2013 against 7,064,081 women applicants who were issued national identity cards during the same period. The difference stood at 16,920,335 or the number of women CNIC applicants was nearly 35 per cent lower than males.

Syed Waseem Hussain, a lawmaker, had asked the Ministry of Interior details of province-wise issuance of CNICs and Child Registration Certificates (CRCs) since June 2013.

The gap in registration of CRCs of females was just seven per cent of the total. NADRA stated that it issued 7,365,355 CRCs to males while females were issued 6,870,060 CRCs.

According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), there are 106,449,322 men against 101,314,780 women. Pakistan’s total population stood at 207,774,520, including 10,418 transgender persons.

PBS data showed that men constituted 51 per cent, women 48.76 per cent while transgender were 0.24 per cent of the total population.

According to NADRA, the disparity in issuance of CNICs was evident in the four provinces, Azad Kashmir, Federally-Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Gilgit-Baltistan.

In Azad Kashmir 227,104 CNICs and 241,773 CRCs were issued to male applicants against 192,315 CNICs and 232,068 CRCs to females.

In Balochistan, 420,348 CNICs and 173,523 CRCs were issued to males while 257,484 CNICs and 137,086 CRCs were issued to females.

In FATA, the difference in issuance of CNICs remained at nearly one per cent – as many as 303,833 males and 300,360 females were issued CNICs in the same period. Moreover, 67,696 CRCs were issued to males and 39,332 CRCs to females.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, 56,811 males were issued CNICs against 33,788 women. Additionally, 57,737 males were issued CRCs against 52,156 CRCs females.

In Islamabad, 96,261 CNICs were issued to males against 94,776 CNICs to women. As many as 103,788 CRCs were issued to males and 100,521 to females in Islamabad.

At least 1,322,812 males got CNICs in contrast to 913,584 women who were issued CNICs in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. As many as 609,578 CRCs were issued to males and 512,919 were issued to females.

In Punjab, the number of CNICs issued to males was 5,316,911 while females were issued 4,090,874 CNICs. Similarly, males were issued 5,336,156 CRCs and 5,070,452 females were issued CRCs in Punjab.

At least 1,810,900 male applicants and 1,180,900 female candidates were issued CNICs in Sindh. Meanwhile, as many as 775,104 males and 725,526 females were issued CRCs in the province.

The same data also reflects that no CRC was issued to three categories of eunuch including male-eunuch, female-eunuch and Khunsa-e-Mushkil. Khunsa-e-Mushkil eunuch are born without any obvious dominating gender.

A total of 353 male-eunuchs, 131 female-eunuchs and 53 Khunsa-e-Mushkil were issued CNICs during the same period.

NADRA still has to clear 30,089 of pending applications for verification.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1518846/far-fewer-women-apply-cnics-men/>

## TWO KILLED FOR 'HONOUR'

Dawn, September 29th, 2017

PESHAWAR: A man and a married woman were killed allegedly over honour in the limits of Paharipura police station on Thursday.

An official of the Paharipura police station said that the woman belonged to the Hazarkhawni locality of Peshawar. He said that the woman had allegedly eloped with a man from Pawaka village about three months ago.

He said that both the man and woman were living in Doha Plaza in the Paharipura locality since the elopement. He said that the woman's husband, Ameen Gul, who was on the lookout for the two, allegedly killed both in area near Ring Road.

The official said that it was a case of honour killing and the police had started further investigation after registering an FIR. This is the second such incident in the provincial capital during the last fortnight.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1360764/two-killed-for-honour>

TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan does not treat its women well. This can be attributed to two traditions the country has inherited. One, women's poor status is common in the Muslim world. They are segregated and don't have access to the government supplied social services that equal those available to the male population.

There is no better example of this than the attack on Malala Yousafzai that almost killed her. Her crime: to speak in public about the importance of educating girls. The second example is from Saudi Arabia that does not allow women to drive automobiles.

This restriction severely limits women's ability to move around and hence, for them to enter the workforce in the Kingdom. The second tradition comes from the country's location. Pakistan is a South Asian country and women's status in the subcontinent is low. It took the rule by the British to make the burning of Hindu widows a crime, a practice called 'sati'. Even now, India by tradition assigns a very low status to women in its society.

It is interesting that the practice of 'triple talaq' — a husband could divorce his wife by simply saying 'I divorce you' three times — among Muslims in India was declared to be illegal by the Indian Supreme Court. In Pakistan, the practice was banned by the 1961 Muslim Family Laws Ordinance promulgated by the military government headed by Field Marshal Ayub Khan. Upon achieving independence, Bangladesh did not abandon this marital law provision.

Women's low status in Pakistan has serious demographic consequences. The government's optimism that the country had entered the phase of demographic transition has not been borne out by the census of 2017. It is estimated that the rate of growth in population was one-third higher than what the government had believed. It was 2.4 per cent rather than 1.8 per cent assumed in the Pakistan Economic Survey of 2016-17.

The second surprise from the census's finding is that the sex ratio in Pakistan has not adjusted to what is regarded as the demographic norm. In normal populations, the ratio of women in the total population is slightly higher than that of men. This is largely on account of women's longer life expectancy. This has not happened in Pakistan and the reason is the relatively low status of women in the Pakistani society.

As the impressive demographic transition in Bangladesh has shown, improving women's standing in society has significant consequences for the birthrate. Bangladesh, once a part of Pakistan, has shown what can be achieved by improving women's social and economic status in society.

The main factor accounting for women's higher social status in Bangladeshi society is the rate of female participation in the labour force which, at 43.1 per cent, is almost double of Pakistan's 24.3 per cent. This is largely due to the employment of women in Bangladesh's large garment-making industry.

Another factor is the level of female educational attainment. Once women enter the workforce, their need for education increases. In Bangladesh, 42 per cent of women aged 25 years and above have some secondary education compared to Pakistan's 26.5 per cent. The sociological consequences arising from these two factors probably explain most of the significant differences in the status of the women in these two countries.

In Pakistan, parents appear to invest less on their daughter's education because they expect higher labour market rewards from their sons — this is due to the expected parental dependence on their sons during old age. This creates discriminatory practices and accounts for lower school enrollment rates for girls.

The empirical evidence from Pakistan, however, shows that the return on education is much higher for females than males, but the portion of the returns on daughters' education that goes to parents is much lower than in the case of sons. Upon getting married, most women move from their parent's household to that of their husband's. This is the case in particular in rural areas.

Another factor that applies to women in general in Pakistan and elsewhere is time-poverty or time-paucity. Girls' day is filled with activities that are not required of boys. In the households with many children, older girls are required to care for their younger siblings. With their time thus crowded, girls are unable to attend schools.

The problem becomes more acute for women in the workforce as they are still expected to continue with their gender-related and culturally-defined domestic roles. Lower rates of fertility reduce the size of households and cuts down on the demand on girls for attending to young children. This is one of the many virtuous cycles that appear all over the demographic field.

The foregoing raises a number of questions, many of them relating to the making of public policy. How should girls' access to education be improved is a question policymakers should ask. This can be done with a combination of government action and private initiative. Governments at various levels — in particular at the local level — should build schools for girls, bringing educational institutions nearer to home.

This way, girls will not need to walk long distances to go to school. The private sector should be encouraged to provide small amounts of credit to women entrepreneurs, especially to those that employ women to increase their operations. Once these steps have been taken, local governments may levy fines on the households that still keep girls from attending school. These and other actions could be incorporated in "women's social uplift programmes", provinces should be required to formulate and implement.

The employment of women in Bangladesh's large garment industry has made them relatively independent of men's control. They have a greater say in deciding on the appropriate size of their families. Bangladesh performs better in terms of the social development of women compared to Pakistan.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1515421/treatment-women-pakistan/>

#### INVESTING IN WOMEN CAN DO WONDERS FOR PAKISTAN

The Express Tribune, September 25th, 2017.

There exists countless evidence on how investing in women's education and health, and paying attention to their employment opportunities and empowerment leads to achieving big dividends in terms of economic development.

Has this evidence led countries to strive for gender equity? This is hardly the case.

The Global Gender Gap Report 2016 compiled by the World Economic Forum ranks countries on gender gap and includes factors such as economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

The report has ranked Pakistan 143 out of 144 countries. Sadly, Pakistan has not only fared particularly poorly in 2016, but its rankings have deteriorated since a decade earlier. Comparing Pakistan's performance in the South Asian region, India has done much better being ranked 87 out of 144 countries.

How does gender equity give boost to economic development? A recent article in the IMF Finance and Development magazine stated that women contribute to economic development directly and indirectly.

The direct route is through workforce participation, which boosts production and thus income, savings, and tax contribution at the household, community and national levels. Moreover, women entering the workforce prefer to have smaller families with children who are better educated and healthier than a large number of children who are not.

It is obvious but worth stating that women cannot enter the workforce and contribute to the economy's productivity without a proper environment of education, training and health in place.

Investing in women's health and education also has spillover benefits to other members of the household. Recent research has pointed out that good maternal health benefits children's cognitive development, behaviour and school performance as well as improving the health and productivity of other family members.

Interestingly, studies have also pointed to the fact that when women earn more and account for a larger share of the household income then more household spending goes towards the health of the family. A case in point is that of Cote d'Ivoire in which as women's income tended to increase, families spent less on harmful products such as alcohol and tobacco.

Women also support the economy indirectly through unpaid labour, particularly at home. They bear and raise children, take care of elderly family members and do other domestic chores. In 2015, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs published a report that stated women outwork men by an average of 30 minutes a day in advanced economies and by 50 minutes in developing countries.

A particular exception and a country that Pakistan has much to learn from is Rwanda. The country has been ranked fifth out of 144 countries by the index, just behind advanced economies such as Norway, Finland and Sweden. Surprisingly, it is much ahead of many countries in the western world such as Canada (ranked 35) and United States (ranked 45).

The country has aggressively pursued reforms on achieving gender parity in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide, which resulted in a spate of destruction and depleted its workforce. Women nearly fill two thirds of the seats in parliament, 52.5% of those enrolled in secondary school are women and account for nearly 54% of the workforce.

Gender equity is one big factor attributed to the progress made by Rwanda on the economic front. This can be evidenced from the fact that between 2000 and 2015, average income in Rwanda more than doubled, far out pacing the growth in rest of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Human capital is a country's greatest asset. But like all other resources, it must be managed for a country to exploit it productively. Investment in women's health and education produce tremendous results, which can lead the nation on a stable path of progress and prosperity.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1515398/investing-women-can-wonders-pakistan/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM SEPTEMBER 18 TH TO SEPTEMBER 24 Th 2017

'WOMEN MUST BE INCLUDED IN PEACE PROCESSES IN AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN'

Dawn, September 23rd, 2017

ISLAMABAD: More Muslims have been killed by Muslims in wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, compared to the casualties in four wars fought with India, former Awami National Party (ANP) senator Afrasiab Khattak said on Friday.

"It is an important development that the governments of both countries have decided to get their houses in order for peace. It is even more important that women are included in establishing peace in the region," Mr Khattak said at the launch of a research study titled Impact of Radicalisation on Women in Pakistan and Afghanistan.



The study aimed to document the impact of radicalisation and violent extremism on the physical, emotional, social, political and economic dimensions of women's lives, and the strategies they have employed to deal with and counter the varied manifestations of radicalisation.

The study was conducted by Aware Girls, an organisation led by young women working towards gender equality, women's empowerment and peace in Pakistan.

Speaking at the launch, Mr Khattak was critical of radicalisation embedded in the state, particularly during Gen Ziaul Haq's regime. He believed that Gen Zia corrupted the system by encouraging flawed and hateful material, depriving tolerant citizens of their basic rights to belief and freedom of expression.

Mr Khattak also described the war in Afghanistan, with its repercussions in Pakistan, as the longest war and a testing ground for some of the most sophisticated weaponry ever used.

"However, women have suffered more [due to] extremism that has been fuelled for the last 40 years. They must be heard and included in the peace processes in both countries," he said.

Other speakers were also critical of Gen Zia for the increasing radicalisation in both countries.

Feminist activist Farzana Bari said Gen Zia's Islam began and ended with the suppression of women, degrading their lives and worth.

"Radicalisation captures the mindsets of those who deny women their right to education, right to vote and right to health. Radicalisation has now spread to urban centres, where examples of violation of the rights of women are common," she said.

Ms Bari emphasised the development of skills among women and access to education to reduce their dependence on men, and equal participation in all walks of life, including politics.

Sheela Qayumi from the Pak-Afghan Pul-i-Niswan Baraye Aman in Afghanistan discussed the study in some detail.

She said research was carried out in 13 provinces in Afghanistan, and found that women lost their family members, were disabled, were forced to leave their homes, were internally displaced and faced sexual violence in the Afghan conflict.

The study also said that women in Pakistan were victims of violent extremism by militants, which manifested in explosions, targeted killings, dress codes, restrictions to mobility and so on. There were also victims of military operations against militants, particularly in Swat and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where indiscriminate and disproportionate violence had taken a toll on their lives.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359423>

#### SHC TAKES NOTICE OF TANIA MURDER CASE

Dawn ,September 17, 2017

KARACHI: Sindh High Court Chief Justice Ahmed Ali M. Shaikh on Saturday took notice of the murder of a 19-year-old girl by an influential person of the area in Jhangara-Bajara town near Sehwan and directed the investigating officer of the case to file a report in this regard.

Official sources said the chief justice took notice of the incident after it was widely reported in media.

The media reports said the area's landlord, Khan Nohani, aided by his associates, allegedly gunned down Tania Khaskheli, a student of class-X, in her home after the girl and her family turned down his marriage proposal.

The SHC further directed the deputy inspector general of police of Hyderabad, the SSP of Jamshoro and the investigating officer to appear in court on Sept 19 along with progress report and relevant record.

The media reports also quoted the victim's father, Ghulam Qadir Khaskheli, as saying that he was receiving threats of dire consequences after he raised voice over unjust murder of his daughter. Tania's sister is also reported to have stopped going to school as the victim's family fears threats to her life.

DADU: Jamshoro police arrested on Saturday a suspect in the murder case of Tania Khaskheli.

A police team arrested one of the suspects, Moula Bux Nohani, after a raid on his hideout in mountains near Naing Sharif in Sehwan taluka.

Jhangara-Bajara SHO Mohammad Ali Khaskheli was placed under suspension on the directives of Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on charges of failure to arrest Khan Nohani, the main suspect in the girl's murder case.

The chief minister also directed Jamshoro SSP Irfan Bahadur to arrest the SHO and interrogate him on the murder and the reasons why he had delayed arresting the main suspect.

Meanwhile, social activists and civil society organisations took out rallies in Dadu, Johi and Wahi Pandhi towns in protest against Jamshoro police's failure to arrest Khan Nohani.

Sindh United Party chief Syed Jalal Mehmood Shah has demanded the Sindh government should immediately arrest all suspects in the murder case of Tania Khaskheli.

It was tantamount to failure of the state and the Sindh government that even after passage of seven days the suspects nominated in the FIR had not been arrested, he said.

Talking to journalists after offering condolence to Ghulam Qadir Khaskheli on the murder of his daughter in Jhangara-Bajara town on Saturday, the SUP chairman said the poor were not safe even within the confines of their homes and feudal lords and influential persons were free to victimise them.

He said that it was one of the stark examples of failure of PPP government in the province that an innocent girl was killed by a feudal lord at her home in broad daylight but police did not dare lay their hands on the killer and his accomplices.

He said the law and order situation had worsened and there was no safety for the honour of the poor and women. It was prime responsibility of the state to provide security to the lives and honour of all citizens, he said.

Mr Shah was accompanied by party leaders Roshan Buriro, Mir Moula Bux Leghari and others during his visit to the victim's family.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1358088/shc-takes-notice-of-tania-murder-case>

‘PAKISTAN GIRL’ TAKES AIM AT CORRUPT COPS AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Business Recorder, 20 September 2017

ISLAMABAD: Country's newest female superhero has vowed to battle venal officials and protect battered women, as her creator tries to inspire the next generation to fight injustice in a deeply patriarchal society.

The new “Pakistan Girl” comic series is based on Sarah, a normal teenager with a pet cat who discovers she has superhuman powers after waking from a coma caused by a blast in her village.

Donning a green cape, country’s national colour, the protagonist whips a man beating a woman in a market and saves a young girl taken hostage by a bribe-seeking police officer in the series’ first comic book released this summer.

The creator of the English-language comic says he hopes the superhero will give young girls across country a role model and embolden them to fight corruption and violence in a country where crime is rife in major cities and corruption is the norm.

“There’s a huge shortage of female role models and superheroes in the mainstream media here,” author Hassan Siddiqui told AFP.

“We wanted to create a strong female character for the girls in Pakistan and even the young boys in Pakistan that they can look up to.”

Women in conservative Pakistan have fought for their rights for decades, in a country where so-called “honour killings” and other violence against women remains commonplace.

Netizens on social media have welcomed the comic, writing largely positive reviews online and calling for more superhero stories in the future. “Its a very brilliant step by you guys... I’m a big fan of Marvel and DC comics and looking forward for this too,” wrote fan Syed Hassan Nasir on Facebook. The author said he now plans to work on an Urdu version of the comic with the aim of reaching millions of readers across the country. He is also mulling a possible animation adaption.

But reaching the masses won’t be easy. Pakistan’s education system has been woefully underfunded for decades, exacerbating illiteracy with more than half of the country’s eight-year-olds unable to read.

According to a 2016 government study, a staggering 24 million Pakistani children are out of school, with a larger share of girls staying home than boys — 12.8 million compared to 11.2 million.

But new fan and school principal Saadia Adnan hopes the comic will provide a new way to help educate children, while also steering them clear of gender stereotypes. “I think we should be teaching them through this kind of literature because that’s actually the tender age when they are building their own images of their future life,” said Adnan after browsing through a bookstore copy. Siddiqui’s latest creation follows the success of his earlier comic series “Pakistan Man” — a moustachioed hero who battles one nemesis named “The Corrupter” and another villain responsible for banning Youtube.

“Siddiqui’s first comic, ‘Pakistan Man’, sold like hot cakes and I hope this book, which is already doing good with sales, will follow suit,” said Ahmad Saeed, owner of Islamabad’s biggest bookstore Saeed Book Bank.—AFP

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/20/9-page/671844-news.html>

## STEPS TO EMPOWER WOMEN

The Express Tribune, September 21st, 2017.

For some reasons, mainly male chauvinism, the Women Reservation Bill has not been passed by parliament. It was introduced in the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1996 when the then prime minister, Deve Gowda, was in office. As in the past, the bill was marked by high drama and hit roadblocks in each of its outings in parliament before the historic measure cleared the first legislative hurdle in 2010.

The bill called for reserving 33 per cent of the seats in the Lok Sabha and all state legislative assemblies for women. As per the draft, the seats were to be reserved for women on a rotation basis and would be determined by draw of lots in such a way that a seat would be reserved only once in three consecutive general elections. The draft said reservation of seats for women would cease to exist 15 years after the commencement of the amendment Act.

In fact, the 108th Constitution Amendment Bill, or what was popularly known as the Women's Reservation Bill, completed 21 years of being in existence last week on September 12. In all these years, it managed to get only the assent of the Rajya Sabha, thus far. In the last two decades the bill has seen much drama in both houses of parliament, clearly aimed at scuttling the measure, with some members even attempting to physically attack the then Rajya Sabha chairman, Hamid Ansari, to disrupt its tabling.

The battle for greater representation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies was routinely punctuated, thanks to frayed tempers and war of words among members which, at times, got physical ever since different governments tossed around the bill passed for various reasons without success.

The bill, however, failed to get the approval of the house and was instead referred to a joint parliamentary committee. The committee submitted its report to the Lok Sabha soon after and in 1998, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who headed the first National Democratic Alliance government, reintroduced the bill in the Lok Sabha. After M Thambidurai, then Law Minister, introduced the bill in the house, a Rashtriya Janata Dal MP snatched it from the Speaker and tore it into pieces. Thereafter, the bill lapsed every time the house was dissolved and was re-introduced by the government of the day in 1999, in 2002 and 2003.

Unfortunately, however, over the years a number of male parliamentarians have opposed the passing of the bill, leaving it in its current state. Even though the Congress, the Left and the BJP were heard openly pledging support for the bill, it just couldn't be passed in the Lok Sabha. No doubt, the Vajpayee government was certainly dependent on other parties for survival in 1998 which many political observers often suggest was the reason for not being able to assert itself.

However, after the 1999 mid-term polls, even though Vajpayee came back to power, the mandate was for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) which won 303 of the 544 Lok Sabha seats. This time Vajpayee was pushed into a situation where he had to keep all the parties together. Yet, given the support from the Congress and the Left, the bill would have sailed through the house had it been formally put to vote. But that was not to be.

Just before the Lok Sabha elections in 2004, Vajpayee blamed the Congress for stalling the bill and said that the BJP and its allies would pass the legislation after getting a decisive mandate in 2004 elections. In 2004, the UPA government had included it in the Common Minimum Programme, which said: "The UPA government will take the lead to introduce legislation for one-third reservations for women in Vidhan Sabhas and in the Lok Sabha." In 2005, BJP announced complete support for the bill.

In 2008, the Manmohan Singh government introduced the bill in the Rajya Sabha. Two years later on March 9, 2010, a huge political barrier was overcome when it was passed by the house in spite of high drama and scuffles between members. The BJP, the Left and some other parties came together with the ruling Congress to help pass it in the upper house. Seven years have passed since that moment when top women leaders from the three major parties — Sonia Gandhi, Sushma Swaraj and Brinda Karat — gave a rare moment to media photographers by walking hand in hand in impromptu celebration of that historic occasion. And yet, in 2017, it has still not seen the light of the day, simply because the political will to help make it a law has been lacking in the lower house. The UPA II government, in spite of having 262 seats in the Lok Sabha, too couldn't make it happen, citing the same excuse of being in a coalition.

Fortunately, the BJP does not suffer from that handicap. The party has the strength and can pass the bill. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is also determined to get the legislation on his table. But I would be surprised if the bill

becomes an act. Male parliamentarians in all the parties do not want to share power with women. When they do not treat them with dignity at home, they believe that women should not be empowered beyond a limit.

True, Modi for the first time has made a woman the country's defence minister. This is a huge departure from the past. Even an all-powerful Indira Gandhi could only keep the foreign affairs. But both defence and foreign affairs going to women is definitely a bold step taken by Prime Minister Modi. These are indications of a positive thinking by Modi.

My only hope is that Modi would stay as determined as he is today to have the bill passed in parliament. Some people say that this is a measure only to get the votes of women with the 2019 general elections beckoning. Whatever the reasons, the women would be able to play an important role in the affairs of India if they are in substantial number in the Lok Sabha.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1511804/steps-empower-women/>

## PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS MINISTER TELLS SENATE: WOMEN DESERVE NO 'EXTRA PREFERENCE' IN JOBS

Business Recorder, 21 September 2017

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Aftab Ahmad told the Senate on Wednesday that there is no need to give extra preference to female officers as they are already ahead of their male counterparts in the race in every field.

During the question hour, Senators Azam Swati of PTI and Usman Kakar of PkMAP wanted to know reasons why lesser officers from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are making it to top positions.

PTI Senator Samina Abid questioned if it was not discriminatory that despite having all the prerequisites, not a single lady officer had made it to the top level, especially in bureaucracy, as they come after going through the tough competitive civil service examination.

The minister made it clear that no discrimination whatsoever was being done with female officers or the provinces, since quota as well as merit was being strictly followed while appointing officers at senior positions.

To another question, the minister explained that promotions are made strictly on merit in accordance with Civil Servants Act, 1973 and rules made thereunder read with the Promotion Policy and that there was no proposal under consideration of the government to promote more women officers on preferential basis.

He said presently, there were as many as nine female officers in BS-21 and 22: seven belong to Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS) while two others from Secretariat Group, 3 are in BS-22 and remaining eight in BS-21.

Minister In-charge of the Aviation Division informed the House that there were 13 international airlines operating to and from Islamabad, besides 04 domestic airlines (PIA, Shaheen Air International, Air Blue and Serene Air).

He explained that Air Services Agreements, governing international flight operations to and from Pakistan, have been concluded with the governments of 98 countries while 23 ASAs are active while 75 are dormant. He was responding to a question asked by MQM's Tahir Hussain Mashhadi.

Replying to another question by Atique Sheikh of MQM-P, Minister In-charge of the Aviation Division said that during 2016-2017, 104 airlines used Pakistan airspace with 226,458 flights (620.43 per day). Emirates Airlines topped

the list with 19,310 flights, followed by Qatar Airways with 17,779 flights, Etihad Airways with 14,311 flights and Air India with 12,845 flights.

PPP Senator Farhatullah Babar wondered why the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, continuing for the last about 35 years, had been abandoned and asked what the reasons were behind it. Replying to him, Sh Aftab said that in view of the conditions prevailing in Pakistan, certain changes were brought about and it was named the National Security Committee (NSC).

“The NSC is a principal forum, which is mandated for considering national security and foreign policy matters with the national security advisor and cabinet ministers. Its functions are to advise and assist the president and prime minister on national security and foreign policy,” he explained.

He maintained the body was similar to the previous one in terms of its functions and added that the NSC had its last meeting on October 04 last year. Babar had also asked why the committee had not met for a year.

JUI-F Senator Hafiz Hamdullah asked if the committee had met after the BRICS declaration, which caused concerns in Pakistan, and if not, why it did not meet. To this, the minister said that the committee could not meet thereon.

Senator Babar raised the issue of the Federal Government Employees Housing Scheme Phase X, Park Road, Islamabad, for allotment of plots to serving and retired government servants, media personnel, professionals and members of the Supreme Court Bar Association. He said that it took five years to sort out complex legal and administrative issues before the scheme had finally come to fruition but the imposition of harsh payment schedule had defeated the very purpose for which it had been initiated.

He said that applicants have been asked to deposit the first installment of Rs 1.5 million within three weeks and rest of the amount within next few months. Anyone failing to deposit the initial deposit of Rs 1.5 million in the next few days will lose his entitlement, he said.

Babar said that most of the applicants were unable to make the down payment in such a short period. As a result the property dealers had become over active and started purchasing the allotment letters from the allottees to make windfall profits when the scheme gets going.

He said that the net result will be that the people for which the scheme is intended will have no plots to build their houses and the property dealers will make hay while the sun shines.

“I hope it is not a deliberate ploy to reap windfall profits through property dealers,” he said and added that the schedule of payment be softened and made easy to enable employees to pay the installments.

Chairman Senate Raza Rabbani asked the Leader of the House Raja Zafarul Haq to look into the matter and bring it to the attention of relevant ministry.

PPP Senator Sherry Rehman voiced her shock and concern over the undisclosed \$700 million fine slapped by the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) on Pakistan.

Speaking on the floor of the House, Rehman said: “This was the very case that Khwaja Asif had taken to NAB against Raja Parvez Ashraf as the famous Rental Power case. As a result of not allowing the PPP to install power projects by PML-N, Pakistan is now losing taxpayers’ money in international arbitration.”

“The Turkish company Karkey Karadeniz Elektrik Uretim AS had been awarded this contract to provide barges but the Supreme Court under then Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry refused to allow even a settlement by the public

prosecutor with the Turkish company. The company went to the ICSID for arbitration, and won the award,” she added.

“Not only did the government conceal this fact since 2016, it also tried to cover up the fine of \$700 million that Pakistan will now have to pay for the suspension of the contract,” exclaimed Rehman.

“When was the government planning to inform the Parliament and the people of Pakistan about this Rs 74 billion award?” questioned Rehman in the Senate.

She further added, “The absence of parliamentary oversight, especially in key international arbitration cases, is a major reason behind losing several important international cases.”

Rehman pointed out, “Despite spending more than Rs1.3 billion on lawyers’ fees to contest the cases which are recently being adjudicated before the ICJ, Pakistan’s success rate in international arbitration cases stands at a shocking 2%.”

“We need to address these issues, especially the importance of parliamentary oversight immediately if we are to have a chance at winning our ongoing international cases,” concluded the senator.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/21/21-page/672138-news.html>

#### APPOINTMENT OF ANTI-HARASSMENT OMBUDSPERSON ORDERED

Dawn, September 22, 2017

PESHAWAR: A Peshawar High Court bench on Thursday disposed of a petition against the non-appointment of the provincial ombudsperson under an anti-harassment law, giving the provincial government two months to fill the post.

Justice Qaiser Rashid Khan and Justice Mohammad Ghazanfar expressed displeasure at the delay on part of the provincial government in the appointment in question observing the anti-harassment provincial ombudspersons had already been appointed to Punjab and Sindh but that hadn’t happened in KP yet.

The petition was filed an NGO, Da Hawwa Lur (daughter of the Eve), through its chief executive, Khurshed Bano, seeking the court’s orders for the provincial government to immediately make the said appointment.

The respondents in the petition are the KP government through its chief secretary; KP Assembly speaker; KP Assembly secretary; women empowerment and social welfare department through its secretary; law, justice and human rights ministry through its secretary, and the federal government through the relevant federal secretary.

The bench told the petitioner’s counsel, Saifullah Muhib Kakakhel, that if the government failed to comply with its (court’s) orders, he should file another petition after two months.

The lawyer said while ombudspersons were appointed at federal level by the federal government and by the Sindh and Punjab governments in their respective provinces, the KP government had turned a blind eye to such a crucial appointment.

He requested the court to declare the non-appointment of ombudsman illegal and based on the government’s ‘ulterior motives’.

The lawyer said the government had been using delaying tactics and that while women had been facing harassment in different institutions, especially universities, there was no ombudsperson with whom a complaint could be filed.

Additional advocate general Mohiuddin Humayun said the appointment process was in progress.

He informed the bench that earlier, the provincial social welfare department had decided that the provincial ombudsman working for redressing grievances against government offices would be given the additional responsibility of the anti-harassment ombudsperson.

Mr Humayun, however, said as it was against the law, that plan was not materialised.

He said the department had been considering a person for the said job but it received objection from the KP Provincial Commission on the Status of Women, which wanted that a woman should be appointed to the post.

Mr Humayun said the department was considering different names for the post and that it was likely that the ombudsperson would be appointed within a month.

Saifullah Kakakhel said parliament passed the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2010, in 2010 with an aim to check harassment of persons in public and private sector institutions.

He said under Section 7 of the said Act, the appointment of the federal and provincial ombudsmen had to be made by the relevant governments.

“That section provides that a person shall be qualified to be appointed as an ombudsman who has been a judge of high court or qualified to be appointed as a judge of high court,” he said.

The lawyer said the KP government didn't take any step to implement the said law even though the representatives of his client's organisation held meetings with the KP Assembly's speaker, women empowerment minister and chief secretary, who had promised to appoint the ombudsperson within one month in 2016.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359233>

## INDIAN SPIRITUAL GURU ARRESTED FOR ASSAULTING WOMAN

Dawn September 24, 2017

NEW DELHI: Police on Saturday arrested a popular Indian spiritual guru, the second in the past month, for allegedly raping a 21-year-old woman in western India.

Police officer Jaisingh Nathawat said the woman, whose parents have been followers of 70-year-old Kaushlendra Prapannacharya Falahari Maharaja, complained that the guru assaulted her on Aug 7 at his headquarters in Alwar, a town in Rajasthan state.

She said that the spiritual guru warned her against telling anyone about the assault, but that she decided to break her silence after another self-proclaimed guru, Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, was tried and sentenced to 20 years in prison last month for raping two followers in northern Haryana state.

A court sent Falahari Maharaja to a prison for 15 days while the police complete their investigation into the case. The woman was allegedly raped when she went to hand the spiritual guru 3,000 rupees (\$45) that she had earned for an internship with an attorney in New Delhi on his recommendation.

## ADVERTISEMENT

Religious sects have huge followings in India and also wield considerable political clout. Crimes against women have been mounting in the country.



The outrage over a 2012 attack on a 23-year-old medical student on a moving bus in New Delhi by a group of men prompted quick action on legislation doubling prison terms for rapists to up to 20 years and criminalising voyeurism, stalking and the trafficking of women. Indian lawmakers also voted to lower to 16 from 18 the age at which a person can be tried as an adult for heinous crimes.

The medical student died two weeks later of injuries caused by the rape. Four men were sentenced to death for the attack.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359708>

#### MARRIED WOMAN, FRIEND SHOT DEAD 'FOR HONOUR'

Dawn, September 24, 2017

SUKKUR: A man along with his son was arrested for killing his daughter and her friend in the name of honour in Jani Dero Jagir village of Jacobabad district on Saturday.

Officials at the Mauladad police station said that Dango Jagirani, helped by his son Shaukat Jagirani, shot dead his daughter, Farida Marri, 22, wife of Naseebullah Marri, and Qalandar Bukhsh Jakhrani, 25, on suspicion of an extramarital affair between them.

They said the bodies were taken in custody and the two suspects were arrested at the crime scene soon after the double murder.

The bodies were taken to the Jacobabad Civil Hospital for a post-mortem examination and then handed over to the heirs.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1359560/married-woman-friend-shot-dead-for-honour>

#### MAN KILLS WIFE, THREE DAUGHTERS IN KASUR

Business Recorder, 12 September, 2017

KASUR: An implacable man on Monday killed his wife and three daughters over domestic dispute in Kasur.

Mohammad Haneef, who was gardener at government school, surrendered to the police after killing his family members including three daughters, eight-year-old Nimra, 14-year-old Laiba and 16-year-old Tayyaba with sharp weapon.

Police officers said the suspect usually had verbal arguments with his 40-year-old wife Shahida. Moreover, a case has also been registered against the culprit.—NNI

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/09/12/3-page/905284-news.html>

#### GENDER DIMENSIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The Express Tribune, September 11th, 2017.

Climate change is not gender neutral. Women and men have different needs, priorities, and possibilities in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Women have greater responsibility for subsistence activities, and environmental degradation severely affects their ability to perform their household tasks. Women's and men's knowledge and capacity to cope with the effects of climate change differ because of unequal access to finance, education, and information. Women and men perceive the risk of climate change differently, and gender influences how they identify

and assess opportunities to respond to climate change. The impact and consequences of climate change affect women and girls in their roles, responsibilities, and opportunities.

Women are overrepresented in the informal sector worldwide, a sector that is acutely at risk from climate change and weather-related shocks. However, engaging with the informal sector has been largely ignored in climate change responses, despite the opportunities that could lead to innovation in adaptation and mitigation strategies, particularly for women. Equitable access to mitigation strategies remains a challenge for women, partly because of the technical nature of mitigation projects in sectors where the opportunities for women have traditionally been limited.

Women's diverse productive and reproductive roles in natural resource use and management, conservation, energy provision and use, and urban development are affected by climate change. At the same time, because of the diverse roles they play, women have unique perspectives and skills that can strengthen the response to climate change.

The impact of climate change on women's lives can also heighten gender disparities and other vulnerabilities. Women's work burden is increased as a consequence of water scarcity, increased pollution, soil and water salinity, and flooding. When there is water insecurity, women spend more time, energy, and resources securing water for the household, and devote more time to caring for family members with health problems stemming from water-borne diseases.

Climate change interventions aimed at providing affordable and safe drinking water, efficient irrigation technologies, and safe sanitation facilities, as well as preserving wetlands, must also take gender inequality into account. Rising sea levels have a wide-ranging negative and complex impact on women. For example, increased salinization due to climate change can lead to a range of health problems including women's reproductive health conditions. When energy insecurity worsens or power supplies are disrupted because of climate change, women, who are responsible for household energy resources, are disproportionately affected.

Renewable energy presents multiple opportunities for women in their roles as consumers of renewable energy, as income earners and profit generators, as renewable energy entrepreneurs, and as employees in this growing sector. Women in rural areas are among those most affected by energy scarcity and related environmental degradation.

Renewable energy technologies can ease women's workloads. However, women are more likely to benefit from employment in the energy sector only if there are wider socially progressive policies in place. Globally natural disasters kill more women than men. Climate-related disasters can worsen gender inequalities when they intersect with social, economic, cultural, and other conditions. Governments must strive to incorporate gender perspectives into their national policies, action plans and other measures on sustainable development and climate change. The consultation and participation of women in climate change initiatives must be ensured, and the role of women's groups and networks strengthened.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1502922/gender-dimensions-climate-change/>

## **October 2017**

***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 16 Th TO OCTOBER 22nd 2017***

***ENGRO HIGHLIGHTS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN***

Business Recorder, 17 October 2017

KARACHI: To celebrate the efforts and the spirit of Pakistani rural women, Engro highlighted International Day of Rural Women creating awareness about the day and reiterating its commitment towards women empowerment. Through the International Day of Rural Women and related events, Engro aims to play its role in empowering rural women within the society for a better and brighter tomorrow.

The company has deployed multiple projects to bring rural women at par with their male counterparts in the rural areas. During these projects Engro has had the opportunity to work with international partner organizations like UNDP, USAID, MEDA and KFW-DEG and World Learning providing agri related skills and vocational trades to over 20,000 women over the last six years. Some of these award-winning programmes and projects include Community Empowerment through Livestock Development and Credit (CELDAC); Women Empowerment through Livestock (WELD); Strengthening Entrepreneurs and Dairy Stakeholders Network (SEaDS Net) and basic primary education.

Speaking at the ceremony, Aman Ul Haque, Head of Engro Foundation said, “Women are already doing the brunt of the work in rural Pakistan. The private sector needs to further empower these women so that they earn for themselves which we know helps in sending more children to school, more savings for the family and better family planning. Our experience in the rural area shows that once women start earning independently, they are less threatened by male dominated societies. We firmly believe the integration of women in business activities is the way forward to have a progressive and more productive society, and this integration can be achieved through the provision of skills and inclusion of women in business value chains.”

In another programme aimed at capacity building of rural females Engro has devised the We-Connect program to facilitate women of Ebrahim Hyderi and Rehri, a coastal community in Karachi—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/10/17/5-page/676705-news.html>

## YOUNG GIRL ‘HIT’ WITH SHARP-EDGED OBJECT IN KARACHI’S FEDERAL B AREA

The Express Tribune, October 18, 2017

KARACHI: Another attack on a woman in Karachi has puzzled the police officials. In the incident, a young girl was stabbed and injured in the Jauharabad area of Federal B Area in District Central. Police said that the incident occurred on early Tuesday morning, however, it was reported by the victims’ family in the afternoon.

According to the family, 15-year-old E\* was on her way to her grandmother’s home, located in Block 9 of Federal B Area, with her brother on a motorcycle when a motorcyclist, wearing a helmet, attacked her with a sharp-edged object.

Karachi stabbings: Police think they’ve got the wrong guy

“We were on our way when suddenly a speeding motorcyclist came close, attacked my sister and escaped,” said the victim’s brother I\*, who was riding the motorcycle.

The victim claimed that she was hit with a sharp-edged object in her back. She was immediately taken to a nearby private hospital where doctors confirmed that she had been stabbed with a sharp object.

Karachi’s serial ‘knife attacker’ arrested in Mandi Bahuddin: police

Jauharabad police have registered a FIR under Section 324 (attempt to murder) of the Pakistan Penal Code against the unidentified motorcyclist on behalf of the victim’s uncle T\* and initiated further investigations. “It was an attack, not an accident,” claimed the victim’s uncle.

Police said they have obtained the footage recorded by the closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras in the area and are trying to trace and arrest the suspect with their help. It has yet to be ascertained whether he was the same suspect who was involved in the series of attacks on women in Gulshan-e-Iqbal and its surrounding areas or some other man, claimed the police.

Karachi women arm themselves against ‘knifeman’

The police are investigating the cases from different angles as the victim had initially said that she was hit by a sharp object during a collision between two motorcycles.

“We did not get any clues regarding the suspect with the help of the footage,” said SHO Saleem Siddiqui. He added that it was the first incident to have occurred in which a woman was targeted while riding with her brother.

Another woman stabbed in Karachi as ‘knifeman’ remains at large

This is the second similar incident to have occurred in District Central as previously, a woman was allegedly stabbed and injured in North Nazimabad a few days ago and so far, at least 13 women have been injured in different parts of District East, including Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Dalmia, Rashid Minhas Road, Pehlwan Goth and PIB Colony. Over a dozen cases have also been registered since such incidents began on September 25.

The police released the suspect’s picture, seeking the help of citizens and also announced a reward of Rs1 million for assisting the authorities in tracing and arresting him.

Knife-wielding motorcyclist forces women to stay home in Karachi

However, investigators are puzzled as the prime suspect, Waseem, has already been arrested in a joint venture by the Punjab and Sindh police from Mandi Bahuddin a few days ago. Waseem is believed to be involved in attacks on women in Karachi.

“Waseem is currently in the custody of Sahiwal police as they did not hand him over to Lahore police,” said SSP Haider Raza, who is currently in Sahiwal. He added that Lahore police officials are in Sahiwal and are interrogating the suspect. DIG Sahiwal has given them two days to interrogate the suspect in order to confirm whether he was involved in Lahore’s incidents, he said. “So far, investigations confirm that Waseem was not involved in Karachi’s incidents, yet we are investigating the case further as his cellphone’s location records show that he was not in Karachi during the series of attacks.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1533845/young-girl-hit-sharp-edged-object-federal-b-area/>

#### FRACTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE CASES SEE CONVICTIONS: SURVEY

The Express Tribune, October 19th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: Though there are laws which can prevent gender-based violence (GBV), lack of implementation of these laws allows perpetrators to continue violence with reckless abandon.

This was stated by National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) Chairperson Khawar Mumtaz in a dialogue on gender-based violence prevention and response in rural communities of Pakistan. The dialogue had been organised by the CARE International in collaboration with Potohar Organisation for Development Advocacy (PODA) and NCSW.

Noting that tackling GBV was a priority of the commission, Mumtaz said that laws need to be implemented apart from mounting a collective effort from support institutions.

She added that the Punjab government has started addressing the issue by opening a one-window centre to prevent domestic violence and to enforce the Domestic Violence Act. But the centre is only working in one district and needs to be replicated in all districts of the province. Mumtaz further said that all institutions have to work proactively, especially the courts, in dealing with rape cases.

Referring a survey which the commission had conducted in the Islamabad and Lahore high courts on the progress of cases submitted under the Women Protection Act 2006, there were only four convictions in the 153 cases filed from 2006- 2015.

Moreover, she said that the ratio of honour killings was much higher in interior Sindh.

But she appreciated the remarkable step taken by Hyderabad police for establishing a women cell to register complaints and responding to them within 24 hours.

Moving beyond statistics, Mumtaz said that it was time to take practical steps to eradicate GBV by raising awareness amongst police and judiciary on implementing relevant laws.

“NCSW also is in the process of conducting a national survey to see how gender-based violence is the biggest hurdle in women economic and social development,” Mumtaz said. Saleem from SPO criticised societal norms, malpractices, the patriarchal system and approaches toward rural and urban women.

Khalida Saleemi, the director of SACH which works for the rights of women, stressed on finding ways and mechanism to implement the sexual harassment act for rural women. Ameena Ilahi, Assistant Country Director, CARE International stated that gender-based violence can be best addressed if it is investigated as a ‘structural ‘and ‘institutional’ issue.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1535145/fraction-gender-based-violence-cases-see-convictions-survey/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 9 Th TO OCTOBER 15 Th 2017

MAN SETS WIFE ON FIRE IN SIALKOT

The Express Tribune, October 9th, 2017.

LAHORE: A man set his wife on fire at their house in Sialkot on Sunday.

The victim M\* had sustained severe burns and is being treated at the Mayo Hospital, Lahore.

Police said the victim was in love with a man named Bilal and they tied the knot two months ago. Bilal was already married to his cousin and has two children from his first wife. Police have arrested the culprit.

The woman’s father named Muhammad Asif said that Bilal had arranged the marriage and had rented a separate house for her daughter to keep the marriage secret. After a few days, when Bilal’s family came to know about his second marriage, they started pressurising him to divorce her, he said.

Asif claimed that Bilal wanted to give the whole incident a colour of an accident that’s why he tried to burn her. “Bilal told me she caught fire while cooking. Who cooks food at 1am? He told me my daughter was burnt when her duppatta caught fire. Nobody can suffer 70% burns after catching a fire through a duppatta.”

Dr Mustehsan Bashir, who is head of the department of plastic surgery at the Mayo Hospital, said that the woman suffered 70% burns and she has less survival chances. “We are trying our best to save her life.”

Investigation Officer ASI Sarwar while talking to The Express Tribune said that police have registered an FIR 334/17 against Bilal and his sister Shamsa at Rangpura police station under section 324 (attempt to murder) and 34 (common intention). “The incident occurred on October 6 and we are investigating the matter. It is too early to comment.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1526243/man-sets-wife-fire-sialkot/>

FATA’S WOMEN VOTERS

THE most striking aspect of the figures recently released by the ECP is the 36pc increase in the number of women voters in the tribal areas — the highest in any demographic across Pakistan. In fact, Fata as a whole has registered the highest increase in the number of people eligible to vote. Of the 97m now registered as voters — up from 86.1m four years ago — 23pc are from the tribal areas. The numbers that comprise the electorate are calculated by Nadra on the basis of CNIC details on its database and the names verified by the ECP before it finalises the electoral rolls.

The increase in voters from Fata, including women, can be explained by the travails of the tribal population due to internal displacement induced by military operations in their native areas. Firstly, registration in the relief camps in KP was contingent upon the possession of CNICs, a technicality that caused many women-headed households considerable difficulty in accessing services, including cash grants. Secondly, with the cessation in kinetic operations up north, many Fata residents are making their way back home and CNICs are mandatory for receiving the compensation packages — sometimes targeted at the women — announced by the government.

However, the inclusion of so many more Fata women in the national database will not necessarily translate into a presence at the hustings, for they procured CNICs as a matter of economic necessity, that too in a context which was a departure from the norm. Such an ‘aberration’ in the eyes of many among their male compatriots may have been ‘tolerated’ under those circumstances, but the full weight of tradition is likely to assert itself when it comes to women exercising their right to vote.

There are many instances of female disenfranchisement as a result of collusion, more tacit of late, between local chapters of various political parties. The huge spike in the numbers of women from Fata who are now in possession of CNICs also indicates how many of them have thus far remained excluded from the decision-making process of selecting their representatives. The ECP should push leaders of political parties to direct their local chapters to motivate these women to vote, and persuade men of the importance of their doing so. Moreover, if women’s votes comprise less than 10pc of the total cast in a constituency, the electoral watchdog should exercise its discretion and declare the polling void.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362983>

## KARACHI’S SERIAL ‘KNIFEMAN’ UNLEASHES COLLECTIVE FEAR

Dawn, October 10th, 2017

Sumaira Jajja

KARACHI: “I was walking with my children to a relative’s house when I felt a hand on the back of my thigh. I was shocked and froze — with anger and embarrassment — as the motorcyclist sped away. Cursing the eve-teaser, I hurriedly entered the house and it was when I felt pain in my thigh area. My clothes were wet with blood,” recalls Mrs Arif.

A housewife and mother of three kids, she is one of the victims of the Karachi knife attacker who has so far injured more than 10 women in two weeks and has managed to elude the police.

“It was a thin man wearing a red and black helmet and off-white shalwar kameez on a motorbike,” she recalls. “I was wearing a big, thick shawl that night and it saved me from severe injuries,” she adds.

Despite the passage of several days since the attack, she admits she is still shaken. “I feel unsafe stepping out alone. The worst part of this attack has been the media frenzy. TV reporters showed up, asking how I felt. My nine-year old daughter is so traumatised,” she says.

Mrs Arif's account is corroborated by another victim. A student of class VII, 14-year-old 'T' was walking to a shop with her mother and brother when the attack happened. "I felt someone's hand slapped my hip. I cringed and hurried but then I was overcome with pain in my upper leg, as blood gushed out," says T.

Yet another victim's brother narrated a similar ordeal. "My sister was touched on her lower body and the next thing she realised she was bleeding," he says.

Pakistan has had its fair share of violent serial attacks. The infamous Hathora group and Chhalawa gang terrorised Karachiites in the '80s and '90s, known for smashing the skulls of their victims.

In the late '90s, there were reports of men with ustra/blade slashing the arms of women wearing short-sleeved shirts outside a major Karachi shopping mall.

Back in 2007, it was the killing of Punjab minister Zille Huma that shocked the country. Her killer was not happy with her clothing.

In 2012, a rickshaw driver in Karachi used to pick up women passengers, disembody them and throw away their body parts. While in 2016, news reports surfaced that a man was stabbing women in Rawalpindi.

Similar to the Karachi attacks, a series of similar knife attacks were reported between 2013 and 2016 in Punjab's Sahiwal district.

"Almost 40 women were attacked in Chichawatni by a man on a motorbike using a sharp paper cutter," says DIG East Sultan Khowaja.

Waseem, the alleged attacker from Punjab, was released on bail last year. He has been declared an absconder and is wanted for the attacks.

"His goal is to create fear and unrest," the DIG adds.

"The injuries and areas of attacks are all similar. He attacks them on the lower part of the body — near the waist, hip and thighs. He controls the speed of his bike with the right hand and uses the left hand for attacks," he elaborates.

Information obtained from police and hospitals shows almost all women suffered injuries on their right side and were attacked from behind.

"He is attacking women — young and old alike. He hasn't shown any preference for women dressed in particular attire."

The general feeling of unease and anger amongst the citizens is increasing. Working women acknowledged feeling overwhelmed and scared, many opting for rickshaws and cab services and not walking to bus stops. Female students of Karachi University and Habib University are avoiding walking alone.

MPA Sharmila Farooqui says that these attacks have traumatised women.

"So far the attacks are limited to one district and this is a good sign. Get the Rangers onboard. Search every motorcyclist in the area, have 24/7 patrolling and most importantly form mohalla committees to keep an eye on anyone suspicious," she stresses.

Dr Sameeha Aleem, a consultant psychiatrist, says "Collective fear is being instilled.

“Many families have restricted the movements of women and girls to avoid any attacks but this is not a solution,” she explains.

She elaborates that some of her female patients have expressed anxiety since the attacks have been reported and are showing worsening symptoms, including panic attacks.

Dr Aleem speculates the knifeman might be receiving commanding hallucinations to attack women if he has a psychotic disorder.

“He could also be an individual who has witnessed violence and abuse at the hands of women and is now revengeful,” she conjectures.

While the attacker plays hide-and-seek with the authorities, citizens hope for his quick arrest.

“The real issue here is that these are all surprise attacks,” says security adviser Norbert Almeida. “He catches his victims by surprise — coming from behind, slashing them and then speeding away.”

However, he too says that it’s safe to believe it is one person at the moment.

“But in a city of 20 million, you can’t stop every single person on a bike and check for a weapon. That is the challenge the police faces,” he says.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1362807>

IT’S A GIRL!

Hafsah Sarfraz

The Express Tribune, October 11th, 2017.

“It’s a girl.” In Pakistan, this statement scares most families regardless of their socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. Pregnant women are seen hiding the gender of their child, gynaecologists are hesitant to inform future parents that they are having a girl and people in our part of the world reach all limits to try and ensure they have a son.

It’s a sad reality, one that I came to terms with when a friend of mine who was expecting for the first time told me that she wants to have a son, because if her first child is a son, her life will be easier. Another friend tried to inquire the gender of the baby so she could shop accordingly, but the gynaecologist insisted that the gender isn’t clear in the reports. After much insistence and admitting that the couple really indeed wants a daughter, the gynaecologist hesitantly admitted that it’s a girl.

The girl-child phenomenon may seem big in Pakistan but it prevails across the globe, being more prominent in developing countries and particularly the subcontinent. Even in today’s day and age, girls are seen struggling for their right to education, health and safety. It is, thus, that the United Nations declared October 11th the International Day of the Girl Child in 2012 aiming to address the challenges and highlighting the needs that girls face. The day aims to promote girls’ empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights, which is also an essential part of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

While the UN may be investing their efforts in realising the true potential of young girls, upholding their rights and promising them a more just and equitable future across the globe and in Pakistan, their efforts alone are insufficient. These efforts need to be backed with support from the grassroots level and communities, which can only be done when all of us join hands to empower the girl-child.



In Pakistan, it is a painfully gradual process but fortunately, the first step has been taken and we are already on the path to women empowerment. However, as with any journey, continuing and remaining dedicated on the path is more challenging than taking the first step. The development sector and the government are joining hands to create equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls. They are channelling their efforts to give girl-children access to health services, stop child marriages and give the girl-child the right to life. However, it is now time that society played a role, too.

It begins with ending discrimination at homes, which may start with small steps like buying the same toys for both genders, giving equal pocket money and sending sons and daughters to the same school so they grow up with similar aspirations and an equal self-confidence. On an individual basis, if we check off these items during a self-evaluation, we need to take the next step, which can begin by encouraging your driver or maid to send their daughters to school and invest in them. Volunteering at girls' schools and sponsoring education of a girl-child are some of the many ways we can eliminate the impression that the girl-child is a burden.

The change has begun. It began when Malala spoke about her rights and her father stood behind her, it began when our audiences were prepared for a TV show called Sammi, which ended with a father of five daughters admitting that he doesn't want a son. It began when a close friend, who may not be proud to call himself a feminist, told me that he wants to raise his daughter like a tigress and not a princess. I knew the change has begun when the maid who works at my place told me that her only child is a daughter and she would be happy to put her through school and make sure she leads a successful life, instead of giving birth year after year in an attempt to have a son. The change has indeed begun and we just need to make sure it continues till we reach that day when the gynaecologist doesn't hesitate to say, "It's a girl."

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1527849/its-a-girl-2/>

## BROUGHT TOGETHER BY PAIN, 3 GIRLS FORCED INTO MARRIAGE HAVE NEW DREAMS

International New York Times, 11 October, 2017

Kabul, Afghanistan — Afghanistan is a place where all too often a young girl's dreams die. But not always.

So it has been with three Afghan friends, whose unrelated cases were all so awful that they are painful to talk about even now that the three are young women, years after the trauma. Each of them escaped a forced marriage as a child, is lucky to be alive, and knows it. Each of them has big dreams — despite what has happened, and because of it.

For one of them, Gul Meena, 18, dreams have already started coming true. Last month she boarded a flight from Kabul to Östersund, Sweden, via Istanbul and Stockholm, accompanied by an American lawyer. It was Gul Meena's first time in an airplane, first time out of her country, first time that, as she put it before, "I will be free."

Gul Meena's first dream was to escape Afghanistan. Her next was to have a television set in her room. She said she wanted to see how her favorite Indian soap opera ends.

Her biggest dream is to become a doctor, an ambition inspired by the three months Gul Meena spent in the hospital — a time of three operations that she remembers, and several more she does not.

Gul Meena was illegally married at age 13. When she discovered that she had become the third wife of a grandfather, she ran away in horror. Her brother and uncle, intent on avenging the family's honor, tracked her down and attacked her with an ax, smashing her head so badly that part of her brain spilled out of her skull. Somehow she survived, and was given refuge in the Women for Afghan Women shelter in Kabul.

There she made two fast friends, Sahar Gul and Mumtaz. They did not discuss their traumatic pasts with one another, but they were otherwise quite close, all survivors of violence and wrongful marriages.

On one of her visits to the shelter, their American pro bono lawyer, Kimberley Motley, brought along several picture books, easy readers for young children. Sahar Gul is also 18, or maybe 17 (ages are often just estimates in Afghanistan); she is now in the seventh grade and can read a bit, so she read the books to Gul Meena and to Mumtaz, who is now 26.

Sahar Gul took the news of her friend's departure hard, even though she knew it was coming. "When I heard, I thought that I am a ghost," she said last month. "I am so sad to be losing my friend. On the other side, I am so happy that she will be free, and will make a life for herself."

Gul Meena, on her last full day in Afghanistan, was so nervous that she couldn't steady her hands; the other girls in the shelter helped her dress. Her housemates approached her, bursting into tears.

"I'm not going to miss Afghanistan because I don't even know how Afghanistan looks," Gul Meena said. She entered the shelter as a child, and like the other girls there, she has not been allowed outside the compound since then, except under escort by staff — for safety, and under government-imposed restrictions on women's shelters.

Sahar Gul's family sold her as a child, at age 13 or even younger, to people who tried to force her into prostitution through torture; they pulled out her fingernails, drugged and raped her, and sexually assaulted her with hot pokers.

"My brother sold me like a sheep to that family," Sahar Gul said. "I was so small when they sent me to that husband, I didn't even know what a husband was." After she was rescued from her two-year ordeal, doctors discovered that she had not yet begun to menstruate.

As with the other two friends, Sahar Gul's plight drew international publicity, and Women for Afghan Women brought her to its shelter. For months, she barely spoke.

Gul Meena was the same: "Every night I couldn't sleep, I thought that someone was coming to kill me with an ax."

Gul Meena, a Pashto speaker, and Sahar Gul, a Dari speaker, did not know each other's language, and knew none of the details of what had happened to the other, but they began keeping each other company for reasons neither can explain.

The shelter staff had kept mirrors away from Gul Meena, but one day she saw herself and was stunned at how badly her face had been damaged. "I didn't even recognize myself," she said. "I was so ugly." Sahar Gul consoled her, telling her friend she was beautiful.

Gradually the girls came out of their shells. Sahar Gul applied herself to her studies, determined to become a lawyer. "If I am a lawyer, I can help other women, too," she said.

Mumtaz was the last of the three to arrive at the shelter. She was the victim of an acid attack by a militia commander angry that her family had refused his offer of marriage because, among other things, she was too young.

Women for Afghan Women sent Mumtaz to India for facial reconstruction surgery; her toughness inspired the others, especially Gul Meena. They viewed her as an elder sister, and the three would laugh together for hours. Ms. Motley called them "the amazing Three Musketeers."

Mumtaz left the shelter three years ago after a young man from her home village asked to marry her. Gul Meena and Sahar Gul said they were happy for her, but envious that she had managed to escape what for them had become a prison.

Both of the younger girls were seeking asylum abroad, but only Gul Meena had any prospect of success. She had been born in Pakistan, so could register as a refugee with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which would try to resettle her abroad, a process that takes years.

During that time, both girls became fans of the Indian television drama “Madhubala,” which they watched together, taking turns with the language — it was dubbed in both Pashto and Dari.

The soap opera is about a young girl, Madhubala, who is forced into marriage with a rich man who abuses her, but she gradually wins his love.

They may like the show, but neither young woman is interested in emulating Madhubala. “I don’t want to get married again, men are all bad,” Gul Meena said. Then she caught herself, remembering that her underage marriage had not been legally valid. “I don’t want to get married, ever.”

Their friend Mumtaz and her husband — a love match — had been living in northern Kunduz Province with their baby daughter. Then, last summer, her husband was killed by confederates of Commander Naseer, the militia leader who had attacked her. A few weeks later, Mumtaz gave birth to her second daughter.

Mumtaz feared the commander would have her and the children killed as well, and begged for outside help. She had no remaining relatives except in-laws, since her own family had fled the country, and she was stranded in a Taliban-controlled area.

Once again, the women’s group’s activists managed to rescue Mumtaz. Last month, she reached the safety of the Kabul shelter for the second time, arriving just four days before Gul Meena left.

This time back in the shelter, Mumtaz did not think she would be watching any Indian soaps with the other women. “I have no patience for these things any longer,” Mumtaz said, indicating her two babies. “I’m too tired all the time, and I am not alone now.”

Though exhausted, she still has her dreams, too: little ones for herself, big ones for her daughters. “I want to study and learn to read and write and then become someone who works in an office,” Mumtaz said. “And I want my daughters to become a judge and a lawyer.”

She hopes that someday her daughters will sit in judgment of people like Commander Naseer. That is Mumtaz the Mother’s dream. Mumtaz the Widow’s dream is more visceral. “I am going to throw acid on the face of Naseer,” she said, “to teach him how bad it was, what he has done to us and what I have had to suffer.”

Gul Meena was recently resettle

Gul Meena was recently resettled in the Swedish village of Duved, population 600, seven of them refugees. “I only wish Sahar Gul could be here,” she said.

She found it hard to believe that the lodging provided for her had only one bed in it. It was the first room of her own she had ever had. Ms. Motley, the lawyer, bought her a television set for it.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/06/world/asia/afghanistan-child-brides-marriage.html>

Zubeida Mustafa

IS feminism changing in Pakistan? That is the question that should be asked by those who are interested in women's issues. That is the question that I pondered over at the Women's Peace Table I attended recently in Karachi.

Organised by Tehrik-e-Niswan (TN) and a few other civil society groups, this gathering was the third in the series that was launched in 2015 on the call of the Peace Women Across the Globe. The idea is to encourage women to be involved in the peace process in regions in the grip of conflict.

For Sheema Kermani, the founder of TN, this was an opportunity to further the women's cause. As it is, Sheema has struggled bravely since 1979 to create awareness on women's rights through the medium of song and dance.

Many others have also worked to help women free themselves from male oppression in Pakistan. But Sheema's approach has been effective at the grass roots for two reasons. First, she has reached out to women who most need to be conscientised. Second, the medium she chose was popular and comprehensible to all whether or not they were educated. Sheema wisely widened the scope of the women's peace table (as is generally perceived in the framework of UN Resolution 1325) in Pakistan. It goes beyond the narrow parameters of war and peace in the traditional sense of international relations.

If women are included in equal numbers in peace negotiations, the outcome of many such dialogues would be different. But it needs to be recognised that gender-related violence and oppression, the subjugation of women and denying them social justice also trigger conflict. It robs the socio-political environment of stability, and a big section of the population is left discontented. This state of affairs is not conducive to peace, so there is a need to realise the significance of increasing women's participation in all public activities which have a bearing on their rights.

Therefore the agendas of the two sessions of the peace table included issues such as missing persons, minorities, health, education, violence, political parties, elections, sexual harassment and peace itself.

It is now clear that awareness has been enhanced. The government and all public functionaries speak of women's rights and swear by them to establish their credentials as champions of the cause of women. No party fails to list its plans for women's empowerment in its manifesto. By and large, the powers that be include women — even though it might be a token number — in various committees and bodies that are set up. A measure of the success of the women's movement in Pakistan is the public recognition of the power of women.

But that is not enough. Not much has changed on the ground. In some ways, the situation has worsened. While a small section of women have managed to improve their lot — thanks to a good education and the opening up of new opportunities for them — the underprivileged of society have sunk deeper into the morass of oppression and violence. With the awareness that has been created, this inability of women generally to gain their rights has resulted in frustration, anger and a sense of failed expectations.

This was evident in abundance in the young activists from all over the country who participated in the peace table. The abduction and conversion of young Hindu girls in Sindh and the forced disappearance of a female journalist, Zeenat Shahzadi, who was investigating the case of an Indian visitor in Pakistan, created a lot of furore. Obviously, impatience is growing and it is becoming difficult to restrain those who feel very strongly about the wrongs that are being inflicted on women.

A via media has to be found. The problem is the growing polarisation in society that has led to this cleavage where radical women are confronting women who are known to be liberal in their views. This is happening against the backdrop of a confrontation between the extremists — that include women as well — and secular-liberal women.

It is time for the radicals and liberals to have a dialogue to understand what is going wrong. However, one must emphasise that women in politics, many of whom are established feminists, are expected to work harder for the implementation of the women-friendly laws that they got adopted. I do not hear much about the women's caucus that was so active once upon a time.

As for activists like Sheema, please continue to educate our women about their rights, if you do not want to lose the silent majority to the extremists. Laida, a teacher in a school in Neelum Colony in Karachi, texted me this message the next morning: "Thank you for taking me to the peace table. I learnt a lot. It was an informative programme."

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1363413>

## MISOGYNY & WORK

Dawn, October 13, 2017

Zeenat Hisam

The writer is a researcher in the development sector.

'He's stabbing women because he wants us to stay at home. He's instilling fear in us. But we will continue to come out and work'. — Gulzar, 27, domestic worker

SO says my domestic help (maasi) after visiting Humaira, a 16-year-old girl from her community, in a hospital after she was stabbed near Liaquatabad while returning home to Moach Goth, a low-income settlement in Baldia Town, Karachi. Gulzar, divorced and a single parent, tells of another stabbing, this one of a 45-year-old maasi in the area where I live near PECHS. "She was stabbed in street number 10. She makes chapattis in bungalows and lives in Korangi," I am told.

How would city officials have reacted if the lunatic was stabbing powerful, rich, influential men? Would they have shrugged it off saying it is impossible to find the lone knife-wielding man in a city of almost 20 million?

This palpable fear of being stabbed — experienced daily since the last two weeks by women workers — is being laughed away by many men (and women who are safe) with the incessant churning out of misogynist jokes ('Men are taking their wives and dropping them off at Gulistan-i-Johar for a taste of knife, ha ... ha...', 'It must be a tailor who is not getting orders for shalwars as girls have taken to wearing tights ... ho ... ho').

You wonder what kind of a society you live in; a society so disrespectful of women who step out into the public domain to make a living, a society that takes violence against women in its stride, a society that lets criminals roam in the streets.

It is getting more and more difficult for women, day by day, to navigate the public space in this maddening city and face the dangers, humiliations and harassment lurking in nooks and corners.

At the workplace, women in low-tier jobs put up with not just maltreatment and, at times, harassment and violence, but suffer from low wages, long hours, lack of protection and absence of terms and conditions of work. Paid domestic work is still outside the ambit of the majority of our labour laws despite efforts by women's groups and legislators to bring it under adequate legal cover.

Due to the 'gendered' nature of work performed generally by women (cleaning, cooking, taking care of children and the elderly), paid domestic work is not considered a 'productive' labour market activity by economists, but referred to as 'non-productive' personal care services. Though misogyny is embedded in macroeconomic structures, domestic work is most riddled with it because it is rooted in slavery and servitude under feudalism and its contemporary manifestations in Pakistan.

Contrary to the popular perception that domestic work benefits only housewives and working women belonging to upper- and middle-income households, paid domestic work is vital for the larger economy. It contributes significantly to the marginalised households run by mothers feeding children and their unemployed or low-paid spouses who can only find casual work due to the disadvantages they suffer (ie low literacy, lack of skills).

Another false perception held by many employers is that domestic workers get more than a fair bargain because 'they are handed down clothes and food gratis, often get zakat, yet do not work with due diligence and have a tendency to disappear without notice'.

This patronising, master-servant attitude also seems to have seeped into the mindset of policymakers and distorted their understanding of domestic work, hence their reluctance to acknowledge it fully as one of the economic sectors that are important for women's greater induction in the labour force.

Policymakers also fail to acknowledge that the demand for domestic work is increasing due to lack of policies reconciling work and family life and the state's failure to provide care services where needed.

The first step to tackle the misogyny embedded in social and economic structures is to acknowledge its existence and accept that although its impacts cut across class, it hurts the less privileged working women the most. The state needs to realise that women-specific labour protection laws and implementation would help only if undertaken in tandem with creating an overall women-friendly environment. This necessitates cities which are safe and inclusive for women, where girls and women are free from violence and from fear of violence.

Women's safe mobility and their easy access to public transport is a key ingredient in a women-friendly city. It is time city planners and policymakers take a round of the low-income settlements in Karachi and trail thousands of domestic workers and see how they navigate the city in the morning to reach their workplaces and return home in the evening.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1363412>

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: KAARVAN CRAFTS FOUNDATION TO HOLD SERIES OF WORKSHOPS

Business Recorder, 15 October, 2017

LAHORE: Kaarvan Crafts Foundation, working for the economic empowerment of women in low income communities, is organizing series of workshops with multiple institutions in Lahore in connection with International Women's Day being observed on October 15 in Pakistan and elsewhere around the world.

These workshops aim at mainstreaming gender into educational institutions and developing community engagement with the youth to build capacity for gender sensitivity, gender tolerance and respect for human rights.

Institutions where these workshops are going to be held include Lahore University of Management Sciences, Beaconhouse National University, Kaarvan's Livestock Training Centre at Kasur, and others.

Through online discussion, workshops, photo studies, and short films Kaarvan hopes to explore a gender-responsive vision.

Everyone has the right to express themselves. In Pakistan this right is mostly claimed and coveted by the elite – people with power who create our norms, our standards, and our narrative. Kaarvan believes in inclusivity for all, especially for the marginalized low-income females living in rural areas of Pakistan.

According to the Danish Jabbar Khan (CEO Kaarvan Crafts Foundation), in order to diminish some of this imbalanced power dynamics present in our culture, Kaarvan wishes to create a safe space for dialogue between two communities (the rural & the urban) who normally do not communicate with each other. By creating a safe space for discussion letting the rural women speak for themselves rather than speaking for them. This is an action towards mainstreaming a gender perspective by bringing rural women to the front.

Objectives behind organizing these workshops is to shift the perspective from sympathy to empathy towards the rural women and exercise self-reflection and self-identification to become more aware of our underlying thoughts or perhaps biases that guide our behavior. To listen respectfully to a person's story is to honour that person's intrinsic worth and to empower the storyteller in a constructive way.

Once all workshops with the educational institutions are held, Kaarvan Foundation will hold learning sharing conference, the date of which will be notified later, where the different educational institutions will share their findings with each other.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/10/15/5-page/676411-news.html>

#### NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 1ST TO OCTOBER 8 Th 2017

##### WOMEN IN THE DRIVING SEAT

The Express Tribune, October 1st, 2017.

The arid lands of Tharparkar and the Thar desert are unlikely places to find women engaged in potentially revolutionary activity. Communities are poor, poorly educated and deeply conservative. Opportunities for employment beyond arid agriculture are few and far between but change is in the air. Beneath the ochre topsoil there is coal, coal which can be fed into Pakistan's ongoing energy crisis. It may be of poor quality and globally the move is away from fossil fuels to greener energy solutions, but 175 billion tons of coal is there and waiting to be taken from the ground, and it is in the taking out that the women of Tharparkar find themselves having a very unexpected career option. Dumper truck driver.

Big truck driving the world over has always been a man's job. Even in the emancipated developed nations it is not common for women to be truckers. The work is physically hard, and even with sophisticated modern vehicles that have power steering and other adjuncts to the quality of working life — it's tough. But a 25 year-old mother of three is today driving a 60 ton dumper truck, earning what by local standards is a substantial wage and she is being joined by a growing number of other women.

The glass ceiling for women in the jobs market is set low. Merely by standing up they may bump their head against it. Now there are 30 women being trained as truck drivers by the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC), and they may earn up to Rs40,000 a month. The company currently has 125 trucks working on the vast open-cast pit but says it is going to need 400, and the work extends into a long future. If it can be done in Tharparkar, it can be done elsewhere. Traditional male chauvinist attitudes can be overcome, and women really can challenge stereotypes and break barriers. The women truckers of Tharparkar may be little more than a quirky headline today but they are also harbingers of change. Pakistan? Women truckers? Yes and why not. Step forward and take the wheel, ladies.

## WHERE ARE WOMEN GOING? AND HOW DO THEY GET THERE?

The Express Tribune, October 4th, 2017.

Having a firm sense of direction is not only beneficial on a practical level, but it can also provide a greater sense of coherence and clarity for a whole range of issues. As a feminist, I periodically ask myself about the direction that Pakistan is headed on the issue of gender. And how can Pakistani women best achieve equality in all areas of their lives? Or put in simple terms 'where are women going? And how do we get there?' Discrimination against women is endemic in our society and cuts across all political affiliations, state institutions and the whole of the private sector.

In examining the systematic and deep-rooted discrimination against women in Pakistan, it is necessary to differentiate between the position of women under the 'law' and their position in the wider society. On the legal side, progress has undeniably been made (although there is still some way to go). Article 25 of the Constitution says: "All citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of law." It also states that "there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex." There are additional pro-women laws that have been passed by successive governments.

However, if achieving equality between women and men could simply be achieved by passing laws, there would be nothing to discuss. There can be no better guarantee of women's rights than the Constitution. It is the highest legal authority in the land. Unfortunately, laws in themselves cannot bring about social change without the will to do so by both the government and the wider society.

Ending discrimination additionally requires there to be a critical mass in favour within both the state and society as a whole. Article 25 provides, in the clearest possible terms, an answer to the question 'where are we going on the issue of gender?' Our destination is equality. The complex and much harder question to answer is how as a society do we get to this destination? In examining this issue we need to look beyond the law and look to the social reality of women's day-to-day lives and how this can converge with women's legal rights. Currently, there is a significant disconnect between the two.

Pakistan is not alone in facing this disconnect between the legal equality 'granted' to women and the social reality (I put the term 'granted' in quotation marks, as regrettably women throughout the world have invariably been 'granted' equal legal status by men). Most, if not all, societies that have passed laws on equality face the same problem, how can you achieve the equality of women in the wider society? We only need to look at the position of women in the UK to see what a huge challenge this is. The UK passed the Equal Pay Act in 1970 and passed the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975, yet in 2017 following the publication of the salaries of its top earners, the BBC was rightly heavily criticised for blatantly discriminating against women by paying them less than their male counterparts for doing the same job.

With over 40 years for successive British governments, with substantial resources at their disposal, to achieve equality, the BBC fiasco showed what little progress had been made. Britain's failure to eliminate discrimination in the workplace over a 40-year period tells us it is simply not a matter of resources and time. If it were, discrimination would have been eliminated in the UK. Resources are only part of the equation.

What is perhaps the key in eliminating any form of discrimination is the view taken by the wider society and societies' support for change. The views of the wider society on any particular issue can be shaped by either governments or civil society groups, or a combination of the two. However, where the institutions of the state are weak and/or inflexible, it is civil society groups and activists that are best placed to influence and shape society and to bring about meaningful change. For example, faced with intransigent state institutions at the state and federal level, it was civil society groups in America that drove the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

The civil rights movement achieved far more for the rights and for the improvement of the day-to-day living conditions of African-Americans than the 13th Amendment of the US Constitution (abolishing slavery) did. Yes, the



abolitionists of the 19th century were successful in ending the legal status of slavery, however, little else changed for the ex-slaves. They still worked on the plantations and continued to have no legal rights, and were not socially free. It was only the social movement led by African-American activists that was able to bring about any meaningful and tangible change for the lives of African-Americans.

In much the same way, it is the women's movement in Pakistan, together with other pro-equality civil society groups, that can help us to arrive at our destination of equality between women and men in both the private and public spheres. Women's participation in the workplace still has a very long way to go. In the context of our predominantly weak state institutions, it is civil society groups that are best placed to be the engine for meaningful change and to remind the state of its responsibility towards the women of Pakistan.

As meaningful change is most likely to occur through Pakistani social groups, what role, if any, should outside international donors play? While international donors and organisations can undoubtedly assist, this cannot be done in a 'top down' manner. Nor can it be effectively done through international management organisations monitoring funded projects. Donors and international groups can lobby parliament to pass laws, but it should be remembered that Pakistan's primary problem is a social not a legal one. Meaningful and lasting change for women can only come from within our society and led by Pakistanis, with the support of likeminded international non-governmental organisations.

Despite the substantial challenges we face, such as the institutional bias against women by state institutions and the current social reluctance to accept the extent of discrimination women face on a daily basis, I believe we can and will make progress in redressing the imbalance between women and men that currently exists in Pakistan. If, as women, we can better mobilise ourselves socially and through the ballot box, we can shape the debate on gender in Pakistan in our favour; and in turn in favour of wider society.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1522203/women-going-get/>

## SAFE WORKPLACES

Dawn, October 5th, 2017

Roshaneh Zafar

WORKING for an institution that is committed to establishing a sexual harassment-free environment, I am often confronted with situations that require great maturity and understanding. Sexual harassment at the workplace is a reality; however, very little data is available to verify the extent of the problem.

Some estimates place the incidence of sexual harassment as high as 93 per cent, while others put it at 50pc. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that a majority of such cases go unreported. Most women when confronted with sexual harassment at the workplace choose to remain silent and do not pursue the issue out of fear of losing their jobs or facing criticism and, in many cases, a backlash.

The truth is that with a runaway population, estimated to be growing at 2.4pc per year, and an economy that is stagnating, promoting dignity at the workplace is imperative if we are to improve economic opportunities for women. Poor, illiterate and lacking social or economic agency, most are employed for low wages in the informal sector. Women are often face dismissal on getting married, during pregnancy or while rearing their child. In such situations, women are less likely to speak out against harassment.

Let us take the case of Fatima (name has been changed), who wrote to me complaining about the unwarranted and unsolicited attentions of her male manager. The latter had made comments about her dress and often asked her personal questions, and on one occasion, when there was no one in office, he had tried to physically harass her; when rebuffed he spread all kinds of rumours about her. The situation had reached this point because Fatima had kept quiet until now and had not communicated with anyone else in the institution regarding the matter.

In such cases, it is hard to provide evidence; often, it is ‘her’ word against ‘his’. Unfortunately, many in Pakistan are quick to judge an individual and even quicker to start a process of character assassination. It is up to the institution to develop robust and effective means for redressal, which should include fair opportunities for hearing the case, having a panel of objective and gender-sensitive individuals both male and female to review each case, and making sure the process is kept confidential.

This is not rocket science and is about building a strong culture with zero tolerance for sexual harassment. It also involves educating male and female staff on the code of conduct and what constitutes professional behaviour.

Ideally, harassment should be dealt with under the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, and Amendment Act, 2012, which put Pakistan ahead of many of its peers. However, the presence of this law does not do much for women facing harassment daily. Economic necessity and fear of social judgement or humiliation keeps many women quiet — especially those who are widows, single mothers, divorced or the main breadwinners. More often than not, they cannot afford to lose their jobs and therefore are fearful of reporting harassment. Harassment often take place by someone they trust — this added layer of disbelief and shame makes it harder for women to come forward with their stories.

Somewhat similar to Fatima’s story is the Ayesha Gulalai incident where she came forward with allegations of harassment against PTI chief Imran Khan. She claimed to have received undesirable messages from the party founder, but instead of positive results, there was a backlash. Instead of the public discourse being steered towards better workplace policies or improving our understanding of sexual harassment as an important social issue the incident led to a mass smear campaign on social media against Ms Gulalai.

Undoubtedly harassment, especially in the workplace, is a major issue faced by women all over the world. It is very common and stems from lack of proper education, laws and systems meant to ensure that women feel protected and comfortable.

With more women joining the labour force in Pakistan, workplace harassment is something that needs to be dealt with logically and quickly. More so, figures of authority should act as role models upholding high standards of conduct in order to achieve a harassment-free environment. Our societal norms and ideas are deeply embedded in patriarchy; this shows we need to make fundamental changes to people’s way of thinking. Educating the population is the first step in ensuring that women are safe and viewed as more than sexual objects. The path to ensuring a woman’s safety will not be easy, but it is extremely necessary.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361755/safe-workplaces>

## BODY OF GIRL KILLED BY IN-LAWS IN TANDO JAM EXHUMED

The Express Tribune, October 5, 2017

**HYDERABAD:** The body of a murdered young woman was exhumed in Tando Jam on Tuesday, while two other bodies were found floating in water channels in Jamshoro and Sanghar districts.

Ameena Mari, 18, was allegedly killed by her in-laws a few days ago and her body was secretly buried in Tando Jam, a rural area in Hyderabad district.

Worried by her absence, Ameena’s family complained to the police on Tuesday and later staged a sit-in on the Hyderabad-Tando Haider road. The police later detained Ameena’s father-in-law, Gul Deen Mari, who led the police to the dead body.

According to the Paban SHO, the body was shifted to Civil Hospital, Hyderabad for post-mortem and later handed over to her parents for burial. The police have still not registered an FIR because they are waiting for the version of Ameena's family, the SHO claimed.

"My daughter was subjected to domestic violence every other day," Ameena's father Aslam Mari told the media, adding that his daughter was married to Salam Deen Mari. He claimed that the police were earlier reluctant to take action and were now influencing him to withdraw the case for an out-of-court settlement.

In another incident, the body of an unidentified woman was found floating in the Indus River, within the limits of the Manjhand police station in Jamshoro district. The deceased was apparently shot in the chest before her body was thrown in the river. The female medical officer at the taluka hospital in Manjhand, Sheeba Khan, confirmed that the woman was shot dead. The body was shifted to the Edhi mortuary after the post-mortem.

Separately, the body of 30-year-old Majnu Khaskheli, who went missing on September 29, was also found floating in a waterway in Jam Nawaz Ali taluka of Sanghar district. According to the Berani police, in whose limits the body was found, Majnu was axed to death. Brother of the deceased Allah Bux Khaskheli said the family was clueless about the cause of the murder because neither the family nor the deceased had any known enemies. The police have yet to lodge an FIR.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1523048/body-girl-killed-laws-tando-jam-exhumed/>

## COURTS FOR WOMEN COMPLAINANTS, WITH WOMEN JUDGES IN THE OFFING

Intikhab Hanif

Dawn, October 6th, 2017

LAHORE: The Punjab Women's Protection Authority in its maiden meeting on Thursday decided to establish special courts for hearing cases of crime against women in all districts in the province.

The meeting which was presided over by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif approved an amendment to the Punjab Protection of Women Against Violence Act of 2017 so as to allow establishment of the dedicated courts for cases of crime against women. Such courts would be established in the centres for protection for women in all districts.

According to officials, the chief minister ordered that the special courts be established by the authority in its centres all over the province. The first would be established in the centre in Multan which has been operational since March 25.

They said the need to establish special courts for women's cases arose because of lengthy procedures and slow pace of proceedings in civil and family courts. The cases of violence against women required to be decided quickly so as to provide justice to the victim women. That was why it was considered to establish special courts for them, an official said.

These courts would be presided over by women judges and prosecutors, specifically trained in the subject, and they would be stationed in the centres across the province.

The chief minister allowed the Punjab Women Protection Authority to open satellite offices in smaller cities to provide effective aid to women victims of violence.

Police and secretaries of the prosecution and home department agreed to voluntarily facilitate functions of the authority and undertake steps that could eliminate crime against women. They further assured that they would take measures to remove any red-tapism hampering quick justice to women.

Meanwhile, the dedicated post created in the Punjab police for elimination of gender crime, additional inspector general; of gender crimes, is going to be operational in one week. Created for the first time in the country, this grade 19 post would be given to a woman police officer.

A handout said the meeting approved the proposal of bringing all the district-level Darul Amman institutions under the control of Punjab Women's Protection Authority. It also approved different steps to further improve performance of the Violence Against Women Center, Multan.

It was stated that divisional centres would be set up in Lahore, Gujranwala, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi in the first instance.

Authority director general Salman Sufi briefed the meeting about the performance of the centre in Multan.

He said that out of the 1,088 cases received, 802 had been disposed of.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361987>

## ANOTHER WOMAN STABBED IN KARACHI DESPITE POLICE CLAIM OF 'IMPORTANT ARREST' IN KNIFE ATTACKS

Imtiaz Ali

Dawn, October 06, 2017

KARACHI: As the city police chief on Thursday claimed to have made a key arrest in the mysterious 'knifeman' attacks in Gulistan-i-Jauhar and Gulshan-i-Iqbal, another woman was stabbed and injured in Gulistan-i-Jauhar in the evening despite heavy deployment of police at more than two dozen spots.

Gulshan SP Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto told Dawn that the 28-year-old woman, identified as Tahira Bano, was stabbed and wounded by the "lone" attacker riding a motorbike in the busy Rado Bakery area. She was admitted to a private hospital for treatment.

These incidents have sowed fear in women in the localities. Women's rights activists staged protests and criticised the law enforcement agency and political administration for their failure to arrest the perceived lone attacker.

On Wednesday alone six women, including two teenage girls, were stabbed and injured by the mysterious attacker in Gulistan-i-Jauhar and Gulshan-i-Iqbal, bringing the total number of such reported attacks to 12 in a week or so.

The incidents have not only emerged as a serious challenge for the police but have also prompted political activists to question the effectiveness of the Pakistan Peoples Party government.

The attacks also triggered reaction from PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, who said: "PPP will not tolerate [these] attacks on innocent women. These terrorists are challenging our nation by attacking our women."

He told Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to summon Additional IG of Karachi Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar to seek a report about the investigations into the incidents and prospects of the attacker's arrest. During their meeting, the city police chief told the CM about the "key arrest".

The city police chief informed the chief minister that the police had detained 15 suspects for interrogation during raids carried out on Wednesday night. Mr Mahar said that "today [Thursday] morning, an important arrest had been made," a police spokesperson said. The chief minister announced a Rs500,000 reward for any persons giving information leading to the culprit's arrest.

Mr Mahar stated that so far 10 cases of attacks on women had been reported to the police, to which Mr Murad said he “wanted results”.

Meanwhile, Gulshan-i-Iqbal SP Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto told Dawn on Thursday that six women, including two teenage girls, were injured when a lone knifeman attacked them in different parts of Gulistan-i-Jauhar and Gulshan-i-Iqbal. The incidents took place within a few hours of each other.

The officer said that the last attack, on a teenage girl, was reported near Hassan Square in the PIB police limits at around 10.45pm on Wednesday.

Five other attacks on women took place in the jurisdictions of Sharea Faisal, Aziz Bhatti and Gulshan-i-Iqbal police stations.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361995>

#### WOMAN BURNT FOR GIVING BIRTH TO BABY GIRL

Dawn, October 07, 2017

KARACHI: A woman was brought to the Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) on Friday after she was tortured and burnt allegedly by her husband over giving birth to a baby girl.

She was admitted to the CHK Burns Centre in serious condition, according to officials. Mrs Safeena Bano was tortured and burnt by her husband on Oct 2 in the limits of Gharo police station of Thatta district and was brought here on Friday.

Additional Police Surgeon Dr Qarar Ahmed Abbasi told Dawn that she had sustained 68pc burn wounds.

According to her statement given before doctors at the Burns Centre, she had given birth to a baby girl around four months ago for which her husband Mohammad Hanif Jat tortured her.

The suspect has been arrested by police.

Red stars show parts of the city where the incidents have taken place.

SP Bhutto said that in the previous attacks on women in Gulistan-i-Jauhar, the lone attacker riding a motorbike was seen wearing dark trousers and shirt. However, the CCTV footage obtained by police of the Wednesday attacks showed that the attacker was wearing white shalwar kameez. However, the officer insisted that they believed that the attacker appeared to be the same.

Residents of Gulistan-i-Jauhar on Thursday lodged a protest against the failure of the police and the government in providing them protection from the attacker.

A large number of women and men protested at Jauhar Mor in Gulistan-i-Jauhar. They carried banners inscribed with slogans such as ‘Enough is enough’, ‘Attacks on women unacceptable’, ‘Arrest the culprit’, ‘Protect women, or quit.’

The protesters also criticised the alleged “incompetence” of the provincial government, particularly that of the home minister of Sindh.

Police authorities have set up two teams to investigate the attacks on women and arrest the attacker.

City police chief Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar said that one team was headed by the CIA DIG and the other by the DIG of East Zone.

“Karachi police are trying their best and have deputed many teams for the arrest of the person/persons involved in these heinous offences to create panic and fear,” the Karachi AIG said. “The person involved is most likely a psychopath.”

He added that the police were working on a “few available clues” and persons involved in previous similar cases were being probed.

The city police chief urged the media to exercise caution while covering such attacks on women.

He requested the media to report the incidents but not to “sensationalise” them. Mr Mahar said police had arrested high-profile target killers and terrorists in the past. He hoped that this case would also be solved.

“I appeal to citizens of Karachi not to panic and provide information related to the incident,” he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1361995>

## **November 2017**

### ***NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 27th TO DECEMBER 3RD 2017***

#### ***SOUTH PUNJAB WITNESSES SURGE IN CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN***

The Express Tribune, November 27th, 2017.

In recent days, an increase in cases of violence against women has been witnessed across South Punjab, especially in Multan. In the last four years, as many as 28,412 cases of violence against women were registered across South Punjab.

These views were expressed by speakers during a seminar organised on ‘Violence against Women’ in Multan. The speakers called for providing more opportunities to women to form a good society. Social activist Shahid Mahmood Ansari, Asifa Saleem, Rukhsana Mahboob and Kausar Shaheen spoke on the occasion.

Members Municipal Committees, including Asma Ishaq Baloch and Ghazala said about 8,000 cases regarding different types of violence were reported in 2017 only.

The Violence against Women Centre in the city received several such cases, including of domestic violence cases, harassment and sexual abuse cases, the speakers maintained.

Meanwhile, Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW) launched 16 days activism campaign to end violence against women in different districts of the province, including Faisalabad and Multan. The campaign would continue till December 10.

PCSW member Shazia George said, “As a society and as a nation, we must fight to end discrimination against women.” She pointed out that PCSW was operating through its board members and divisional coordinators in all divisions of Punjab to give suppressed women a platform to voice their grievances.

An awareness walk, under the arrangements of Social Welfare Department, was also held on the eve of ‘Violence against Women Day.’ The walk led by State Minister for Textile Haji Muhammad Akram Ansari. The walk started from District Council Chowk and culminated at Katcheri Bazar Chowk after passing through Khaleeq Qureshi Road.

Women, belonging to different NGOs and employees of the various departments, participated in the walk.

Similarly, a walk was held in Bahawalpur that started from Farid Gate and culminated at Quaid-e-Azam Medical College to raise awareness against violence on women. The walk was led by Local Government Director Fouzia Ayoub Qureshi. The participants were carrying placards inscribed with slogans in support of women's rights.

Earlier in 2016, more than 75 cases of torture against women were reported at the Benazir Bhutto Women Crisis Centre, Multan.

Punjab Gender Parity Report 2016 stated that incidents of torture on women have increased by 20% while 173 women were killed for honour in 2015. In 2013, more than 5,800 cases of violence against women were reported in Punjab. Those cases represented 74% of the national total that year.

Since 2010, a number of pro-women laws have been introduced including the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act of 2016.

Similarly, Special Monitoring Unit of Punjab revealed on average each day, six women are killed, eight women are raped, 11 are assaulted, and 32 abducted for various reasons. Moreover, Pakistan ranks as the third-most dangerous country for women to live in.

In 2016, the Punjab Assembly unanimously approved the Protection of Women against Violence Bill, calling for an end to all criminalities against women such as domestic violence, acid attack, rape, psychological and economic abuse, stalking and cyber-crimes. The 31 clauses of the new bill provide an efficient system for complaint registration and penalties for offenders. The new law emerged as a saving mechanism for prevention, combating and eradication of violence against women. The rate of violence against women throughout the country paints a very gloomy picture.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1569333/1-south-punjab-witnesses-surge-cases-violence-women/>

GBV IN SINDH  
Shehnila Zardari

Dawn, November 28th, 2017

THE 2016 Global Gender Gap Report ranked Pakistan as the second worst country in the world for gender equality. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's annual report states that violence against women is the most common rights violation. Harmful customary practices; domestic, sexual, psychological and economic violence; and violence against women in the political arena are the main categories of 'violence against women' as framed by the National Commission on the Status of Women in 2015. Gender-based violence (GBV) is the term used by the UN and other international organisations.

A recent report, State of Gender-based Violence Response Services in Sindh, aimed at finding how medico-legal services were being provided; how many cases of violence against women were reported to the police; the nature of the cases and police responses; the services provided at shelter homes; and what measures have been taken for the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA), 2013.

GBV response services are being offered and run by government departments at the district and taluka level. Since the 18th Amendment, such services have been devolved and handed over to the provinces. The Sindh Police and the provincial health, women's development and social welfare departments were engaged for administering detailed 'key informant interviews'.

GBV survivors are the most important situational analysis participants. Two shelter homes from Karachi and two from Hyderabad were identified for focus group discussions. The shelter homes' staffs were also put in the category of 'key

informants'. GBV service providers in the private sector were also engaged with to ascertain their role in addressing the issues affecting women in the province.

Key findings from the data highlight weaknesses in Sindh's GBV response services sector. Until a few months ago, Sindh did not form its Commission on the Status of Women. This left a huge vacuum in policy formulation and devising institutional arrangements for eliminating anti-women crimes. The absence of 'rules of business' leaves the DVA unimplemented. The operation gap does not assign clear mandates to any service provider mentioned in the act. The lack of interdepartmental coordination is a barrier in providing relief to an already mentally and physically stressed victim.

It was also observed that the concerned departments had little idea of how the allocated funds should be spent. More than 80 per cent of respondents were not even familiar with GBV-related laws. This lack of understanding among government officials shows their inability to comprehend the complexities of GBV issues. Every department keeps their own records pertaining to GBV. The records are not being used for analysing the current situation, which would help in policy- and decision-making to take corrective measures.

Although police reforms are required to develop and adopt guidelines for handling cases of domestic violence and sexual offences in a discreet, professional manner, where the dignity of women is protected, medical and police department officials are not trained in handling GBV cases. To add, the dearth of female medico-legal staff and police officials intimidates victims.

While medico-legal certificates have to contain the personal information of the survivor, sexual assault history, forensic evidence collection, general examination for injuries and wounds (marks of violence), and examining doctor's opinion, in practice, medico-legal officers record only very basic information. Medical records prepared by the MLOs lack evidentiary value that proves critical for the survivor during litigation.

Further, the living conditions in shelter homes appear to be very poor. Services related to medical treatment, psychological counselling, legal aid, rehabilitation, security and training are not being offered in government-run shelters, despite adequate budgets.

It is recommended that every department's mandate with respect to GBV protection should be clearly defined, and the departments' staff should be trained to effectively handle GBV cases. Provincial departments must develop the skills to prepare gender-sensitive budgeting for responding to practical needs with the required funds and resources. It is important to raise awareness about the law and the services that can be provided.

It is also important to appoint female MLOs at the taluka level to enhance women's access to protective services in their neighbourhoods. The health department should consider establishing more forensic laboratories to collect immediate forensic evidence in GBV cases. More shelter homes need to be established in all the province's districts so that the disparity between the number of survivors and available capacity can be addressed.

To achieve this, there needs to be a provincial-level umbrella body — comprising civil society groups, public bodies, legal aid agencies and department representatives — for collective planning and execution of GBV response strategies and action plans.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373358>

## STRUCTURAL MALADY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Express Tribune, November 28th, 2017.

Despite marginal improvements in gender-specific legislation in Pakistan, violence against women hasn't declined during the last few years. The demeaning and dehumanising incident in DI Khan where a teenage girl was paraded



naked in the streets by nine men for honour-based revenge should serve as a moment of reflection on how low we have sunk. Last week, a man in Tank district doused his wife in petrol and burnt her alive. Such incidents, not rare in rural areas of Pakistan, raise questions about inability of the state apparatus that fails to protect women's right to life and dignity. The problem is not the missing might of the state apparatus but a deeper structural malady in the body of the state and society.

Every short-term, quick-fix and tried and tested solutions, suo motu, politicians and rights activists' solidarity with the victims and condemnations will never prevent recurrence of the incidents mentioned above. After the initial response, once diagnosis of the malady begins, we shift the blame to the unjust informal justice mechanism that reinforces patriarchy or the dead slow nature of the formal justice system that fails to generate credible deterrence against rights and further entrenches the vulnerability of the meek and mild. The initial responses to bring perpetrators to justice, though right and much needed, yet insufficient, gloss over the more complex structural injustice that serves as effective medium or enabling environment for individual actions that trump justice.

Structural injustices manifest itself in the form of unequal institutional arrangement that further perpetuates marginalisation of certain groups, biased and distorted narratives, social norms, and discourses that produces and reproduces unfruitful outcomes particularly in the case of violence against women. However, some of them particularly the lack of gender-and rights-based socio-political, and the triangular alliance between patriarchy, ignorance and a conservative religious establishment and its subsequent influence on denial of social space to women merit serious consideration.

The politics of individual rights except Bhutto's lip-serviced 'roti, kapra aur makaan' has never been the case in Pakistan. From Zia's Islamisation to Musharraf's so-called 'enlightened moderation' or Benazir's and Nawaz Sharif's struggle for 'democracy', rights-based discourse never surfaced as priority in political decisions. When democracy's intrinsic values are forgotten and it is used as a tool of 'best revenge' or when slogans of 'change' are lust for power rather than structural reforms, rights-based discourse rarely shapes the political agenda. The mantra of 'strengthening democracy' and 'change' turns into crap when life, dignity and property of citizens are not protected. The obsession of political establishment with strengthening democracy is misplaced; it is not the looted money deposited in Swiss banks and off-shore companies or the hunger for power that threatens democracy, but the looted, robbed and nakedly paraded honour of ordinary Pakistanis that questions the essence of our democracy. It is the oppression of the poor at the hands of rotten governance system that perpetuates structural injustices which threatens democracy and equal opportunities.

The triangular alliance between patriarchy, ignorance and a conservative religious establishment has so far precluded any rights-based meaningful discourse in Pakistan. While the alliance defines woman as repository of man's honour, it has kept her out of educational institutions, economic activities and political decision-making. If the alliance values women's submission and sacrifice as a sign of good character, it is bound to choke freewill even if that concerns women's own lives. The lack of rights-based socio-political discourse denies any improvement in women's social space or effective agency for lifting them out of their predicament. The denial of social space in the traditionally male crafted — police, politics, market, mosque and court in the current settings reinforce such a predicament.

In a quest to fast-track progress of exit from this predicament, one needs to focus our attention on education. It is education that can break the alliance of patriarchy and a conservative religious establishment that has so far hold sway over definition of women's rights and the subsequent social space accorded to them. Rather than squandering millions on talking-shop seminars and conferences, a moderate investment in the form of affirmative action and a robust parliamentary oversight to fast-track women's access to quality education, should be made. In this regard one institution, the Women Parliamentary Caucus on the premises of the National Assembly, can play a phenomenal role by forging alliances against the nexus of patriarchy and ignorance. Women inside Parliament have to take a lead role in design and oversight of the affirmative actions to promote women's education and subsequent empowerment. An increased spending on education with special emphasis on promoting rights-based discourse should be accompanied

by meaningful employment opportunities. Economically poor voices rarely achieve tangible outcomes no matter how loud and how shriek they may be.

Reflecting on the injustices meted out to women, the state should demonstrate its relevance not in terms of just punishing the perpetrators but eliminate the conditions that make man and woman the enemy of each other. No one sounds more relevant than Thomas Paine who famously remarked that “Man is not the enemy of man but through the medium of a false system of government. . . .instead of seeking to reform the individual, the wisdom of a nation should apply itself to reform the system.”

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1570134/6-structural-malady-violence-women/>

## COURT REJECTS POLICE REPORT IN HONOUR KILLING CASE

Dawn, November 28th, 2017

KARACHI: A judicial magistrate threw out on Monday a police report seeking exoneration of four members of a jirga in a case pertaining to the murder of a couple in the name of ‘honour’.

Two teenagers, 17-year-old Ghani Rehman and 15-year-old Bakht Taj, both belonging to a clan of the Mohmand tribe, were allegedly electrocuted by their families on the directive of a jirga for running away from their homes in Ali Brohi Goth, Ibrahim Hyderi, in August.

The investigating officer through an investigation report asked the court to exonerate the jirga members — Sirtaj, Lal Rehman, Taj Mohammad and Jan Mohammad — under Section 497-B of the Criminal Procedure Code as he claimed that no evidence was found against them during the investigation.

However, a judicial magistrate (Malir) dismissed the police report and issued non-bailable warrants for their arrest. The fathers of both the victims and two other relatives are already in prison.

The jirga of tribal elders had allegedly directed the parents of the couple to put them to death for having flouted the traditional code of ‘honour’ and after the killing on Aug 14 they were quietly buried in a graveyard in Sherpao Colony without any last rites performed for them.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1373245>

## 12 MILLION ELIGIBLE FEMALE VOTERS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CAST VOTE FOR WANT OF CNIC

Irfan Ghauri

The Express Tribune, November 29, 2017

ISLAMABAD:

Millions of women eligible to cast votes are unlikely to be added to the electoral rolls for the next year’s general elections as the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) does not have the capacity to make their Computerised National Identity Card (CNICs) in the limited time.

In the revised voters’ list of 97.02 million registered voters, 54.60 million [or 56.27 per cent] are men while 42.42 million [43.73 per cent] are women, showing a gap of more than 12 million.

This gap between male and female registered voters in the country has increased from 10.97 million in March 2013 to 12.17 million in September this year. It is estimated that the voters’ list will have well over 100 million citizens and the gap between male and female voters is likely to increase further.

The main reason why millions of women of 18 years and above are not added to the electoral rolls is that they do not have the CNICs. Issued by NADRA, the CNIC is a pre-requisite to get enrolled in the voters' list and it is also needed as proof of identity for casting vote.

The Sindh Assembly on November 23 unanimously adopted a resolution recommending the federal government to take steps to register all eligible women voters in the electoral rolls. The resolution claimed that there were around 13 million unregistered women.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in its meeting on November 17 decided to organise the national voters' day on December 7. After this huddle, the ECP's planning committee for the next year's general elections announced the launch of a special campaign to register eligible women in the voters' list.

It will focus on 79 districts where there is a greater disparity between male and female voters. The ECP will also complete computerised data-feeding system at all of its district offices next month.

However, the main impediment to the registration of women voters would still remain unaddressed unless all stakeholders – including the ECP, NADRA, political parties and civil society organisations – galvanise themselves to ensure that all missing women have CNICs before April 2018.

The ECP will freeze voter's list for general elections scheduled in July-August next year.

Sources in the ECP said NADRA's current infrastructure of the National Registration Centres (NRCs) and Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs) is not sufficient to make the CNICs for these millions of women, in addition to their normal work.

NADRA has a total of 539 NRCs, 234 MRVs and 14 women-only NRCs.

A NADRA official told The Express Tribune that it would be impossible for his organisation to prepare more than 12 million additional CNICs by April 2018. This work, he said, would be in addition to the routine work that NADRA centres were doing.

He said the staff at registration centres was already overburdened and NADRA had already conveyed to the ECP that it could make a maximum of 2 to 3 million additional cards by April next year.

"Sometimes it takes us 45 minutes to process one application. People have different issues. Some lack required documents, some have other issues," the official said while requesting not to be named.

It takes 30 days on average to print the normal card, 21 days in case of urgent cards and a week in case of executive cards.

Given these impediments due to the existing capacity of NADRA, it will not be possible for it to ready more than 12 million cards. Subsequently, these women who are otherwise eligible to vote will not be able to get registered in voters' list.

Different civil society organisations working for women registration claim they have been facing difficulties in procuring the CNICs for the women whom they try to facilitate.

"Normal CNIC is free of cost for the first time. However, NADRA officials insist on the Smart Card which costs Rs400 per person," an official of a civil society organisation said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1571124/1-twelve-million-eligible-female-voters-may-not-able-cast-vote-want-cnic/>

## MAN MURDERS WIFE OVER COLD DINNER IN LAHORE

The Express Tribune, November 30, 2017

**SARGODHA:** A woman was murdered by her husband over petty issue in Factory Area police limits on Wednesday. The police said that Feroz Khan, a resident of Chak No 85/NB, had an argument with his wife Roshan Bibi for serving him cold food.

After exchange of hot words, Feroz murdered his wife and fled from the spot. The body was handed over to the family after legal formalities. The police have registered a case against the accused and started investigation.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1572042/1-man-murders-wife-cold-dinner-lahore/>

## ‘POWER FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN IS UNSINKABLE’

Shazia Hasan

Dawn, December 03, 2017

**KARACHI:** Talks, debates, performances and activism all became a part of celebrating women and girls as the British Council and Southbank Centre’s two-day Women of the World Festival, WOW, got under way at the Alliance Francaise de Karachi here on Saturday.

“We are not brought up quite right. Women don’t even know when to complain as they are put in a box where getting power is inconvenient,” said Senator Sherry Rehman during an interesting panel discussion about ‘Identity and self worth’.

“Women who seek power are seen as pushy but powerful women are also attractive,” she pointed out.

“Power must be exercised from the home and make its way to your space in public. Women spaces are shrinking. Exclusion makes them shrink. You have to create opportunities and also take power, because power is never given. When it comes to women empowerment, it has always been two steps back and one step forward. Power and opportunity won’t walk up to you, you need to see it for what it is and you need to grab it,” she explained.

Chris Hunt, British Council’s Sindh and Balochistan director, also a panellist, said that he had always tried to remain conscious about the power dynamics.

“I give people space. I also create spaces where people can raise their concerns and speak up,” he said, adding that to some extent men were blind to this as they value capability. But, he also pointed out that power dynamics lay beneath capability.

“I remember I was in school when our headmaster said that he had done grocery shopping for his wife. But he told us that when he told her that he had done grocery shopping for her, she corrected him and said that he had done it for them not her. That’s inclusivity, that’s bringing everyone to the table,” he said.

Earlier, WOW’s founder and Southbank Centre’s artistic director Jude Kelly said in her keynote address that the first step for women and girls was to challenge the idea of their not being as important as men and boys.

“When I was 15, I felt excited about life. I didn’t realise then that society had an organised way of disseminating power, women had less power than men,” she said.

“When you hear things like you don’t matter as much as the men, your big dreams for yourself become smaller and you start apologising for having big dreams,” she said, adding: “When you have less power in your relationships, in your jobs and in your finances, it leads to a world that is uneven and unbalanced.”

“I realised my dreams because hundreds of years ago some people sat around and said how to educate girls? How to get women to vote? So we were given more power by others. And now I am also giving back by celebrating women. WOW was started 10 years ago by me and today it has grown into this extraordinary movement in 27 countries. WOW in Pakistan was started last year. Power for girls and women here is unsinkable,” she said.

The day offered many more moments to prompt people especially women and girls to ponder. There were other panel discussions on ‘Gender and work’ and ‘Women in science and technology’, documentary screenings, literary readings, inspirational talks by Maliha Hussain of Mehergarh, storyteller and educator Hiba Masood and showbiz personality Atiq Odho.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374128>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 20Th TO NOVEMBER 26Th 2017

BREAST CANCER A CURABLE DISEASE, SAYS SURVIVOR

Dawn, November 20th, 2017

KARACHI: A survivor and health experts on Sunday said that early detection of breast cancer could increase the ratio of survival up to 100 per cent, but it required good amount of awareness in society.

“Because of poor awareness, this fatal disease takes lives of thousands of women around the globe because discussing breast diseases is considered to be a taboo in male-dominated societies,” said Khadija Bakali, a survivor of breast cancer, at a seminar organised by the Living Well Facilitator at Umbrella Cancer Network, A UK-based organisation working to create cancer awareness for early diagnose, at the Rangoonwala Community Centre in Dhoraji.

Ms Bakali, who suffered from the cancer twice, fought against the disease courageously and emerged victorious, shared her story with the audience.

“My husband and family stood by me at a time when their support was hugely needed,” she said.

She said sharing the problems with her family was extremely essential as this helped them take the required measures at the initial stage of the cancer to prevent its growth.

“Strong willpower and family support is a must to fight cancer because physical assistance is not enough in a holistic approach against the disease,” Ms Bakali said.

She said that instead of panicking, reality must be faced with courage and preventive steps should be taken to control breast cancer, a curable disease if detected at an early stage.

When she shared her experience, her mother and brothers were also present among the audience.

Dilshad Nabi, a health educator, said that every year 40,000 women died of breast cancer.

She said 80pc lumps in breasts were benign, meaning they were not cancerous and could easily be treated.

“Though the causes of the cancer are not completely understood”, she said, “the use of oral contraceptive, birth of child after 30 years, no breast feeding, being unmarried, obesity, smoking and lack of physical activity are the risk factors”.

Dr Imtiaz Ahmed said that due to a lack of awareness, a large number of women were falling prey to the fatal ailment.

Masudah M. Ahmed, the founder of APWA in the UK, and Rabia Khatoun, a teacher of Khadija Bakali, also spoke.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371563/breast-cancer-a-curable-disease-says-survivor>

## OICCI PLEDGES INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE, TO EMPOWER WOMEN

Business Recorder, 22 November 2017

KARACHI: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce & Industry (OICCI) has pledged to create more inclusive workplaces and empower women in the workforce across Pakistan.

This pledge was announced in collaboration with UN Women as part of an ambition to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals towards gender equality and to serve as an inspiration for businesses in Pakistan and beyond. To further this commitment over the next three years, OICCI members will focus on establishing a conducive environment that enhances gender equality and develop women for high level corporate leadership.

In moving towards realization of gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women Pakistan provides support to innovative initiatives that promote women's human rights, with special focus on their economic security, political participation and freedom from violence.

Khalid Mansoor, President OICCI Managing Committed highlighted, "OICCI members have a strong commitment towards gender balancing and have pledged to support initiatives towards empowering women in the socio economic growth of Pakistan"

Jamshed Kazi Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan mentioned that "empowering women within the growing corporate sector is a challenge where, we believe, the private sector can be the "agents of change" to build a healthy environment where gender equality is considered a reality, encouraging more women to gain confidence in their ability to assume senior management positions including as CEOs and member of the Board of Directors".

Bruno Olierhoek, Chairman, OICCI CSR Subcommittee, said, "The OICCI Women initiative wants to propose a concrete way forward, a "how to" manual, helping organizations to have a women friendly work environment. I believe that OICCI together with UN Women can start a movement, in Pakistan, by promoting this simple and pragmatic approach and thus making a real impact." Shazia Syed, Co-Chair, added "It is our responsibility as business leaders to recognize the business case for gender equality and diversity in the workplace. Today, we have provided a roadmap built on best practices within Pakistan's industry to empower women for sustainable success."

During the panelist discussion, the CEOs and senior management of MNCs spoke about best practices of their companies which helps them retain female talent and emphasized on its importance to be promoted in all organizations for gender-equality. These best practices included providing security and support for relocating, work with home-day care, maximizing their potential by making lean-in circles and formulating female orientated mentorship network.

The OICCI members will further work to increasing advocacy amongst members as well as voicing the initiative to support formulating policies at government level which would benefit gender diversity at workplaces in the country.

As part of their commitment to Pakistan, the OICCI has dedicated the CSR Report for 2016 – 17 to creating a platform for women empowerment and gender equality. This aims at bringing all OICCI members under one umbrella for a concerted effort towards achieving the vision of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and becoming a source of inspiration for other businesses in Pakistan and beyond.

## LAW TO CURB ACID ATTACKS ON WOMEN SOON, PA TOLD

Hasan Mansoor

Dawn, November 23, 2017

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly was on Wednesday informed that the provincial government was finalising an “effective” law to curb the rampant cases of acid attacks on women.

“Our government is trying to make a law which should not be toothless legislation as has been made by another province. Our law would be aimed at curbing the menace [of acid attack] once and for all,” said Irum Khalid Javed, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister on Women Development, during the Sindh Assembly’s Question Hour.

She was answering lawmakers’ queries on behalf of CM Murad Ali Shah who holds the portfolio of the department.

Answering a question by Pakistan Muslim League-Functional lawmaker Nusrat Sahar Abbasi, Ms Javed said acid was easily available in the market where anyone could sell or purchase it at will.

“We are making a law — the Sindh Acid Crime Control Bill, 2017 — to prevent this practice [sale and purchase of acid] effectively,” she said, making a horrifying statement that so far the provincial government was unable to regulate it.

She said the Gender Reform Action Plan (GRAP) was begun years ago with an objective to create a society where women have equal rights and could progress with men and had equal opportunities so that there might not be any discrimination with anyone on the basis of gender.

She said there were four key areas in the GRAP — political reforms, administrative or institutional reforms, reform in public-sector employment and policy and fiscal reforms.

Ms Javed said the department had taken measures to achieve the objectives of the programme to a certain extent.

“Almost 50 per cent of its objectives [have been] achieved in phases,” she said, adding that her department’s offices had been established at divisional and district levels since 2007-8 in phases.

She said pro-women laws including the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013 and Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2013 had been passed and their rules of business formulated.

Apart from the Sindh Acid Crime Control Bill, 2017, she said that the provincial administration was preparing for getting the Sindh Dowry Bill, 2017 passed.

Giving details, she said equipment and furniture to all district administrations had been provided for strengthening and supporting all women development projects during 2007-8.

Besides, computers, photostat and fax machines had been provided to all line departments concerned for establishment of gender mainstreaming unit.

Besides, focal persons were nominated in all the line departments; rules of business had been amended and notified as per the gender perspective, she said.

Ms Javed said that a women caucus was established in the Sindh Assembly in 2005-6.

She said some 20pc representatives of women in all parliamentary committees had been ensured, which was being followed in letter and spirit.

She said that the department provided gender trainings to all the line departments in phases; conducted gender training for parliamentarians; facilitated public-sector universities in Sindh for procurement of equipment, furniture and books for libraries in 2007-8; organised seminars, workshops and training programmes at provincial, divisional and district levels on gender issues in phases; and arranged broadcasting programmes related to gender issues in progressive phasing.

Replying to another question by Muttahida Qaumi Movement's Rana Ansar, Ms Javed said more than Rs97 million had been allocated for women crisis centres in the previous fiscal year.

More than Rs24m had been allocated for each such centre in Karachi, Hyderabad, Benazirabad and Jacobabad, she said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1372207>

#### MAN, THREE WOMEN KILLED OVER KARO-KARI

Dawn, November 23, 2017

**SUKKUR:** A man and two women were killed while a 12-year-old boy was injured over an old dispute of karo-kari in Wali Mohammad Dahani village in Punhoon Bhatti taluka Garhi Khairo of Jacobabad district on Wednesday.

According to reports, armed men on a motorcycle opened indiscriminate fire on Gul Hassan aka Karihar Jakhrani, his wife Waadi and a woman from the neighbourhood, Girah Naz, wife of Khan Mohammad Dahani. As a result of the firing, all three of them were killed and Girah Naz's son Barkat Ali Dahani was injured. The assailants fled from the scene after aerial firing.

After the incident, police reached the spot and shifted the bodies and the boy to the Garhi Khairo hospital but he was later shifted to Larkana due to his critical condition.

Post-mortem examination of Gul Hassan was performed at Garhi Khairo hospital but bodies of both women were shifted to Jacobabad Civil Hospital for medico-legal formalities after which they were handed over to relatives.

Jacobabad SSP Sarfaraz Nawaz Shaikh told the media that after being threatened with karo-kari, Gul Hassan was shifted from Kandhkot to village Wali Mohammad Dahani where he got shelter with Khan Mohammad Dahani.

He said that different police teams were formed for assailants' arrest.

No case was registered in the Punhoon Bhatti police station over the incident till filing of this report.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1372206>

#### SINDH ASSEMBLY DEMANDS REGISTRATION OF 13M WOMEN VOTERS IN COUNTRY

Habib Khan Ghori

Dawn, November 24, 2017

**KARACHI:** The Sindh Assembly on Thursday demanded registration of 13 million female voters across the country, including 2.3 million from Sindh, to enable them to exercise their right to vote in the coming general election.



This demand was made by a resolution tabled by Ghazala Sial of the Pakistan Peoples Party jointly signed by Naheed Begum, Naila Munir of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement and others. After a brief deliberation, when put to vote, the resolution was carried with consensus.

The house, called to order at 11.40am, carried three bills with consensus. Two of them were amendment bills tabled by Senior Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Nisar Khuhro through supplementary agenda for effecting minor amendments while The Sindh Institute of Animal Health at Karachi Bill, 2017 was also introduced.

After completion of the business, Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani read out the order of Sindh Governor Muhammad Zubair at 2.50pm to prorogue the session.

He announced that on Dec 13 Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) would be commemorated for the first time in the Sindh Assembly building in which Pir of Qambar Sharif Hussain Shah would specially participate.

Before the chair called it a day on the 15th running day of the fourth session of the parliamentary year, the other business considered by the house included Question Hour on the prisons department and four out of six calling-attention notices.

The privilege motion of Rana Ansar of the MQM was admitted and referred to the Standing Committee on the Rules of Procedure and Privileges. In the motion the legislator had drawn the attention of the house towards the finance department secretary for releasing funds allocated in her name under the Community Development Programme without her knowledge. Such an attitude of a public servant towards a public representative had not only breached her privilege but of the whole house, she said, and added that as such the motion be referred to the committee concerned.

The adjournment motion of Khurram Sher Zaman of the PTI pertained to a shortage of medicines at the Civil Hospital, Karachi. He said the shortage was causing hardship for poor patients and they were compelled to purchase medicines from the market.

Senior Minister Khuhro opposed the motion saying that there was no shortage of medicines in the hospital. "If he has any proof of it, he should present it in the house as an adjournment motion cannot be based on newspaper clippings," he said. The PTI lawmaker said he would present the proof of it if allowed to speak. The chair said the proofs should be submitted at the time of filing the motion as such it was not maintainable, and ruled it out of order.

Bill No. 29 of 2017 — The Sindh Livestock Registration and Trade Authority Bill — which was introduced on Wednesday, was taken up for consideration and unanimously passed after the third reading.

The bill is aimed at introducing the system to provide for registration, tagging and identification, improving existing livestock sector practices in line with international standards for trade and their export. Butchers would be registered and provided training and laws to import livestock would be made.

The minister also introduced the Sindh Institute of Animal Health at Karachi Bill 2017 while the bill to amend The Jacobabad Institute of Medical Sciences Act, 2013 and Shahdampur Institute of Medical Sciences, which were tabled with supplementary agenda, were carried with consensus.

The resolution for registration of female voters was tabled by Ghazala Sial of the PPP with joint signatures of Heer Soho, Naela Munir, Naheed Begum and Rana Ansar of the MQM. The resolution recommended that 13 million female voters of Pakistan, not included in the voters list, be issued CNICs.

The resolution was endorsed by Senior Minister Khuhro and MQM parliamentary leader Syed Sardar Ahmad and was carried with consensus.

On a point of order, the Sindh government demanded that the federal government fix government rates of wheat and allow wheat export. This demand was made by Mr Khuhro while responding to a point of order.

He said if wheat rates were not fixed soon, wheat procurement would not be possible in the season as the wheat procurement stock of the last crop was lying outside godowns for want of capacity. He said sugar cane growers were already facing hardships for non-fixing of sugar cane prices and if wheat rates were not fixed soon, the farmers would be facing hardships further.

Earlier, Dr Seema Zia of the PTI by her calling-attention notice said that 1,300 constables of Benazirabad district had been posted on security duties elsewhere. Senior Minister Nisar Khuhro said that 1,259 constables of Benazirabad district were deployed on security of Chinese, schools, offices, religious places, banks and prisons.

Regarding another notice of Dr Seema Zia saying why loose electric cables lay hanging from poles in the Clifton area, Local Government Minister Jam Khan Shoro said the cables were being laid underground.

In response to the notice of Dilawar Qureshi of the MQM regarding the inordinate delay in carrying out development work in Gulshan-i-Sarmast Scheme in Hyderabad, the local government minister said development work in the society would be completed soon.

#### School vacation schedules

Replying to the calling-attention notice of Heer Soho of the MQM about summer and winter vacation schedules, Education Minister Jam Mehtab Hussain Dahar said a decision would soon be taken in that regard with consultation of representatives of the private educational institutions. He said the vacation issue was decided by the steering committee.

According to a weather report prepared on the basis of the last many years, a severe cold wave grips Sindh from Jan 10 to 20. Therefore, the government is mulling to change the vacation schedule.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1372511/sindh-assembly-demands-registration-of-13m-women-voters-in-country>

#### INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TODAY

Business Recorder, 25 November 2017

Muhammad Saleem

LAHORE: Like other parts of the globe, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is being marked here on Saturday (today) with a resolve to continue efforts for putting an end to violence against women.

The day is marked every year on November 25, to show support and solidarity with women suffering various kinds of violence. To mark the day, different events including walks, seminars have been planned to raise awareness against violence against women.

The White Ribbon Campaign is launching “16 Days of Activism” campaign against violence against women on Saturday.

A spokesperson of the NGO told Business Recorder that one in every five women experienced gender-based violence in Pakistan, which contributes to Pakistan’s low ranking in the global gender gap index.

She called for behavioural changes among men, and said that men must take greater responsibility to become part of the solution.

She said, “There are 15 or 16 laws addressing violence against women and children, we people still need to be made aware of these laws. Victims and law enforcement agencies need to be made aware that laws have been promulgated for their protection.”

According to Asian Development Bank report, a staggering 85 percent of women in Pakistan have experienced some form of violence at some point in their lives.

Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in his message said the role of the women in the process of national development is praiseworthy and the importance of their role in the development of Pakistan cannot be denied.

“Dream of prosperity can be materialized by first empowering the women,” he said, adding: “Any injustice meted out with the women is equivalent to cruelty.”

He said that provision of resources for empowering the women is a beneficial investment for the constitution of an enlightened society. Giving details about different steps taken by the Punjab government for the welfare of the womenfolk, he said that effective legislation has been made to protect their rights as well as to eliminate the menace of torture in the society.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/11/25/9-page/684136-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 13Th TO NOVEMBER 19Th 2017

A GAME CHANGER FOR WOMEN?

Hadia Majid | Karin Astrid Siegmann

November 13, 2017

Karin Astrid Siegmann is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague. Hadia Majid is an assistant professor of economics at Lums.

VARIOUSLY termed a ‘game changer’ or ‘game over’ for Pakistan’s economic development, few observers address the question of whether the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will contribute to women’s empowerment or exacerbate their marginalisation in Pakistan. This is a vital question in a country that is second-lowest in global rankings of gender equality.

The Planning Commission assumes CPEC will boost growth and create jobs for women and men alike, yet it seems unable to provide figures that support this optimism. Academic research — some of it produced at institutions funded to promote a positive narrative on CPEC — expects projects to create jobs in Pakistan as ‘China is losing its comparative advantage of low-cost labour’. These studies are silent on who stands a chance to be recruited for such low-wage jobs.

Our own research shows that women and men in Pakistan have experienced dividends of economic growth in different ways, eg, during the boom in the services sector after the turn of the millennium, men were favoured over women for employment in banking and telecommunications. In industry, in contrast, lower-paid female workers were hired in the textiles and garment sector.

This enabled exporters to prepare for the more competitive global environment after the textile and clothing trade was liberalised in 2004. Thus, employment creation has not always been empowering: casual, poorly paid or even unpaid employment is likely to reinforce women’s marginalised position.

For a job to contribute to women's empowerment, regular, formal and well-remunerated employment is of special import. The question is: will CPEC provide such empowering jobs to women workers?

It is mainly the special economic zones planned under CPEC which hold the promise of generating employment that also benefits women workers. The largest chunk of envisaged investments goes into the capital-intensive energy sector. Directly, this is unlikely to generate significant employment opportunities.

The labourers building the roads and other infrastructure projects under CPEC are likely to be male and their employment temporary. The planned SEZs, however, involve labour-intensive assembly line work, such as in textiles, clothing and toys manufacturing that typically recruit a significant number of female workers. Currently, nine SEZs are planned across the country, with experts expecting this number to quadruple.

However, SEZ jobs' track record in empowering employment is not impressive. About 60 per cent of all global employment in SEZs is hosted by China. There, especially in light manufacturing, women form the majority of the workforce.

For a long time, wages in Chinese SEZs were kept low to attract foreign investors. Additionally, working 12 to 14 hours per day was common, without labour law protection for the bulk of the (migrant) industrial workforce, or representation by independent trade unions. But with the recent significant wage increases in its eastern industrial hubs, China is looking west — to Pakistan.

Pakistan's own experience with SEZs does not offer much reason for optimism. While labour laws apply to SEZs, this is not the case for export-processing zones where trade unions and strikes are prohibited. Karachi's EPZ is the oldest one, offering employment to thousands of women. Most are young, unmarried, and on temporary appointment without any written contracts. Many are, hence, fearful of dismissal in case of pregnancy.

Productivity is warranted by providing sick leave only at the cost of penalties from workers' salary and strictly regulating visits to the restroom. In fact, most female employment in Pakistan's export-oriented industries is casual, or informal and home-based where wages are even lower than in formal manufacturing. With an average of about Rs5,500 in 2015, women manufacturing workers' monthly earnings can only be called sub-poverty wages. Such jobs may well be the 'comparative advantage of low-cost labour supply' that attracts Chinese investment.

Hence, if CPEC's effects mirror the experience of Pakistan's export-led development of previous decades, then the investment is unlikely to contribute to women's empowerment. On the contrary, it will translate into the import of poorly paid and disempowering jobs.

Yet, for women to avail themselves of even such, or more attractive, job opportunities, the structural barriers that lower their labour participation must be removed. Here, placement of SEZs across the country, not just around major urban hubs, and the passage of the corridor through rural areas is a welcome feature of the proposed plans. While greater connectivity to markets may provide a catalyst for the requisite change in Pakistan's patriarchal social set-up, creation of employment opportunities in relatively more remote areas will provide the economic impetus to attract women workers.

However, in order to ensure that CPEC can actually be a 'game changer' for gender equality in Pakistan, it has to be informed by gender analyses. A gender unit for the CPEC Secretariat could provide the required assessments of CPEC projects from a gender perspective. Similarly, while enforcement of existing labour laws is important, UN Women had earlier suggested that women's employment can be promoted in CPEC projects through gender quotas and policies that protect against workplace harassment.

The CPEC optimism must be tempered with a dose of realism. True, we are looking at a massive inflow of capital that has the potential to transform the economic and social landscape of our country. Yet, we must delve deeper into the characteristics of the proposed plans and that of the jobs being promised. Only then can CPEC's potentially significant economic dividends translate into positive and gender-sensitive social change.

Karin Astrid Siegmann is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague. Hadia Majid is an assistant professor of economics at Lums.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370197>

MYANMAR SOLDIERS GANG-RAPED ROHINGYA WOMEN: UN  
Dawn, November 13th, 2017

DHAKA: Myanmar soldiers "systematically targeted" Rohingya women for gang-rape during violence against the minority Muslim community which triggered an exodus to Bangladesh, a UN special envoy said on Sunday.

Pramila Patten, a special representative of the UN secretary-general on sexual violence in conflict, made the comments after visiting Bangladesh's district of Cox's Bazaar where some 610,000 Rohingya have taken refuge in the last ten weeks.

Many of these atrocities "could be crimes against humanity", she said.

"I heard horrific stories of rape and gang-rape, with many of the women and girls who died as a result of the rape," Patten told reporters in Dhaka.

"My observations point to a pattern of widespread atrocities, including sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls who have been systematically targeted on account of their ethnicity and religion."

The sexual violence in Myanmar's northern state of Rakhine was "commanded, orchestrated and perpetrated by the armed forces of Myanmar", she said.

"The forms of sexual violence we consistently heard about from survivors include gang-rape by multiple soldiers, forced public nudity and humiliation and sexual slavery in military captivity."

"One survivor described being held in captivity by the Myanmar armed forces for 45 days, during which time she was repeatedly raped. Others still bore visible scars, bruises and bite marks attesting to their ordeal," Patten added.

Deadly raids by Rohingya militants on Myanmar police posts on August 25 sparked ferocious reprisals against the community by the military in the mainly Buddhist nation.

The special representative said others involved in the sexual violence included Myanmar border police and militias composed of Buddhists and other ethnic groups in Rakhine.

Refugees are still streaming across the border from Rakhine into Bangladesh, where hundreds of thousands have settled in squalid camps.

The UN now estimates the majority of the Rohingya once living in Rakhine — previously estimated at around one million — have fled a campaign of violence it has likened to ethnic cleansing.

Patten said the sexual violence was a key reason behind the exodus and occurred in the context of "collective persecution" of the Rohingya.

“The widespread threat and use of sexual violence was clearly a driver and push factor for forced displacement on a massive scale and a calculated tool of terror aimed at the extermination and the removal of the Rohingya as a group,” she said.

For decades the Rohingya have faced persecution in Myanmar, where they are denied citizenship and denigrated as illegal “Bengali” immigrants.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370116>

## ABORTION IN ITALY, A RIGHT WRONGED

Ilaria Maria Sala

International New York Times, NOV. 13, 2017

Late last month, Cosimo Borraccino, a left-wing member of the regional council for Apulia, in southern Italy, proposed passing a local law to require the enforcement of national legislation granting women access to abortion. His opponents on the council, mostly from center-right parties, said the bill was unnecessary and that Mr. Borraccino was “slamming into a wall of self-evidence.”

Yet when it comes to reproductive rights in Italy, respect of the law is anything but self-evident. In fact, 9 out of 10 gynecologists in Apulia refuse to perform abortions, even though the right to obtain one has been legal since 1978. Nationwide statistics are only slightly less staggering: Seven out of 10 gynecologists in Italy won’t terminate a pregnancy.

They can do that because the very law that legalized abortion nearly 40 years ago also exempts medical personnel from providing the procedure if “they have a conscientious objection, declared in advance.” More and more conscientious objectors — many of them Catholic — have joined gynecological wards, women’s clinics and pharmacies since, and as a result getting an abortion in Italy today can be as hard as in countries where abortions are illegal.

Some 20,000 unsafe and illegal abortions are said to be performed in Italy every year, compared with about 100,000 legal ones. The number of illegal procedures is increasing, advocates for women’s rights say, even as the number of legal ones is decreasing. According to 2015 figures from the health ministry, the most recent available, less than 60 percent of public hospitals in Italy even provided abortions. Earlier this year, one woman in Padua, a city in the northeast, had to go to 23 hospitals before she found one that would terminate her pregnancy.

For this, Italy has been repeatedly chastised by the Council of Europe and the United Nations Human Rights Committee. The government has responded demurely, at times claiming that the number of medical personnel who are not conscientious objectors has remained steady for 30 years.

Yet, according to official figures, the share of conscientious objectors among gynecologists rose from 59 percent in 2005 to 70 percent in 2013. (The government has stopped releasing the data in recent years.) And Noemi di Iorio, an activist with the women’s collective La Mala Educación, told me during a women’s rights rally in Bologna on Sept. 28 — International Safe Abortion Day — that “the presence of religious conscientious objectors in women’s health clinics has reached a peak.”

A pitched battle certainly now seems to be underway — in hospitals and on the streets, in local assemblies and courts throughout the country.

Early this year, a major public hospital in Rome listed two job openings for gynecologists, specifying that it was seeking candidates who were not conscientious objectors. The Italian Bishops' Conference denounced the ad as discriminatory, but a local court said it was legal. In August, an administrative court in Rome ruled that medical personnel could not invoke conscientious objection to refuse prescribing birth-control pills or withhold certificates of pregnancy, which women seeking an abortion need. Local media called the decision a "revolution."

Almost as soon as Law 194 was passed in 1978, the Church and its political proxy then, the Christian Democratic Party, tried to have it repealed. A referendum was held in 1981, but voters rejected the idea — roundly, by a margin of 2 to 1. Having failed to change the law, the Church then set out to exploit its internal contradictions — which it had helped create.

Even as Law 194 guarantees the right to an abortion, it "recognizes the social value of motherhood." According to Angela Balzano, a researcher in philosophy and bioethics at the University of Bologna, that built-in tension, along with "the loophole provided by the clause on conscientious objection," was an attempt to mediate between "two irreconcilable positions" in the late 1970s: the abortion-rights agenda of the Radical Party, a leading left-wing party, and the anti-abortion Catholics. She called this "a clear case of judicial antinomy."

Four decades later, it's apparent who has benefited from that weakness, and this result is no accident. Pope Francis himself, speaking at a gathering of Italian Catholic physicians in 2014, encouraged doctors to make "brave choices that go against the current," referring pointedly to conscientious objection and abortion.

Although the Christian Democrats are no longer, Catholicism remains a major political force. The religious movement Comunione e Liberazione (Communion and Liberation), whose stated mission is to promote the "education to the Christian faith" and comes under the pope's direct authority, has thousands of supporters — some say many thousands — including in hospitals, universities and women's clinics, and among politicians in center-right parties, like those who opposed Mr. Borraccino's law in Apulia.

In addition to legalizing abortion, Law 194 called for establishing specialized women's clinics. But after years of cuts to the state health care system, many clinics today are Catholic, and those refuse to provide even information or basic services to women seeking an abortion. What's more, they are partly funded with taxpayer money: 0.8 percent of personal taxes are directly allocated to the Church, unless taxpayers specifically ask to opt out. So much for the separation of Church and state.

The law granting women access to abortion has been gutted, Assunta Sarlo, a journalist and activist with the feminist group Usciamo dal Silenzio (Let's End the Silence), told me, partly "because the religious forces have been able to count on political allies in what remains a strongly Catholic country." But it's also, she said, "because the reputation of abortion is such that choosing to be a gynecologist who carries out this type of procedure is akin to career suicide."

Opinion polls suggest that the vast majority of Italians still support access to abortion. But some three-quarters of the population also call themselves Catholic, and so even for some Italians who support women's right to terminate a pregnancy, abortion still carries a stigma. And that's just the kind of tension that the Church has been expert at exploiting — at a great cost to women, as well as the rule of law, in Italy.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/13/opinion/abortion-italy-conscientious-objectors.html>

MODEL DISTRICTS FREE FROM GENDER VIOLENCE PROPOSED IN SINDH  
Hasan Mansoor

Dawn, November 17, 2017

KARACHI: A top official entrusted with the task of bringing about improvements in the status of women in Sindh said on Thursday that heinous crimes against women were increasing by the day, necessitating concerted efforts aimed at ending gender-based violence (GBV).

“It is high time to formulate joint plans to eradicate GBV against women in Sindh,” said Nuzhat Shireen, chairperson of the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women (SCSW), during a seminar organised by the Strengthening Participatory Organisation (SPO).

The seminar discussed in considerable detail the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women Bill, 2015, under which the SCSW was set up by the provincial government.

Briefing those present on the role and mandate of the commission, Ms Shireen said women were facing a host of problems. That was why it was not possible for the SCSW to bring about improvements in the area alone.

In response to a question, she said a detailed strategic plan would be formulated soon for smooth functioning of the commission. “It is highly encouraging to see all civil society organisations welcoming the commission and offering it support, which we need immensely,” she said.

She added that the SCSW would initially work to develop violence-free model districts in Sindh. “We are working with police, local administrations and everyone else holding stakes in some districts to launch a concerted effort [in this regard].”

As per the commission’s mandate, said Ms Shireen, the commission would work closely with the ministries for women development, social welfare, human rights and the police department to strengthen the mechanism to combat GBV and ensure access to justice in Sindh.

The Sindh Commission on the Status of Women Bill, 2015 was passed by the provincial legislature on April 6, 2015 and was given assent by the governor on May 12 the same year.

Under the act, the Sindh government is supposed to constitute a commission to be known as the SCSW. The act aims to promote social, economic, political and legal rights of women as provided in the Constitution, international declarations, conventions, treaties and agreements relating to women, including Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.

The seminar was informed that the SCSW was constituted in September this year. “This commission has been established 30 months after the passage of the law owing to rigorous efforts of the SPO and with the support of the Provincial Steering Forum (PSF), a forum comprising government officials, human and women’s rights activists and media representatives,” said an organiser.

Raheema Panhwar of the SPO said it was a proud moment for all stakeholders that the SCSW had finally been set up.

She said her organisation would continue to work with the commission to strengthen the GBV response service and in implementing pro-women laws in Sindh.

Iqbal Detho, Maria Mehwish, Sarah Zaman, Farhat Parveen, Iqbal Tahir, Rashid Ahmed and Dr Qarar Abbasi also spoke on the occasion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1370964/model-districts-free-from-gender-violence-proposed-in-sindh>

‘PAKISTAN’S FAILURE IN MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTHCARE DUE TO GIVING PREFERENCE TO MALE CHILD’



Dawn, November 19, 2017

KARACHI: Lamenting that the state of maternal and child health in the country remained dismal even after six decades, experts at a seminar have said that success required a holistic approach and concerted efforts aimed at improving access to education and health, ending gender disparity, popularising good quality midwifery and ensuring that people get clean drinking water.

The seminar — The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Pakistan's Maternal, Child Health and Nutrition Challenges: Issues and Progress — was held at the Aga Khan University (AKU) on Saturday.

The programme was jointly organised by the national ministry of health services, regulations and coordination, the World Health Organisation and AKU.

Pakistan has incorporated 169 targets under the SDGs into long-term planning frameworks such as Vision 2025 and the National Health Vision 2016-2025.

Sharing their insights into factors holding back the country's progress on these goals, experts pointed out that poor health indicators were intrinsically linked to low education levels and poor environmental conditions people were living in and the state had to work in a holistic manner if real progress was to be made.

Pakistan's failure in maternal and child health was also rooted in the culture of giving preference to male child, they said.

“Pakistani girls continue to be less likely to receive a full course of vaccinations than boys of the same age. Even though the latest data shows a narrowing of the gender gap in immunisation, the persistence of this inequality for three decades means that young girls and women are more vulnerable to preventable illnesses,” said Dr Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, founding director of the Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health at AKU.

Worryingly, he observed, there had been an overall decline in demand for treatment of diarrhoea and pneumonia for both sexes over the past three decades with the extent of the drop being much larger for females.

“This means female children are also less likely to receive treatment for these diseases than in the past,” he said, adding that a lack of attention to female health and education both reflected and perpetuated a feudal, patriarchal mindset in society.

In presentations on child malnutrition and stunting, it was stated that though the proportion of children who were underweight had declined slowly in the country, one in three young children continue to have low weight for their age.

The situation, they said, had worsened between 2001 and 2011 with the proportion of children suffering from this chronic form of malnutrition rising from 37 per cent to 44pc.

“The global prevalence of stunting is 25pc whereas in Pakistan it is estimated to be 44pc. Eighty per cent of world's 165 million stunted children live in just 14 countries, including Pakistan, where 9.6 million children are affected by it. Stunting has long-lasting consequences on cognitive ability, school performance and future earnings,” said Dr Syed Asad Ali, research director and associate professor at the AKU's department of paediatrics and child health.

Citing some data, he said the prevalence of stunting was highest in the country's tribal areas followed by Balochistan, Gilgit, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Azad Kashmir. The urban-rural divide mattered little in terms of childhood stunting and wasting, he said.

On why stunting rates had not changed in Pakistan, he said often babies were significantly growth compromised right at birth. In addition, they did not receive adequate quality and quantity of nutrition and suffered from environmental enteropathy as a result of poor diet, frequent infections that led to gut failure.

“Improving breastfeeding practices and mothers’ nutritional status, early detection and treatment of wasting in young children and improving women’s nutritional status is the key to move forward,” he said.

Speakers noted that achieving progress in the health and nutrition indicators laid down in the SDGs required a multisectoral approach with a focus on the underlying determinants of health such as poverty, education, food security, water and sanitation, and population growth.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1371338/pakistans-failure-in-maternal-child-healthcare-due-to-giving-preference-to-male-child>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 6 Th TO NOVEMBER 12 Th 2017

INVISIBLE WORKERS

Dawn, November 9th, 2017

Zeenat Hisam

BE it science and technology, art and literature, philosophy and history, politics and international affairs, it is the translators who are opening the doors and windows to the world for us. Yet, in Pakistan, they remain the most invisible of knowledge workers.

Working in practically every field, these workers translate texts — containing ideas, concepts, information — making an important contribution towards society’s development, using their specialised skills. Who are these people and what are their concerns?

There is very little that we know about how this category of knowledge workers operates in a milieu which displays little understanding of the importance of translation in today’s world and that confers hardly any recognition on the profession. Translators in Pakistan usually work in isolation. Apart for those that translate literary works, translators in most disciplines have no opportunity to intermingle with one another. An important reason for this state of affairs is the absence of any collective platform or association of translators.

In most countries associations of translators are active, strengthening the profession and acting as an interface between knowledge workers and various organs of society that need their services. The International Federation of Translators has 100 associations from 55 countries affiliated with it, and representing over 80,000 translators the world over. In Asia, translators’ associations from China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Macau are affiliated with the IFT..

The number of translators’ associations worldwide is much greater. In the European Union alone, there are over 100 associations of translators and interpreters as indicated by a 2012 report. Closer to home, Iran has a thriving culture that promotes the translation profession. The state in Iran established the College of Translation in 1973, which was later merged with the Literature and Humanities University. Currently, 38 universities offer MA in translation studies. There are three official translators’ associations and 56 unofficial translators’ agencies in Iran.

Globalisation and international trade, technology transfer, cultural exchange, and labour and other forms of migration have increased the need and importance of translation in all countries. In May 2017, the UN adopted a resolution recognising the role of professional translation in “connecting nations, and fostering peace, understanding and development”. The UN also declared Sept 30 as the official International Translation Day, though the day has been celebrated for the last many years.

The issues faced by translators in Pakistan range from a lack of recognition of their work and low remuneration to poor standards of translation and the absence of an established code of ethics. Many lament current practices in the electronic and print media with regard to languages, linguistics and terminologies, lack of certification and accreditation and the general deficit in the teaching of languages.

In the last three decades, a substantial amount of translation in various disciplines has been done. But there is still lack of adequate dissemination and the absence of documentation and indexing. To address these problems, the government, for starters, should set up a translation house to promote and streamline the profession. Professional education in translation needs to be promoted. Meanwhile, academic councils should introduce translation studies degree programmes at Karachi University, Jamshoro University and the Federal Urdu University, to name a few. Currently, the subject is being taught at four universities — University of Gujrat, National University of Modern Languages, International Islamic University and Allama Iqbal Open University.

A number of freelance translators in Pakistan use online translator-client portals to link up with clients in search of specific translation jobs globally. Quite a few translators combine human translation with machine translation using online tools. An internet search on the current demand for translators in Pakistan shows an increasing demand for specific translation jobs.

Associations of knowledge workers play a critical role in garnering public and official recognition for professionals. A collective platform can take up this role and tackle some tough tasks, including formulation of a code of ethics for translators, advocacy for degree programmes at universities, support for training and education of translators, provision for professional testing and certification of translators and assistance to members in finding employment.

In a multilingual society like ours, made complicated with the dominance of the English language, the role of translators is even more critical as they facilitate our understanding of diverse cultures and help with social integration.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369351/invisible-workers>

## GROWING GENDER INEQUALITY

Business Recorder, 9 November, 2017

The World Economic Forum’s latest “Global Gender Gap Report” suggests achieving gender parity is a more distance dream than its earlier guesstimate. While women worldwide are closing the gap in such critical areas as health and education, notes the report, a significant general inequality not only persists in the workforce and politics, it is shifting into reverse.

Previously, WEF had reckoned it would take 170 years to close the gap, the new report now says it will be another 217 years before that goal is achieved. For Pakistan, the prognosis is particularly dark as it ranks 143 out of 144 countries in the gender inequality index.

Aimed at tracking gaps on critical indicators so that countries may set priorities within their own economic political and cultural contexts, the index points out that the potential role models are the countries that — within their region or income group — are leaders in distributing resources more equitably between women and men, regardless of the overall level of available resources.

In countries like Pakistan, a vast talent pool that can play a crucial role in social progress and economic development remains vastly underutilized. Although there has been a significant progress on education, it is not leading to gains for women in equivalent earning opportunities, economic independence and leadership. As a matter of fact, all these factors are interlinked; economic independence is the key to gender equality.

The way forward is to make a determined effort to induct more and more women in the workforce in leadership positions. The WEF data shows when women are better represented in leadership roles more and more women are hired across the board. Some in such positions consciously hire women within their organisation, others are attracted to companies they see as offering greater opportunities for advancement or mentorship. This, the report found, holds true even when considering disparities in the size of female talent pools across industries.

As regards politics, in this country the political parties need to review the present mode of representation of women on reserved seats. Most of them get 'selected' for these seats on the basis of being related to influential male politicians or personal connection rather than merit. Genuine activists largely remain ignored.

As a result, the ones who make it to the assemblies are not accorded due respect by fellow legislators, and the quality of representation is poor, too. It is imperative, therefore, the political parties allocate a sizeable number of party tickets to their female members so they fight and win elections like their male colleagues.

Women who participate in the electoral process in this way can make a lot of difference in bridging the gender inequality gap. It is hoped those in policymaking positions will take a serious notice of the WEF report and set the national priorities right, putting the country on the path of inclusive economic growth and competitiveness.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/11/09/22-page/681174-news.html>

‘WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS CONTRIBUTING TO ECONOMIC GROWTH’

Dawn, November 10th, 2017

KARACHI: The Pakistan Women Entrepreneurs Network for Trade (WE-NET) was launched on Thursday with the support of the World Bank (WB), said a press release.

The network aims to create a representative platform for women entrepreneurs in trade of goods and services.

Founder and President WE-NET, Yasmin Hyder highlighted how technology was revolutionising business operations and the need for women entrepreneurs to benefit from digital processes and ecommerce capabilities for global trade.

Country Director, WBG Pakistan, Illangovan Patchamuthu underlined the importance of women's participation in the economic development of Pakistan.

He reiterated Pakistan's significant progress in regaining macroeconomic stability over the last 3 years.

Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Margaret Adamson, said the Australian government supports Pakistan's efforts to increase regional trade and investment through the Pakistan Trade and Investment Policy Programme.

Special guest Dr Gulden Tarktan, founding chair of W20, emphasised the necessity of including women in the formal economy by addressing women's economic empowerment through education, employment and entrepreneurship.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369511>

Waseem Ashraf Butt

GUJRAT: A man allegedly set a 19-year-old girl on fire for refusing his marriage proposal in Mandi Bahauddin district on Friday, sources said.

The girl was taken to the burns ward of the Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Teaching Hospital, Gujrat, where doctors said she was out of danger, according to the sources.

Police said they had arrested the suspect.

Riaz Ahmed, the girl's father, told officers at the Bhagat police station in Phalia tehsil that his daughter used to learn sewing at the house of a woman in Kalu Sahi village where Tasawwar Hussain, the woman's brother, proposed to her. But the teenage girl declined the proposal.

He said that when his daughter did not return home late into the night on Thursday, he and other members of his family reached Hussain's house where they found him pouring petrol on her. The man had set the girl on fire, before her family members could do anything to save her.

Ahmed said he put a shawl on his daughter in an effort to extinguish the fire, which did go out soon afterwards but not before a considerable portion of her body had been burnt.

Sub-Inspector Muhammad Aslam of the Bhagat police station told Dawn by phone that the victim had stated that she was being forced by the suspect to marry him.

However, he said the suspect had levelled similar allegations against the girl and claimed that she had burnt herself only to put pressure on him to marry her. Aslam said that with the suspect already in custody and a case registered under Sections 336B, 324 and 337L of the Pakistan Penal Code, police were set to reach the bottom of the matter.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369744>

## BRAZILIAN WOMEN CAN LEARN TO YELL

International New York Times, 11 November 2017

SÃO PAULO, Brazil — When I was 7, I joined the Brazilian Girl Guides. One of the basic laws of the guides was that a girl should be “courteous and delicate.” (These days they only emphasize the “courteous” part.) I remember being taught to abide by the following requirements to earn one of the guides' coveted badges: A girl needs to know how to treat authorities, how to show deference to people, how to listen and speak at the right time and — my favorite — how to address people without yelling.

In September, I took my first classes in women's self-defense. They definitely left some marks on me (besides the bruises). I could finally understand, in my body, the full extent of the violence and humiliation that we women in Brazil are meant to swallow during our lives, always with meekness and grace. Lowered head, slumped shoulders, stiff neck, dropped gaze: Our whole body is often shrunken and pointed inward, as if we are trying to be as small a target as possible.

For a long time, showing obedience and good manners were considered the most important things for a girl to learn. Even now, especially in developing countries like mine, this has barely changed: The worst thing a woman can do is speak up for herself and spread ideas that are not “appropriate,” like saying that misogyny exists in her professional

field or denouncing a sexual crime committed by a powerful man. It's always better to stay quiet and just let the abuser have his way. If the woman could also manage to say "thank you" after that, it would be even better. (For the record: Women should also refrain from using irony.)

But I don't need to go very far to prove that we have good reasons to yell. Just look at a few random acts of gender-based violence in Brazil in the past few months: A male detainee strangled his girlfriend to death inside a prison cell because she restated her desire to end their relationship during the visit. A young man pushed his ex-girlfriend in front of a bus because she told him she was pregnant and he had already planned an exchange trip to Canada. A woman who told the police that her ex-partner was spying on her with a secret camera was stabbed to death by him — in a police vehicle on their way to a police station.

These are extreme manifestations of the unequal power relations between men and women — real-life, concrete expressions of a social dynamic that forces women to stay in a subordinate position, always speaking at a low volume and cowering. The full spectrum of gender-based violence also encompasses but is not limited to sexual harassment, domestic battering, sexual exploitation, violation of reproductive rights, "honor" killings and rape. Not to mention all kinds of threats and abuses of power that hurt women physically, sexually, economically and psychologically.

And what is the only unanimously acceptable response to these acts of violence? Showing deference to the aggressors and keeping one's mouth shut, of course. It really doesn't matter that we might carry this burden for the rest of our lives, etched in our consciousness and stored in our tense necks and shoulders. How a woman could possibly heal from a traumatic experience is not the main concern here. Tactfulness, discretion and the responsibility of keeping men safe from unjust accusations are more important.

I spent a few years in a psychologically abusive relationship that left me all hunched over and defensive. After it ended, every time I decided to talk or write about what I'd been through — even in the vaguest terms — I experienced a concerted backlash, an attempt to silence me that pushed me more and more toward the domain of the hysterical, exaggerated, resented woman. In many cases, nothing is easier than condemning a woman to a social and professional limbo. The more powerful the abusers are, the less people believe the victims and the more difficult it is to get material proof.

Every single woman in my self-defense course had some horror story. Learning how to block, evade, immobilize and disarm potential attackers was not the hardest task. The most difficult was the yelling. Our female instructor, Heloïse Fruchi, told us that when we faced our imaginary aggressor, we should look him in the eye and shout as loud as we could. Anything, really, could work: "No!" or "This is Sparta!" or "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore!" Some of us simply couldn't do it, having spent an entire life being courteous and delicate.

During our classes, we have blushed, giggled and apologized to one another a hundred times. I've found myself lowering my eyes and doing a common pleading gesture (hands out, palms up) every time I faced the prop that I was supposed to fight back against. We've found out that we walk, talk and write in perpetual dread — and that we do not particularly fear the stranger who might drag us into an alley and rape us as much as we fear our own male friends, neighbors, relatives, bosses and partners. Because it seems that — more often than one might think — they love us and respect us only to the extent that we behave in a pleasing way. The minute we step out of line and begin to entertain ideas of our own, we become vulnerable.

In other words, for women it's always a lose-lose scenario: Be quiet and spend 10 years in therapy; be delicate and suffer from a chronically stiff neck; be firm and get ostracized; be loud and get punished.

Those lessons that begin at age 7 teaching us to be courteous and deferential are partly to blame. If only we were taught instead to yell and scream, while kicking and cursing like a pirate. Maybe that couldn't prevent abuse. The ultimate responsibility, of course, is not on us; it's on the abusers. But at least we wouldn't have to lead those permanently stiffened, suffocated lives.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/09/opinion/brazilian-women-yell-manners-feminism.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 30TH TO NOVEMBER 5 Th 2017

#### WOMAN `POISONED BY HUSBAND` DIES IN HOSPITAL

Dawn, 30 October, 2017

**BAHAWALNAGAR:** A woman allegedly poisoned by her husband three days ago died at the DHQ hospital on Sunday.

Ali of Basti Saddar Din told the A Division police that his son-in-law Maqsood Ahmed had poisoned his daughter Aasia Bibi over suspicions of illicit relations. He said Aasia was being treated at the hospital for three days, but could not survive. Police registered a case against the suspect.

**PROBE:** The local government director general has ordered an inquiry into alleged corruption in the Bahawalnagar district council.

A contractor, Saeed Lodhi, submitted an application pointing out alleged financial embezzlement in the district council and violation of law in issuance of tenders.

Earlier, the deputy commissioner had been complained about the irregularities and a petition filed with the Bahawalpur bench of Lahore High Court by contractors.

Local Government Additional Director General Zahid Qayyum summoned the district officer and chief officer of the district council on Oct 31.

**PROTEST:** Families of three men injured in firing by dacoits protested on Sunday against the police for conniving with the suspects and not taking action.

The protesters said that suspects, including Mazhar, who they claimed had been carrying out robberies with impunity, opened fire on three men, including Asif and Ghaf far, in Garkana village in the Saddar police precinct.

They added that the men sustained critical injuries and that they had complained to police about the incident, but no action was taken.

`The suspects and accomplices have been threatening us with dire consequences if we pursue a case against them, they alleged.

They accused Station House Officer Javed Gujjar of conniving with the suspects.

[https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=30\\_10\\_2017\\_006\\_006](https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=30_10_2017_006_006)

#### THREE WOMEN HELD FOR 'LINKS WITH BANNED OUTFITS' IN CHAMAN

Dawn, November 1st, 2017

**QUETTA:** Law enforcement agencies have taken three women into custody for allegedly having links with banned Baloch militant organisations.

A spokesman for the Balochistan government said in a statement, issued here on Tuesday, that the three women had been arrested in Chaman. He claimed that they had illegally crossed into Pakistan from Afghanistan.

The spokesman said the women had been arrested by Frontier Corps personnel as they entered Pakistan on Monday. He said initial investigation disclosed that the women had links with banned militant organisations.

He did not disclose the identity of the three women, saying that their identity would be announced after the investigation.

Meanwhile, the Baloch Human Rights Organisation (BHRO) has alleged that security forces have arrested the wife and children of Dr Allah Nazar, chief of the banned Balochistan Liberation Front and relatives of another militant leader Aslam Baloch.

Activists of the BHRO staged a protest rally outside the Quetta Press Club on Tuesday in which women also participated. They demanded immediate release of the women.

They said the women should be produced before a court of law if there was any case registered against them. They appealed to national and international human rights organisations to take notice of the incident and play their due role for immediate release of the women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1367582/three-women-held-for-links-with-banned-outfits>

## **December 2017**

*NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 25th TO DECEMBER 31st 2017*

### ***COST OF MARGINALISING WOMEN***

The Express Tribune, December 26th, 2017.

Five hundred thousand girls could be born in Pakistan but they are not. Thanks to the boy bias. Even today regardless of affluence, traditionalism in Pakistan is so endemic from agrarian times that a woman who births only girls is far below the woman who births males, but she is better than the barren women. This society, like a lot of other traditional societies, has been left with archaic mores, even when they are not needed anymore.

Girls in the country do better in standardised tests, but the preference for males is stark and ludicrous. As if the only worthwhile role of a woman is her power to give birth to male heirs, even when her own life hangs by a thread or even when there is nothing but poverty to inherit.

If a girl-child makes it to being born, she will likely have only five years of schooling; there is only a 33 per cent chance she'll be allowed to use a mobile phone; only a 24 per cent chance she'll be allowed to work and only a marginal chance she makes it into Parliament. With these many odds maybe being part of the '500,000 missing girls' of the country is a less painful option.

No surprise then that the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, in its index, has placed Pakistan at the fourth worst in the world. Violence against women is endemic and perhaps because Pakistan has lowest financial inclusion globally. Violence is to blame.

Twenty-seven per cent women in Pakistan are subjected to domestic violence. With oppression endemic against women, both at the workplace and at home, it makes all the more sense that women leave the turf to men. Then, men fault them and punish them for, and because of, their lack of power. Vicious circle.

The problem is not just with the man who gropes a woman on the bus, or the one who makes sexual advances to his coworker, or even to the one who makes his wife birth sons or else he remarries. The problem is with the fact that the power structures have taken up the persona of the male. The state also governs in masculine. Right from the point of a woman bearing only half witness to the point where women are not given the right affirmative action programmes.

When women parliamentarians like Sherry Rehman worked hard to pass the Harassment in the Workplace Act, they found so much resistance. When it was time to vote, male parliamentarians hid in toilets. The right-wing parties called it anti-tradition and even women from other parties opposed it because their own party didn't table it.



Pakistan has come a long way in terms of women's rights. It has gone forwards in terms of the laws and provisions and safeguards, but backwards in terms of women's individual rights. In the '60s, historical pictures and literature is replete with women dressed for the summers, riding bikes, taking public transport, driving, working and just being out and about. Visible. Unguarded. Chin up.

If you want to see the line of progress notice how women's backs have arched as they walk in public now compared to how they tread upright before. The burden of womanhood and the fear of catcalling and harassment make them internalise shame.

That a woman will go out her front door and come back unharrassed in the evening is an anomaly. At some point she'll be considered fair game by men for being outside the protection of their four walls. Women are dressing far more conservatively in public, but just like the four walls of their home don't guarantee safety, neither does their cloak. All women are harassed.

We are going about this the wrong way. We are not just going to get results empowering women to break the glass ceiling. We are going to need to ask men to stop blocking them. To stop demeaning them. To stop putting them in a grid of chaste women and unchaste women. To stop them from valuing women based on their sexuality status.

In a way, with the sociopolitical context of the nation appeasing a revisionist group of right-wing fundamentalists, women are being used as a negotiating counter. Women and minorities, particularly women with a minority status are being leveraged. As women's individual freedoms are being bargained away, so are the country's values of inclusivity and progressiveness. These are non-negotiable on a global context. So it's a real shame.

If a woman's ultimate contribution to society is to birth, assuming, the forth worst woman in the world is going to make a mess out of even that job. The fact is women are more than just that. Take women's agency from patriarchy, which is foreign to both our religion and our traditions and give it back to women. That's where that agency belongs.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1592987/6-cost-marginalising-women/>

## NOT A SINGLE WOMAN CAST VOTE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY-POLLS IN DIR DISTRICTS

Dawn December 26, 2017

TIMERGARA/UPPER DIR: Social activists and losing candidates from Lower and Upper Dir on Monday condemned the election commission for failing to ensure women enfranchisement during the recently held local government by-elections on tehsil and village council seats in the two districts.

According to electoral lists, the number of women voters in Shahikhel Talash tehsil council ward was 6,286 but none of the registered women voters exercised their right to vote.

The seat was won by Jamaat-i-Islami-backed candidate Gul Hakim Khan, getting 1,283 votes. Similarly, in Samarbagh tehsil council ward, there were 7,042 registered women voters but none of them polled their vote. The seat was won by JI candidate Akhonzada Azizur Rehman who bagged 2,101 votes out of the total 17,321 registered voters.

A social worker Akbar Khan told Dawn that there had been reports of unwritten agreement among different parties in Samarbagh not to allow women to cast vote. He said it was responsibility of the ECP to ensure at least 10 per cent women participation at all levels of LG polls.

Social activists Ibrash Pasha, Umar Zada and women rights' activist Shad Begum said all mainstream political parties were reluctant to allow women to exercise their right to vote. They said in the past there had been written pacts among

political parties about barring women from voting. They vowed to press the ECP to ensure every woman was able to cast her vote.

Shad Begum said after the passage of Election Act, 2017, the ECP was bound to ensure women participation in voting. She said it was very sad that no one in two tehsil councils' wards and 23 village councils exercised their right to vote during the LG by-polls held on Thursday.

Lower Dir District Nazim Mohammad Rasool Khan said the ECP had set up separate polling stations and polling booths for women but the women voters did not turn up. He said no one had barred women from voting.

JI Lower Dir secretary information Engr Yaqubur Rehman also rejected reports about barring women from voting. Talking to Dawn, he said women themselves did not come out for voting.

However, PPP, PML-N, PTI, ANP and JUI-F candidates for tehsil council Shahikhel Talash ward blamed JI candidates for banning women from voting, and demanded of the ECP to declare the election null and void and also take notice of a JI minister's involvement in rigging the by-election.

In Upper Dir, over 6,000 registered women voters in Darora, Chukiatan and Brawal union councils did not use their right to vote.

According to ECP, 6,813 women voters were registered in the Darora union council, but not a single vote was polled. The same situation was witnessed in Chukiatan and Brawal village councils where women were also kept deprived of casting vote.

Sources said all the political parties in Darora union council had reached a verbal agreement a day before the polling day that women won't be allowed to cast vote. According to local residents and activists the district election commission office also ignored women voters by not setting up a single women polling station and booth in Darora UC.

District election commissioner Amjad Ali told Dawn on phone that they had not established separate polling stations for women in Darora UC. However, he said the people of the constituency were not interested in women casting vote.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1378923>

## HINDUS PROTEST 'ABDUCTION' OF NEWLY-WED WOMAN

Dawn, December 30, 2017

**MITHI:** A man lodged an FIR against two suspects alleging that they had kidnapped his wife with the intention of converting her to Islam.

Roji Kolhi lodged the FIR (62/2017) at the Nagarparkar police station on Friday against Mohammed Ali and Ali Nawaz, and told the police that they barged into his house in Kothara village and took away his 19-year-old wife on Thursday.

A large number of the couple's close relatives along with other members of the Hindu community held a protest demonstration outside the police station to demand recovery of the woman and arrest of the nominated suspects. They expressed the fear that she would be converted to Islam and married off forcibly. They said the couple had solemnised marriage only on Dec 4. However, some of the area residents claimed that the woman had an affair with one of the suspects and she might have gone with him with mutual consent.

Tharparkar SSP Ameer Saud Magsi told this reporter that raids were also being conducted at their suspected hideouts in Tharparkar, Umerkot and Mirpurkhas districts to recover the woman.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1379582>

## JIRGA RAPE CASE

Dawn, December 31, 2017

AS illegal instruments that perpetuate violence against women because of their heinous ‘verdicts’, jirgas (or panchayats) are gravely detrimental to women’s lives. Despite federal and provincial laws outlawing this kind of parallel adjudication system, the state has failed to clamp down on the latter, which is why jirga justice thrives.

Last week, reports revealed the disturbing extent of impunity associated with the jirga system when it emerged that a married woman was raped for more than a month by three influential panchayat members in Tandlianwala in Faisalabad. Her in-laws trusted the panchayat with taking the woman to her premarital home on the promise her parents would organise a rukhsati ceremony. Instead, these ‘arbitrators’ allegedly kidnapped and raped her. Marrying without her father’s approval was tantamount to ‘dishonouring’ her community, and so this woman was ‘punished’ by the jirga members.

Whatever the reason for this crime, the latter must be investigated so that the victim receives justice. Jirga members sanctioning barbaric violence in the garb of punishment must know in no uncertain terms that they will be tried as criminals and sentenced if found guilty. Although it has been more than a decade since the 2002 jirga decision that led to Mukhtaran Mai’s gang rape as retribution for her brother’s transgression, women’s bodies continue to be bartered as they pay the price for crimes committed by others; most suffer ‘revenge’ rape or are killed for ‘honour’.

Here, reforming judicial processes to ensure accessibility so that communities do not resort to parallel justice systems is imperative. The state must not outsource dispute management and justice to jirgas because this is akin to handing over women’s rights to regressive elements. Instead, strengthening the offices of the federal and provincial ombudsmen will preserve the sanctity of the law. Though more crimes of a sexual nature are reported because women are breaking their silence, the process to reverse the undercurrents of misogyny is agonisingly slow. Change will only come if the state becomes an enforcer of the law.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1379830/jirga-rape-case>

## NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 18th TO DECEMBER 24th 2017

### STUDY FINDS HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC BUSES

Dawn, December 20th, 2017

LAHORE: A report on ‘Women’s Safety Audit in Public Transport’ says that Lahore bus stations and buses are not women friendly.

Women and girls face staring, stalking, obscene gestures, whistling, lewd remarks and touching while commuting in public buses.

The report was launched by the Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation at a local hotel on Tuesday where Margaret Adamson, Australian high commissioner to Pakistan, was chief guest. The study was conducted by Aurat Foundation and Co-led by the Women’s Development Department of Punjab and the UN Women, in collaboration with the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, the Chief Minister’s Strategic Reform Unit and the Punjab Safe Cities Authority.

Margaret Adamson said there was need to focus on a clear way enhancing contribution to women's safety while traveling and at public places.

Jamshed Qazi, country representative of the UN Women Pakistan, said one did not see many women and girls at public places in cities as sexual harassment was a big hurdle. He said the Punjab government introduced a good initiative of 'Women on Wheels', whereas civil society activists introduced 'Girls at Dhaba'. He said the mobility of women at public places was a real challenge.

Women's Development Department Secretary Bushra Aman said the dream of the future was such where both men and women were treated equally and had equal rights and opportunities. She said work was under way to build separate waiting areas space for women at bus stations.

The Women's Audit in Public Transport in Lahore assesses the safety concerns of women and girls commuters of public transport in Lahore. Focusing on the bus services provided by the Lahore Transport Company (LTC) and Metro Bus, it includes a detailed desk review, a perception study with 903 women commuters and 100 bus drivers and conductors, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions.

The study finds that inadequate infrastructure and security arrangements, a gender neutral approach by administrators and policymakers, social attitudes towards women and girls, and lack of awareness among the general population about the impacts of sexual harassment on women's and girl's lives, are some of the major reasons why dramatic levels of harassment on public transport have gone unnoticed and perhaps increased.

The report reveals that data on women using public transport is not currently available, limiting gender sensitive policies and actions. There is limited use of travel cards by women, and about 79 per cent of women and girls traveling on the metro bus service do not process travel cards. There are significant safety concerns at bus stops as about 82 per cent of women commuters report harassment at bus stops, with higher rates at LTC bus stops compared to metro bus stations, and amongst younger women (20-29 years of age) compared to older women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1377754>

## AVOIDING THE GAZE

The Express Tribune, December 21st, 2017

Gallup finds one in five women in Pakistan have experienced inappropriate stares from men, twice in urban than in rural areas. I would have expected a different ratio, but then we know how women can be evasive about such experiences. Simply because it might just eat up their mental bandwidth; conjuring up memories of unpleasant incidents. I feel the same predicament recalling my daily walk from the gate of the government office compound to the entrance of the office itself.

I walk in a straight line with my horse blinders on, trying to avoid the gaze of the many bystanders I walk among. No, these are not security personnel. They are just men who happen to be there, insistent on staring down all members of a different gender.

The first few months, I would carefully scan myself in the mirror before I left the house. I stopped wearing make-up and bright colours. A year passed and I was still not immune to the feeling of 'being on the ramp for show'. I would wake up well rested and full of energy each day, enjoy the beautiful drive on the Constitution Avenue, listen to FM 89 and reach the gates of the secretariat in a good mood, until: I had to walk through the gates leading to my office. By the time, I would reach my desk I would be exhausted and would need 10 minutes to 'prime' my brain into finding my existence worthwhile. I had no name for this feeling until I read Sendhil Mullainathan's and Elder Shafir work, 'Scarcity'.

Mullainathan and Shafir introduce the concept of 'Mental Bandwidth' and tout it as the most important resource of all. They add it to the repertoire of resources that economists talk about allocating all the time. While capital and labour are necessary inputs, what about the 'labour input' that makes it relevant to the wellbeing of human welfare? These scholars say it's the brains energy to process information and make decisions. Simply put, it means all the effort that goes into carrying out daily routine chores and tasks that require critical thinking.

We might believe that an economist might think that, we use the brain only when we are calculating our taxes or making household budgets. However, a neuro-economist might disagree and argue that biologically, the brain is wired to fire up those neurons when we eat food, listen to our favourite song, interact with other humans. Or in my case, try not to interact with other humans ogling at me in my own office's parking.

In a few months, I had adjusted to the reality of being ogled at and had come up with a survival strategy: zero eye contact or observing my surroundings. Evolutionary biologists of the last century might turn in their graves, as this might appear to be an oxymoron to them. Not being aware of your environment as a survival strategy? This woman is definitely setting herself up for failure. However, my sense is that the modern society we live in has to have new social norms and rules. So 'civil in-attention' was a perfectly acceptable survival strategy in my opinion, until...

A colleague of mine relayed to another acquaintance that Ms Komal Shakeel suffers from a lack of manners or may have a haughty head on her shoulders, for she fails to greet her senior colleagues and acquaintances pretending not to notice them while she walks past them. Anyone slightly familiar with the rules of the game in high powered work environments would understand what blasphemy it is to not greet seniors upon chance 'running into each other'.

One's career progression might be at stake. So I had just committed a cardinal sin and all I was trying to do was minimise the discomfort to my brain, trying to avoid the 'gaze' and in the process failed to notice the presence of someone I should not have ignored. This is just one example of the 'tax on mental bandwidth' and strategy to avoid it resulting in 'costs' to a career.

On a daily basis, women face this additional tax. From running simple errands, such as, grocery shopping to making presentations at work. Women-led businesses in Pakistan have to sometimes hire an 'errand boy' well versed in the language of patwaris and personal assistants to officers handling these processes. The implicit costs of not being able to network in a traditional sarkari are also incurred by these women who are asked for bribes more often than men.

Constantly, they are aware of the way they look, the way people might perceive them from the posture they have or the colour of the lipstick they wear. Just the mere act of existing is work for those billion brain cells toiling hard to compete in a male-dominated world.

To add to this, is the additional labour of the female anatomy. Women would have to show up to work with a smile on their face, on the first day of their period. If they happen to sensitise others to this natural plight, they are met with awkward, uncomfortable shifts by their male colleagues.

Sometimes, self-censorship gets into the way, because one may not want to appear weak or incapacitated in comparison to male colleagues. However, hiding something under the rug does not make it go away. Dilemmas like this pose an additional tax on the mental bandwidth, something Harvard economists value the most among all the resource inputs that go into creating value in the economy.

With uncomfortable workplaces — one simply needs to look at the washrooms in various public sector offices, even the ministries to understand a real life basic struggle — a mere 22% of women in Pakistan are currently engaged in any economic activity, compared to a 67.8% of men.

Historically, the State Bank uses an employment elasticity approximated at 0.11-0.3, which translates into one percentage growth in GDP creating a 0.11-0.3 per cent growth in workforce. If we are keeping away a significant

portion of our population from entering or remaining in the workforce, simply because policymakers are failing to understand the existential experience of a woman, we are imposing a substantial cost to not just national economic growth, but also hindering the global economy from growing.

Here is where policymakers need to step in. It is easy to get lost in policy recommendations when mainstreaming gender. Having 10% women on the boards of all companies, allowing paid maternity leaves or having quotas for women to enter universities are all good policy suggestions, but they fall short, simply because they are treating the symptoms not the cause.

The driving philosophy behind policymaking is where the spotlight needs to rest. Are we taking into account the additional labour that a woman's mind has to bear in order to compete in the job market? Are we really understanding the experience of existing in a particular type of biological structure? Will women ever really have equal opportunity? Is there really a new social contract where men do realise that their privileged position in society is a result of no skill of their own, but simply a lottery by nature? As policymakers, shall we not move for equality to equity? Simply because equality is making sure each one has equal access to resources to help them reach their potential, but equity is about enabling individuals to reach their potential even if it means facilitating one more than the other, because as John Rawl's aptly puts it, we are not all born equal under 'the veil of ignorance'.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1588945/6-avoiding-the-gaze/>

## WOMEN URGED TO LEARN SELF-DEFENCE SKILLS

Haneen Rafi

Dawn, December 23, 2017

KARACHI: A four-day self-defence workshop for women ended at the Japan Information and Culture Centre on Friday, where participants were schooled in martial arts and self-defence techniques.

Present at the closing ceremony was MNA Arif Alvi, who spoke about the importance of improving physical fitness and confidence building, which, he added, was unfortunately neglected by citizens of Karachi as there were hardly any places which facilitated physical fitness activities.

Organised by the Pakistan Martial Arts Association, more than 200 women from various educational institutes participated in the workshop to learn self-defence skills.

The main purpose behind the workshop was to empower women to face and tackle threats that they might face when out and about in the real world.

Physical fitness, Mr Alvi said, helped in attaining spiritual fitness, which would help make society a better place and also establish law and order for all.

“Physical strength and a superior thought process should be used together to establish yourself in society and in extension make it a better place for all. Stand by your principles, work by your principles and fight for your principles,” he told the young girls present there.

He also stressed how important it was to empower women in Pakistan so that they could reclaim public spaces where they feel safe and secure. “In buses or in bazaars, women must feel safe. This workshop must have helped you gain internal strength and confidence.”

He also spoke about how the Japanese culture had inspired him. "I have seen that there is a resistance among the Japanese and that they do not step on the rights of others, which is something we must also practise."

According to teachers and students present at the workshop, the training helped them gain mastery over their fear and handle threats.

In order to control such a situation, one must be able to gain control over oneself first. This required dedication, motivation and perseverance, and the women were taught several techniques to resort to when faced with danger.

At the closing ceremony of the workshop, Toshikazu Isomura, Consul General of Japan in Karachi, showed his concern about street crime situations in the metropolis, expressing his hope that the participants keenly got the awareness of self-defence. He also elaborated how empowering women was essential and would benefit society at large.

When faced with an armed individual, witnessing street crime, or even being attacked from behind, trainers at the workshop broke down the entire process of self-defence over the four days and taught the participants how to help themselves as well as get help from their surroundings when in danger.

Not only were trained individuals used to demonstrate this, but volunteers were also part of the depiction which helped everyone understand the subtleties of self-defence better. Some of the popular techniques taught were the half nelson and full nelson which outlined the positioning of the arms to overcome the attacker. Gun disarmament techniques were also taught considering that muggings in Karachi were an ever looming threat.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1378234/women-urged-to-learn-self-defence-skills>

#### 'NATIONAL DAY FOR RIGHTS OF WORKING WOMEN' TODAY

Business Recorder, 22 December 2017

LAHORE: With a view to expediting the process of providing complete protection and security to the womenfolk working in different departments, 'National Day for the Rights of Working Women' is being marked on Friday (today).

To mark the day, different women rights organisations would hold functions to raise awareness among people about rights of working women. Speakers in these functions would highlight the role of women in the process of national development.

In his message, Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif said the role of womenfolk in overall socioeconomic development of the country cannot be ignored because no society can progress without giving equal rights to its women.

He said Pakistani women are talented and hardworking and they have proved their mettle in different fields.

Women's proactive role in different administrative and defence organizations are praiseworthy, he said, adding: "It is sanguine that Pakistani women have also shown their talent in education, health and sports fields. In fact, they have earned a niche with their talents and hard work and the Punjab government has also adopted an effective strategy to include the womenfolk in the process of national development."

Shehbaz said that revolutionary steps have been adopted to empower the women as well as to protect their rights. The women's quota has been enhanced from five percent to 15 percent in government employments and the women have also been granted a three years age-relaxation for the government jobs. Centres have been established throughout the

province to protect women rights and to eradicate violence against them. Similarly, women have been given 33 percent representation in committees and decision making boards working under the government, he said.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/22/11-page/689196-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 11th TO DECEMBER 17th 2017  
ECP TAKING STEPS TO RAISE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLLS: OFFICIAL  
Saleem Shahid

Dawn, December 11, 2017

QUETTA: Balochistan Election Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Majeed Jaffar has said that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is taking several measures to increase the ratio of female voters and ensure their maximum participation in the electoral process.

Speaking at a meeting held at the Governor House on Saturday to commemorate the national voters' day, he said the reason behind celebration of this day was to engage the maximum number of voters in the electoral process with special focus on women, disabled persons and members of minority communities. He said the Constitution empowered the ECP to conduct transparent elections in the country in which all candidates must have an equal opportunity.

Emphasising the need for inclusion of female voters in the electoral process, he said the ECP had taken several steps to encourage women and create space for them in the electoral process.

According to him, the Elections Act, 2017 declares null and void an election in which women are barred from exercising their right to franchise or an election in which participation of women is less than 10 per cent of total registered female votes. No individual, contestant or political party would be allowed to stop women from using their right to franchise, he added.

This is pertinent to mention here that there is a huge gap between male and female voters in Balochistan. According to some statistics, the gap is of around 600,000 votes. One of the causes of this gap is that a large number of women in Balochistan do not have computerised national identity cards and, therefore, are not registered in computerised electoral rolls.

Mr Jaffar said that to ensure the maximum participation of women in the election process, the ECP had initiated a campaign in 11 districts of Balochistan under which women would be registered in computerised electoral rolls. It was encouraging that Balochistan was the first province to initiate such a project, he added.

He said disabled persons would be provided the facility of postal ballot.

Retired Justice Shakeel Ahmed Baloch, a member of the ECP, shed light on some ongoing and future projects of the commission.

He said that among the most important things required for conducting free, fair and transparent elections were the availability of error-free electoral rolls and registration of all eligible voters in the computerised electoral rolls.

For these purposes, the ECP conducted an exercise for the revision of electoral rolls last year and it would launch more projects to make electoral rolls error-free before the next general elections, he added

Mr Baloch said the reason behind celebrating the national voters' day was to create awareness about the importance and sanctity of vote.



He also talked about other ECP measures, including procurement of election material and printing of watermark ballot papers.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375929>

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Dawn, December 11th, 2017

HISTORIES of oppression are always followed by histories of subversion. In societies that have silenced women for decades and subjected them to exclusion, there have still been instances of resistance by strong-willed women. Not only does this give reason to hope, it also reminds us that the recent outpouring of women's stories from across the world is an alternative to ceding to the dark undertow of patriarchy.

In effect, the 16-day global movement against gender-based violence couldn't have come at a more opportune moment when igniting more conversation and action on women's rights in Pakistan is essential. Starting Nov 25 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and ending yesterday (Human Rights Day), this annual campaign conceived by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University puts the spotlight on women's empowerment.

For Pakistani women, the gender equality challenge constitutes a lifetime of struggle requiring sustained intervention. Wavering political commitment to women has proven problematic especially when parties fail to confront regressive forces for reasons of survival.

Tolerating a litany of excuses to keep women backward is no longer an option. Closing legal loopholes and implementing laws stringently so that victims of 'honour' crimes, rape and sexual harassment are not deprived of justice is imperative, especially as the poison of misogyny remains pervasive.

Ours is a country where statistics on crimes against women defy belief — every second woman has suffered some kind of domestic violence; 93pc have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime; and 2,300 women were killed in the name of 'honour' in 2016.

Yet again, we ask this question of the state: when women continue to battle patriarchy with their lives, why are perpetrators of heinous acts allowed to maim and murder with impunity? Refusing to change the status quo denies the nation of women's full participation. Our policymakers must know that the price for no change in women's lives gets much higher by the day and this is unacceptable to all.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375782>

## WALK HELD TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Business Recorder, 12 December 2017

FAISALABAD: On the directions of Punjab Govt, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Centre for Women organized a walk to raise awareness about the violence against women on the eve of World Human Rights Day.

The walk was led by Member Provincial Assembly Dr Najma Afzal.

Manager Women Centre Kanwal Shahzadi, Sanam Zahra, Law Officer Zahid Ali Shakir, representatives of the various NGOs and women belonging to different walks of life participated in the walk and they were carrying banner and placards inscribed with the slogans of protection of human rights and chanting slogans against the violence on women.

The walk started from office of women centre and culminated at Jamia Chistia Chowk after passing through different roads.

Expressing her views, MPA Dr Najma Afzal said that religion Islam teaches us to serve and respect of the humanity.

She said that every person of the society should play his or her role for the protection of the human rights by following the teaching of Islam. She said that the government was taking different measures for the welfare and development of the women folk and the human rights were being protected on all levels.

The MPA said that the present government had taken revolutionary steps for safeguarding the human rights however, there was need to change the behaviour of the society to curb the incidents of violence against women. She said that Punjab government had made legislation to protect the rights of the women and women protection bill was promulgated in this regard.

She stressed upon promoting the sentiments of patience and tolerance for honouring the human rights.

She said that the women had been given equal rights for development and they had been associated with the democratic institutions for their empowerment by the government. Manager Women Centre and others also spoke on the occasion.

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/11/5-page/686986-news.html>

#### INITIATIVE AIMS TO IMPROVE FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN WORKFORCE

Dawn, December 12, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank is entering into a partnership with the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) to help improve employment opportunities for women.

IFC considered its engagement in Pakistan important because only 7 per cent of the country's work force comprise of women, the third-lowest rate in the world. The initiative is part of a larger IFC effort to drive economic development in Pakistan.

Through the partnership, IFC and the PBC will show businesses how they can tap into a large – and underutilised – pool of female talent.

The PBC represents 60 of the country's largest private-sector companies. A recent survey by the group, Gender Diversity in the Business Sector of Pakistan, found that the vast majority of its members had workforces that were less than 20pc female.

“Our partnership with the Pakistan Business Council aims to promote female participation in Pakistan's labour force and support the country's economy which right now is missing out on a talented pool of potential workers,” said Nadeem Siddiqui, IFC Senior Manager in Pakistan. “Investing in women is a smart solution to business challenges and, among other things, helps firms maintain a pipeline of future leaders,” he said.

Pakistan has the second largest gender gap, ranking 143 out of 144 countries in the gender equality index. This low ranking indicates the magnitude of prevailing gender disparities in earnings, education, health, and political participation.

“Gender equality is one of our key strategic areas and the collective efforts of PBC and IFC will further enable equal opportunities for women in the work place,” said Fuad Hashimi, executive director for PBC's Centre of Excellence in

Responsible Business. “This will help reduce the gender gap that currently exists and contribute to the growth of Pakistan’s economy.”

Under the initiative, IFC will train CEOs and human resource directors at PBC-member companies on how to better recruit, retain and promote women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375982>

## ILLUMINATION AT BA, BHC TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

The Express Tribune, December 12, 2017

Mohammad Zafar

The Balochistan Assembly and the Balochistan High Court (BHC) bathed in orange illumination on Monday as part of the campaign ‘Leave No One Behind to End Violence against Women and Girls’.

Orange is the colour of happiness and associated with no violence against women. The campaign was organised by the ‘Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Alliance’ (EVAWGA) Balochistan, while the illumination event was jointly arranged by the Balochistan government and the EVAWGA with the support of the ‘UN Women’.

A large number of activists, belonging to various non-governmental organisations, visited the BHC and the Balochistan Assembly in the evening, carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans like ‘Say No to Violence against Women’ and ‘Orange the World’.

Balochistan Assembly Speaker Raheela Hameed Khan Durrani and woman legislators and government officials were present on the occasion.

Speaking at the orange illumination ceremony, Durrani vowed to support the pro-women legislation to ensure an end to all forms of gender-based violence in the province.

“Violence against women will not be tolerated. All such moves would be resisted,” Durrani said, referring to the bills regarding violence against women passed by the Balochistan Assembly. “All steps will be taken for the empowerment of women and protection of women rights.”

Speaking on the occasion, BHC Registrar Rozi Khan said that the judiciary stood with the civil society activists to ensure rule of law in the province, where perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence were punished and the women led a dignified life.

Amjad Rasheed, EVAWGA Chairperson and the Chief Executive Officer of the Taraqee Foundation, stressed the need for making joint efforts to end discrimination against women and girls. “We must join hands,” he said.

Also speaking on the occasion, Ayesha Wadood from the ‘UN Women’ highlighted the salient features of the ‘Leave no one Behind to End Violence against Women and Girls’ campaign.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1581852/1-illumination-ba-bhc-promote-gender-equality/>

## UNILEVER PAKISTAN AND UN WOMEN COLLABORATE FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Business Recorder, 13 December 2017

KARACHI: Unilever Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment towards enhancing gender diversity within its business by signing on to the Women’s Empowerment Principles, with support from UN Women.

The Seven Principles for Women's Empowerment, are a joint initiative of UN Women (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) and the UN Global Compact. These principles provide a set of guidelines to help companies focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community, through policy and action.

Shazia Syed, Chairperson & CEO, Unilever Pakistan, highlighted, "The business case for gender equality and diversity has long been accepted as an integral part of organizations across the world. In Pakistan, we too are defining the organizational road map that will empower women to become the flag-bearers of economic success."

Jamshed M. Kazi (Country Representative, UN Women Pakistan) congratulated Unilever in driving change from the top and galvanizing momentum to advance gender equality, diversity and inclusiveness.

Speaking on the occasion, he said "The cultural, social, political and infrastructural complexities associated with gender equality are broad and we need to cultivate a spirit of mutual work to be able to tackle these challenges. Multinational companies like Unilever Pakistan are paramount in bringing change and CEO Shazia Syed is an inspiration for many women."—PR

<https://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/12/13/8-page/687382-news.html>

'80% PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM THYROID PROBLEMS ARE WOMEN'

The Express Tribune, December 14, 2017

A deficiency of thyroxine leads to slowing of all body processes and weight gain so a normal thyroid function is essential for health, said Dr Tasnim Ahsan. "Around 80% of people suffering from thyroid problems are women. However, thyroxine deficiency is easily treatable."

The College of Physicians and Surgeons dean of faculty of endocrinology, Professor Dr Ahsan shared her views at a public awareness seminar on thyroid held on Wednesday at University of Karachi.

Dr Ahsan mentioned that auto-immunity, a failure of the body's immune system, is another common cause of goitre and thyroid dysfunction. "Iodised salt should be consumed regularly as Pakistan is an area lacking in iodine, which may lead to the development of goitres."

Talking about the thyroid gland, she said that its only function was to make thyroxine, a hormone that is required by every cell of the body to function normally. She maintained that a deficiency of thyroxine leads to slowing of all body processes and weight gain. "An excess of thyroxine production or release leads to opposite effects," she said, adding that thyroxine deficiency is easily treatable and requires lifelong replacement therapy.

Hypersecretion can be treated either with oral medicines, radioactive iodine or surgery, said Dr Ahsan. "A particular variety of auto-immune thyroid disease called Grave's disease may also be associated with the involvement of one or both eyes, which may have to be treated independent of the thyroid," she added.

Thyroid cancer occurs when abnormal cells begin to grow in the thyroid gland camera, she explained, adding that thyroid cancer is an uncommon type of cancer. "A doctor should be consulted urgently if there is a rapid enlarging of goitre or nodules in the neck as these may indicate thyroid cancer," Dr Ahsan maintained.

She pointed out that iodine was an element that was needed for the production of thyroid hormone. "Iodine rich food should be an essential part of people's diet," she said, adding that iodine is found in various foods such as fish, milk, yogurt and other dairy products.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1583447/1-80-people-suffering-thyroid-problems-women/>

## BUSINESSWOMEN NEED FACILITATION

Dawn, December 14, 2017

Sumaira Jajja

KARACHI: There is a dire need to facilitate women-run small and medium enterprises through skill development and easy access to cheaper finance to help businesswomen expand their outreach to regional and international markets, stressed participants of a consultative session held on Wednesday.

The public-private consultation on the development of 'Women National Business Agenda' was organised by the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) and USAID Pakistan Regional Economic Integration Activity (PREIA) in collaboration with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI).

The aim behind this women-specific agenda is to give them a voice – 'a first step towards their participation in the economic policy advocacy process'.

FPCCI Vice-President Mosooma Sibtain highlighted the need for encouraging and empowering businesswomen. "Women entrepreneurs face a number of challenges which hamper their growth and survival. These include limitations pertaining to access to finance, networking opportunities, relevant business and marketing trainings and lack of an enabling environment," she noted.

Recommendations to the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) included allocation of 25 per cent budget/quota for women exporters to ensure their participation in TDAP-sponsored trade delegations/exhibitions, establishing of platforms for knowledge sharing, and increasing formal exports by women entrepreneurs in online business.

It was also suggested that the SME policy document be revised with a gender angle and the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority needs to build a stronger outreach network and take initiatives to encourage more women to participate in the economic system and prepare business guidelines for themselves.

One glaring problem identified was that the 24 districts with concentration of women-led businesses were excluded from the State Bank of Pakistan's Credit Guarantee Scheme, with the current policy being too stringent and little support from the commercial banks.

The central bank was asked to improve coverage of the credit scheme and simplify the requirements for businesswomen to become eligible for obtaining loans. On the occasion, a TDAP representative said the authority was launching the National Exporters Training Programme next month along with SheTrade trainings for women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1376460/businesswomen-need-facilitation>

## ICCI URGES FOCUS ON POLICIES FOR WOMEN

The Express Tribune, December 14, 2017

ISLAMABAD: Women form over half of Pakistan's total population and the government should make policies to focus on their empowerment to achieve sustainable economic growth, said Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) President Sheikh Amir Waheed.

Addressing a 25-member delegation, he said developed countries have achieved rapid growth by focusing on women empowerment and urged the government to facilitate them so they can play their due role in the development of the country.

Waheed informed the delegation about the initiatives taken by the ICCI for promoting women entrepreneurs.

He said that ICCI has established a Women Growth Centre to provide guidance and facilitation to aspiring women entrepreneurs in business start-ups.

Also speaking on the occasion, ICCI Senior Vice President Muhammad Naveed and Vice President Nisar Mirza said that women have a promising career in entrepreneurship as by starting their own businesses, they could not only achieve economic independence, they could also create jobs for others.

Ideas for Life Trust Director Sadaf Raza, who was also leading the delegation, said that they were working in the core areas of education rights, women empowerment, youth emancipation, and communication for development.

She said that for women empowerment, IFLT was providing training to women so that they could play role of leaders and entrepreneurs in society and contribute effectively towards nation building. Raza said that the purpose of taking the delegation to different organisations was to expose them to various working environments and create networking opportunities for them.

The IFLT has already trained some batches women, while another batch of 25 women were currently under training, she informed.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1583509/2-icci-urges-focus-policies-women/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 4th TO DECEMBER 10th 2017

‘MEDIA DOESN’T HELP WOMEN OVERCOME CHALLENGES IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY’

Dawn, December 4, 2017

Bilal Ahmed

KARACHI: Lack of female journalists in the electronic and print media is a major factor causing a blackout of women-centric issues in the media and thereby rendering the media unable to challenge the prevailing misogynistic mindset of Pakistani society.

A panel of journalists agreed on the media’s failure in giving due coverage to women-related issues at a session on the final day of the Women of the World (WoW) Festival at the Alliance Française de Karachi on Sunday. The journalists engaged in the discussion included Muna Khan, Mahim Maher, Zarrar Khuhro and Razeshta Sethna.

“I do not feel as if the media succeeded in helping women overcome challenges in society,” Maher remarked. She bemoaned the fact that very few female journalists were working in major newspapers and TV channels.

According to Maher, the situation in local newspapers and TV channels was even more dismal. She cited a research that analysed 21,949 news stories published in six local newspapers of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in three months. It was found that only 74 stories were carried through a female source. She lamented that in comparison to male reporters, the names of female reporters being printed in leading English newspapers were almost invisible.

“Women are never sources of information,” Maher decried, adding that women are the centre of news only when they die or are tortured and threatened.

Disapproving of the modus operandi of electronic media, the speakers pointed out that very often it does not bother to bring up real issues. In the race to 'break' news, news bureaus even do not bother to verify information before airing it for the public. Unlike print media, there is no editor in electronic media who could judge any news' worth, Khuhro said.

The panelists also complained about the trend of disclosing names of women who were raped or killed for 'honour'. Commenting at the end of the session, activist Mukhtaran Mai said the media is ever willing to show photos of rape survivors but seldom dares to reveal the faces of the perpetrators.

It was also brought up during the discourse that instead of correcting irrational prejudices and stereotypes, the media often serves as an enforcer of regressive mindsets. Citing the allegations of Ayesha Gulalai, Maher commented that no news channel bothered to invite a social psychologist to discuss the issue of sexual harassment. Many analysts stuck to the point that Gulalali was lying because she should not have waited four years to speak up. No one dared to raise the point why women opt to remain silent after facing harassment, Maher said. "Human behaviour is never discussed in the electronic media."

Adding to the point, Khuhro remarked, "We do not shape public opinion; public opinion shapes us".

Media is controlled by men and they steer it as per their patriarchal mindset, the speakers said. We have to deal with situations when male editors object to the word 'breast cancer' and want to change it to just 'cancer' even if the news story is exclusively about breast cancer, Khan said.

Maher also spoke on the dilemma faced by an editor in deciding whether to carry a news item or to hold it. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, attacks on polio workers decreased when the media stopped reporting about anti-polio campaigns, she said. "We never know who is going to read our news," she said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1575088/1-media-doesnt-help-women-overcome-challenges-patriarchal-society/>

## ECP LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN TO REGISTER 12M FEMALE VOTERS

Iftikhar A. Khan

Dawn, December 5th, 2017

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday launched a project aimed at bridging the gap of over 12 million between male and female registered voters in the country.

According to the electoral rolls of September 2017, of the 97.02m citizens registered as voters, 54.60m are men (56.27 per cent) and 42.42m are women (43.73pc). The gap between male and female voters has now gone up to 12.17m from 10.97m in March 2013.

Speaking at the launch of the campaign to be run in collaboration with the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), Chief Election Commissioner retired Justice Sardar Mohammad Raza said there was a broad international consensus that elections were the cornerstone of every democracy. He, however, noted that merely carrying out elections could not be considered a real democracy, unless essential principles were followed. "ECP believes that elections are free, fair and transparent if they are inclusive in which every segment of the society has an equal opportunity to participate," he remarked.

He said women made up almost half of the country's population but their participation in the electoral process, specifically as voters, was low. "The underlying cause is the absence of national identity card (NIC) owing to different socio-cultural constraints," he observed. "To me this means ignoring considerable number of our population in the decision-making process."

He said the ECP was starting a female NIC and voter registration campaign targeting unregistered women in 79 districts across the country. He said through the campaign, women would be mobilised and facilitated to acquire NICs so that they could be enrolled as voters.

The CEC said the campaign was a collaborative effort of the ECP, Nadra and civil society organisations working at grassroots level.

Under its existing projects, the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) intends to reach out to more than 1.7m unregistered women to list, motivate and facilitate them to apply for NIC registration. Concrete efforts are required to lower the number of women who will potentially be disenfranchised from the 2018 general elections.

Sources in the ECP said the time was too short as the electoral rolls were to be updated by April next year. They said keeping in view the deficiency of Nadra's capacity and administrative hiccups, the target to register a bulk of the out-of-electoral rolls women was in all probability to be missed.

They said the civil society was engaging with Nadra's regional and local centres to facilitate registration of women across the country through separate windows (National Registration Centers – NRCs), provision of Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs) and registration camps outside Nadra offices. However, they have been facing challenges in coordinating with Nadra in some areas which affect the overall pace of the registration.

Nadra has a limited number of MRVs. The available MRVs have predetermined schedules. Fewer MRVs are available for fresh registration of women in identified census blocks.

Nadra's NRCs do not have the facility to cater to large number of citizens. Many women cannot be facilitated at these centers due to a lack of separate windows.

Nadra officials need more departmental approvals before engaging with civil society mobilisers. In some cases, the approvals take time and facilitation does not take place timely.

When contacted, a civil society representative said civil society's facilitation to first-time women applicants around Nadra centers in the form of camps could be very helpful. However, it remains a challenge to seek permission from Nadra for such camps.

He said Nadra might increase working hours in districts with higher rates of under-registration, declare Saturdays a working day for all NRCs until April 2018, enhance MRVs capacity to process NICs (50 a day), coordinate MRV schedules with CSOs locally and ensure all NRCs issue free NICs to first-time registrants.

He said administrative rules of Nadra might be amended to provide for allocation of special days and counters / windows for fresh registration of women at NRCs, Nadra might be instructed to consider prioritising allocation of MRVs for fresh registration of women in identified areas and to issue free cards to first-time women registrants instead of requiring them to acquire Smart Card which cost Rs400 per card.

He said Nadra rules might be amended to provide for relaxation in departmental approvals for extending cooperation to civil society organisations working on fresh registration of women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374614>



KARACHI: Women's quest for empowerment and the challenges they face was the topic of an academic study at the 4th International Conference on Women Empowerment, held on Tuesday, in an effort to lessen the suffering of women and enhance their self-actualisation.

The conference was jointly organised by the department of social sciences at Szabist and Advanced Educational Institute and Research Centre.

Chief guest of the conference, women rights activist Anis Haroon recalled the setting up of the Women's Action Forum in 1981 in response to Ziaul Haq's restrictions on women. According to her, to rectify the marginalisation of women and improve their status in society, it is essential to make them an empowered political force.

"Basic rights such as education, health, right to work and right to marry, as well as family planning, are all part of gender equality. According to the Constitution, women are also citizens and they must be given equal rights," she said.

The Constitution of the country extends equal rights; however, laws formulated in the country are discriminatory, she explained. There was an overt differentiation between men and women, and even between religious minorities.

She also spoke about how malnutrition was severely affecting children and how their growth was affected by it. "So if one mother is educated she will be in a better position to take care of herself and her child."

Thinking that women's death is unavoidable because of lack of access to healthcare during childbirth is a fallacy, she explained.

In this day and age of science, it can only be considered as neglectful and something that needs to be rectified.

Dr Syed Aziz of Health Canada, Ottawa, gave a detailed presentation on different types of cancer plaguing women, as well as highlighting the types of symptoms one must be on the lookout for.

The premise of his presentation was to not only create awareness, but also encourage a sense of self-preservation among the audience who would work actively towards preventing the different types of cancer.

Dr Severine Minot, assistant professor of social development and policy at Habib University, gave a talk on men, women and the role of emotional intelligence [EI] in their lives. She spoke at length about how research indicated that EI was related to empowerment because "it entails improved awareness of the self, of others and of the social/material conditions of our lives. These all are affected by each other".

She said that EI was a driver of leadership. "Responses are mature, weighted, enlightened and profoundly meaningful within the frame of personal and collective well-being."

Emotions and cognitions are intrinsically related and there is no separation between the heart and the mind, Dr Minot explained. "We think better in some emotional states and we think worse in other emotional states. In disruptive emotional states we have a hard time learning and thinking."

Federal government official Sikandar Mughal spoke about how the law had evolved to include acts that protect women against harassment in the workplace.

He gave a detailed presentation on how a complainant could bring the issue of harassment to the federal ombudsman, which was then handled with care and sensitivity. He also said that individual cases were not allowed to linger and a decision was given in the shortest amount of time.

In the question hour session however, a few women raised several issues and shared stories where the federal ombudsman's office had led the women who had appealed for help, down. In some cases, almost a year had passed with no decision.

Mr Mughal heard several concerns and complaints and insisted that on the federal level, strict protocols were followed, though this might not be the case at the provincial level.

He placated the audience and assured them that he would look into the complaints and closely investigate any irregularities or delays at the provincial level.

The performance of Sheema Kermani of Tehrik-i-Niswan was a powerful rendition of a woman's journey battling regressive mindsets which had caused her to develop a debilitating medical condition that had left her isolated and ostracised from society.

Other speakers at the conference tried to explain how the concept of feminism is dictated by individual perspectives and can also be shaped by cultural narratives. But all were of the view that equality between men and women is essential for Pakistan to truly develop with regards to its social equality, health indicators, as well as improving the literacy rate.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1374774>

#### POLICY GUIDELINES FORMULATED FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Dawn, December 7th, 2017

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Wednesday announced policy guidelines for the women's empowerment in the province.

The announcement was made by Chief Minister Pervez Khattak during a ceremony organised by the social welfare department and Parliamentary Women Caucus Committee at the Chief Minister's House here.

The guidelines were prepared by the social welfare department, Parliamentary Women Caucus Committee and UN Women.

The policy is focused on the greater role of women in legislation, provision of better employment opportunities and facilities in public transport to them and end to aggression against them.

Parliamentary Women Caucus Committee chairperson Meraj Humayoon said the policy guidelines would help eliminate discrimination against women in all walks of life.

The CM said a 16-day awareness campaign had been launched to sensitise the people to the rights of women throughout the province.

He added that discrimination and violence against women had to become a subject of the past.

Mr Khattak announced the establishment of a daycare centre at the Civil Secretariat and said the government would make efforts to ensure provision of inheritance rights and access to justice to women and removal to hurdles to their development.

He said the government would soon legislate on domestic violence and burns prevention and rehabilitation.

The CM said the government had established a toll-free helpline 'Bolo and Badlo' at the Directorate of Social Welfare, Special Education and Women Empowerment in Peshawar for registration of the cases of gender-based violence in the province.

He said the government had drafted the women's empowerment policy for creating an enabling environment for women to take decisions for own betterment.

Mr Khattak said the policy provided implementation level guidelines and actions for stakeholders to work towards its goals.

"I appreciate the efforts of the Women Parliamentary Caucus for elaborating on the policy document to make it implementable," he said.

The CM said the cabinet recently approved the amendments to the 'Protection against Harassment of Women at Work place Act, 2010,' which would definitely reduce and check harassment of women at workplaces.

He said the government had already enacted the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women Act, 2016, to make the women's commission financially and administratively autonomous.

"For the welfare of widows and dispossessed people, we have enacted the Lissaail-i-Wal Mahroom Foundation Act, 2015," he said.

The representatives of the Parliamentary Women Caucus Committee and UN Women appreciated the efforts of the government for empowering women and legislating to ensure equal rights for women.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375065>